



EXPO
2020
DUBAI
UAE



EXPO LIVE

FULFILLING THE MISSION

2016-2021

INNOVATION CAN COME FROM
ANYWHERE, TO EVERYONE





NEED HIGHER RES IMAGE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank everyone, who was involved in the creation and execution of Expo Live Programme, including Expo 2020 Dubai Leadership, Expo Live team, our colleagues, Expo 2020 Dubai partners and the wide network of Expo Live friends and supporters.

AUTHOR

This report was written by iGravity, a Swiss-based consulting and investment advisory firm specialised in impact investing and committed to building a more equitable and sustainable financial system.

SETTING THE STAGE	Foreword: The Vision	4
	Beginnings: From World Expo to changing the world	5
	Journey: The power of a promise	8
THE EXPO LIVE PROGRAMME	Challenges: The only constant is change	10
	Beliefs: Creating the winning combination	11
	Approach: Inspire, support and connect	18
RESULTS AND IMPACT	Key figures	29
	Supporting novel solutions	36
	Connecting minds	38
	Inspiring agents of change	47
	Reflections in hindsight	54
THE NEXT STEPS	Scaling our impact: Our journey continues	55



1. FOREWORD: THE VISION

Expo 2020 Dubai's theme 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future' is based on the belief that innovation and progress are the result of people and ideas, coming together in new and unique ways.

When presenting to the 166 member nations of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) in Paris in 2013, the Expo Dubai leadership committed to the creation of a USD 100 million Expo Partnership Fund to accelerate entrepreneurial spirit around the world and support projects delivering lasting and positive impact. Widespread access to finance remains limited for innovators, especially those working outside established start-up ecosystems, and younger organisations in small and emerging economies. We wanted to empower all problem-solvers – those from the region and around the world, regardless of their background, resources, or social status.

We launched Expo Live in May 2016 for this reason. Every social innovator – no matter where they are in their journey – deserves access to funding, business guidance and support, to realise their full potential. Expo Live symbolises a global gathering of nations dedicated to finding solutions to the pressing challenges of our time. It also symbolises a mandate – a pledge that the United Arab Emirates has made to the world – to inspire future generations, create positive impact and build a more prosperous future for everyone.

This inaugural Expo Live Impact Report is a testimony to the exciting journey with our partners and friends that began in 2016. With 192 countries participating, Expo 2020 Dubai presents a powerhouse of inspiration. In all, 140 global innovators were supported and more than 11,000 applicants from 184 countries who are at the ideation, prototype, or product stage are also acknowledged here.

It is a matter of great pride for the UAE and I, that through the years over 5.8 million beneficiaries have now been empowered. We have created a living example of what can be achieved when talent, ambition and passion are pooled together.

We are in a global transition away from a mindset of competition and towards collaboration, inspiration and growth. We hope to inspire many others to join this journey and perhaps even lead the way forward in future. The true legacy of Expo 2020 Dubai will be measured by the connections it creates, the people it inspires, and the future it builds.

HER EXCELLENCY REEM AL HASHIMY

UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation
Director General, Expo 2020 Dubai

2. THE CONVENING POWER OF A WORLD EXPO

A World Expo is a celebration for all, a global destination where everyone can learn, innovate, create progress and have fun by sharing ideas and working together. Each Expo revolves around a theme to leave a lasting impact on the path of human progress, making every Expo a once-in-a-lifetime experience. **Expo 2020 Dubai** is the first World Expo ever hosted in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA) region.

Expo 2020 Dubai has three sub-themes, on which **Expo Live** builds on:

- **Opportunity** - unlocking the potential of individuals and communities to shape a better future
- **Mobility** - creating smarter and more productive movement of people, goods and ideas
- **Sustainability** - respecting and living in balance with our planet

Today, the world's most pressing challenges are being tackled by innovators across the globe. The pace of progress is astonishing. The innovations of today would have been deemed impossible just five years ago. Dubai and the UAE have long been

leaders in innovation and the promotion of a knowledge economy. It is only natural that innovation plays an integral role in shaping Expo 2020 Dubai.

Expo 2020 Dubai strongly believes that innovation and progress blossom when people and ideas combine in new and creative ways. The event's overarching theme of 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future' recognises that the creation of sustainable solutions to global problems requires a willingness to reach out across geographic and institutional boundaries, industry clusters, cultures and disciplines. Expo 2020 Dubai brings together hundreds of countries, innovators, international organisations, companies, entrepreneurs, NGOs, universities, and millions of people to celebrate human ingenuity. The first mega-event of its kind in the region, Expo 2020 Dubai provides a unique global platform for presenting novel and innovative solutions with the potential to transform the lives of people around the world.



3. BEGINNINGS: FROM WORLD EXPO TO CHANGING THE WORLD



Platform for
Innovation


200+ pavilions


192 countries


25 million visits



Intentional programme to foster social innovation and entrepreneurship by supporting novel solutions, connecting minds, and inspiring change makers

University Innovation Programme:

- **19** university partners
- **46** projects supported
- **130** volunteer professors
- **3** companies founded

Innovation Impact Grant Programme:

- **11,000+** applications from **184** countries
- **140** selected Global innovators from **76** countries

The Good Place Pavilion

- A multi-sensory interactive experience to explore the innovators and their impact on the community

Expo Live is an innovation and partnership programme launched by Expo 2020 Dubai to fund, accelerate and promote creative solutions that improve lives while preserving our planet. Expo Live harnesses the convening power of a World Expo to demonstrate how global innovation and committed people can advance the pace of progress and inspire a more inclusive and prosperous future.

Expo Live moves these themes into action through a combination of grant programmes, innovation challenges and knowledge-sharing events. It promotes collaboration and provides technical assistance and exposure to Global Innovators (GIs).

Expo Live consists of:

- The Innovation Impact Grant Programme (IIGP) – which provides funding, business support, and exposure to innovative solutions that benefit communities or the environment

- The University Innovation Programme (UIP) – which incentivises creative thinking and collaboration between university students to solve problems relevant to the UAE and the region
- The Good Place Expo Live Pavilion – which is Expo Live's home and showcases innovators and outstanding projects that we have championed

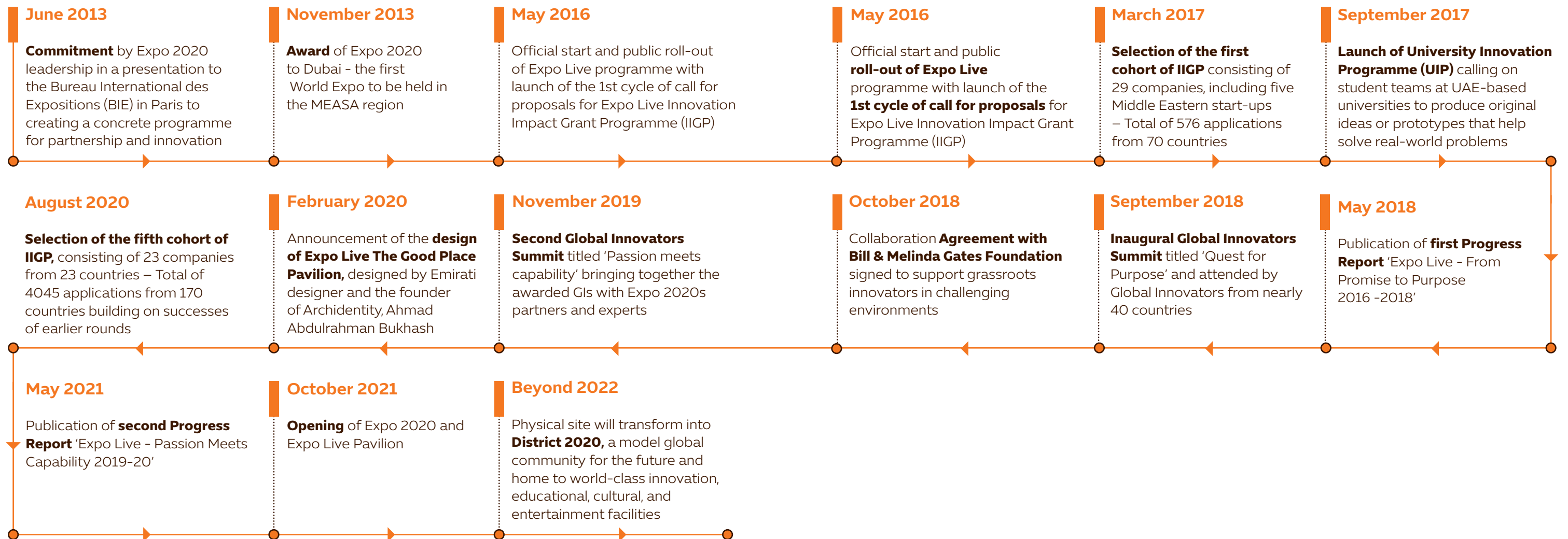


"It's more than just a display of solutions, it's about a movement. A prototype can inspire. A good story inspires. Reliability inspires. Working together inspires. That is the spirit we are trying to embody."

YOUSUF CAIRÈS
Senior Vice President
Expo Live



4. JOURNEY: THE POWER OF A PROMISE



5. CHALLENGES: THE ONLY CONSTANT IS CHANGE

HUMANITY IS AT A MAJOR TURNING POINT. WE FACE UNPRECEDENTED DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES, AND WE NEED NEW WAYS OF ADDRESSING THESE COMPLEX ISSUES.



“Deserts are spreading at something like 12 million hectares every year. If you break that down, that’s 2,000 football fields an hour. The basic prognosis is that within the next 20 years or so, 135 million people will have to find somewhere else to live if we cannot stop this.”

OLE KRISTIAN SIVERTSEN
CEO, Desert Control

Most of these challenges disproportionately affect already vulnerable communities. For example, nine of the ten countries most affected by extreme weather events between 1997 and 2016 were developing countries. Agriculture remains the sole source of employment, livelihood, and income for 50-90% of the populations in developing countries. Climate-associated disasters triggered food crises in 23 countries and were responsible for pushing more than 39 million people into acute food insecurity. While some challenges require urgent planetary responses, there are also a number of local issues – such as basic public access to sanitation, healthcare and education – that have not been adequately addressed.

Governments and international organisations are struggling to provide timely and effective interventions that ensure long-term, sustainable impact. The USD 170 billion annual spending in ODA (Official Development Assistance) together with private philanthropy is unlikely to bridge this gap.

However, novel solutions and new models of cooperation that break down geographical borders and traditional boundaries are emerging. These new ways of working transcend traditional distinctions between enterprises meant only for commercial gain versus non-profit entities. These social innovators present viable and sustainable solutions to the challenges they and their communities face.

Innovation does not happen in a vacuum and so innovation ecosystems must be nurtured in every corner of the world. Access to finance remains the key challenge for enterprises seeking to start or scale their social innovations. On the one hand, most donor grants prefer funding traditional NGOs and non-profits, and on the other hand, venture capital continues to favour existing and well-established innovation ecosystems – with only 0.8% percent of global financial assets under management enabling impact investments .

In some regions, including the UAE, social innovation is still a nascent concept. Extensive efforts are required to bridge the perceived divide between entrepreneurship and not-for-profit, and to create a robust ecosystem where social innovation can flourish.

¹Source: <https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/global-issues-connected-matters/>
²Bloomberg, Global Sustainable Investment Alliance (GSIA), the GIIN and OECD

Desertification, Photo by Ivars Krutainis on Unsplash



6. BELIEFS: CREATING THE WINNING COMBINATION

Innovative ideas that address social problems are generated every day and everywhere. For social innovation to occur at scale, more than a single idea is needed. It requires the right mix of people, with access to the right support, intervening at the right time. Social innovation is about generating unconventional ideas that trigger change – a natural response to malfunctioning economic, social, and environmental systems.

Expo Live has enabled social innovation through four models. Enterprises that innovate around a product, a service, a process or one that enables social transformation.



"We encourage, support and fund innovators, regardless of who you are, where you come from, regardless of your age, your nationality, your personality."

FATMA IBRAHIM
Grant Manager, Expo Live

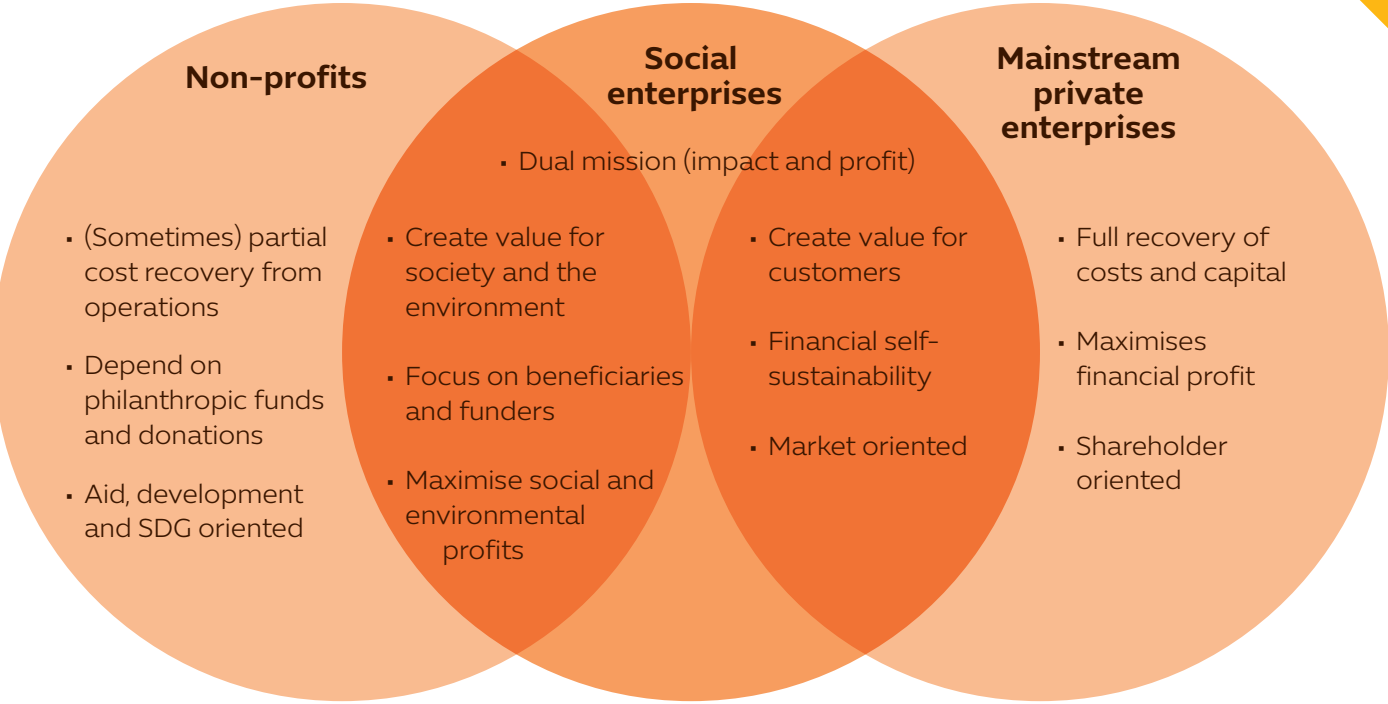


"When I was looking at the problem of farmer poverty, I saw a clear, viable business solution that would help solve the problem from a market standpoint. There was an opportunity to create an organic food business that answers the needs of both the farmers and the consumers."

PEETACHAI DEJKRAISAK
Jasberry co-founder

A social enterprise seeks to create an economically self-sustaining solution. What distinguishes it from any other enterprise, is the commitment to meet the real and pressing issues of people and the planet. This is evidenced, for example, by their articles of association, an explicit purpose statement or the sharing of excess profits within the community.

Social enterprises bring social innovation to scale through semi-commercially viable solutions. With guidance, the enterprises may grow to be independent of grants and attract debt or equity financing from private investors – a critical component to narrow the huge funding gap to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Product innovation	Service innovation	Process innovation	Social transformation
Compost Baladi is a Lebanese social enterprise specialised in biowaste management. Compost Baladi's products resort to low tech, low cost and locally manufactured waste management solutions; aligning with a sustainable circular economy approach.	Endurance Electric is a for-profit social company in Chile that alleviates energy poverty for families who have access to limited or bad quality energy. Endurance Electric transforms lives by implementing a pay-as-you-go system for access to different energy services.	Babyl is the largest digital health service provider in Rwanda. Babyl works through telephones and the internet to provide medical advice and services across Rwanda to address the lack of access for people living in remote, vulnerable communities.	Meet My Mama is a French social enterprise that has found a unique way to tap into the skills of migrants and refugees by offering them training and business opportunities. Meet My Mama provides a platform where companies can order food for their events.



"In low-income countries, more than half of people do not have regular access to the Internet. I came across the idea of using feature phones (low-end mobile phones limited in capabilities compared to today's smartphones) to deliver an education technology experience."

MIKE DAWSON
Founder Ustad Mobile



"I just loved the idea of being able to pay it forward and help someone who isn't close or nearby, who you probably will never meet. But you have a chance to be important in their life for a brief moment."

CHRISTIAN ERFURT
Co-founder Be My Eyes



"aQysta started with the idea of solving the problem my parents were facing in Nepal – not being able to irrigate their farm, even though it was right next to a river. We developed a water pump propelled by water that does not require any fuel or electricity to operate. As we implemented, we realised smallholder farmers face many other challenges and so we launched the Grown Farm Incubator to help them grow their farms sustainably and thrive."

PRATAP THAPA
Co-Founder, aQysta

The Expo Live Global Innovators are both social innovators and social enterprises. Size, legal form and geography do not really matter. Change agents come from everywhere, including individuals working at the grassroots level, frontline workers, ministries, NGOs, for-profit companies, charities, or faith-based organisations.



Desert Control



Desert Control is a climate technology company specialised in reclaiming degraded soil and turning desert sand into fertile soil. It has a patented product, Liquid Natural Clay (LNC), which can turn degraded sand into fertile soil in less than seven hours.



Location
NORWAY



Theme
SUSTAINABILITY



Sector
ENVIRONMENT

Market oriented business model	Desert Control's product offers a strong value proposition for customers with short payback times. Their LNC product reduces water consumption up to 50 per cent and increases crop yields up to 62%. Changing desert to green land also reduces carbon dioxide emissions by between 15-25 tonnes per hectare annually. The company targets three types of customers: (1) green landscaping firms, who can reduce water consumption and use of fertilisers, (2) agricultural industries, both food production and forestry, who can improve yield and reduce the risk of deforestation (3) NGOs and multi-stakeholder initiatives that promote impact programmes.
Credible social commitment	The company's vision is to make the earth green again, by stopping and reversing desertification and soil degradation. It aims to turn degraded land and sand to fertile soil, and at the same time reduce the water usage for green ecosystems by up to 50%.
Raising capital via financial markets	In April 2021, Desert Control successfully raised approximately USD 23 million in its initial public offering (IPO) on the Oslo Stock Exchange. The private placement attracted significant interest from domestic, Nordic and international investors, focusing on ESG, sustainability, and green innovation. The capital raised will finance the company's growth plan and commercial rollout in the UAE and the western United States.



Be My Eyes connects blind and low-vision people with sighted volunteers or workplace representatives for visual assistance through a live video call, thereby improving their independence and self-reliance.

Location
DENMARK

Theme
MOBILITY

Sector
ICT

Market oriented business model	Be My Eyes is a mobile app that connects blind and low-vision individuals with sighted volunteers and companies from all over the world through a live video call. The Be My Eyes business model relies on partnerships and contracts with companies. Through an app the service can be integrated into existing communication channels of a company to accommodate the needs of the company's low-vision employees, clients, suppliers, and other stakeholders.
Credible social commitment	The Be My Eyes story starts in Denmark in 2012 with Hans Jørgen Wiberg, a Danish furniture craftsman, who is visually impaired himself. Through his work at The Danish Association of the Blind, he recognised that blind or low-vision people often needed a little assistance to solve everyday tasks. However, it wasn't until a blind friend told him that he used video calls to connect with family and friends, who could help him with these tasks, that Hans Jørgen got the idea for Be My Eyes. He believed that the technology of video calls could be used to visually assist blind or low-vision individuals, without them having to rely on friends and family, but by relying on a network of volunteers.
Raising capital via financial markets	Be My Eyes has become a global phenomenon. It attracted 10,000 volunteers within its first 24 hours of operation, and within eight weeks, it had users in 100 countries. During the past six years, 4.5 million volunteers and 290,000 blind and visually impaired have joined the community. It is now the most prominent online platform for the blind and visually impaired, and one of the largest micro-volunteering platforms in the world, aiding in 180 languages.

At Expo Live, social innovators are never alone. To implement their ideas, social innovators need to have great co-founders, fellow employees, teams, advisors, and shareholders. Board members can help them keep their heads high in difficult moments and guide their ambitions. The leaders and teams behind the innovation have many things in common.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE TEAMS

Deep **understanding** of the issue and of local context – bottom-up

Combination of **tenacity, resilience, courage, and drive** to pursue success in the face of adversity

Business acumen, they see the opportunity and not only the problem



Collaborative spirit, not in competition given the magnitude of the problems to solve

High **social motivation**, committed to changing the status quo

Able to bootstrap to get started, as there is a lack of support and investment at the early stages



"Failure is part of the journey. It is hard, it is tough, it is not easy to accept. It is difficult to talk about with others, but it is an experience. And if I didn't go through that experience, I wouldn't be the same man that I am now."

BASEM ALBELADI
Founder of Labayh



"I needed to focus on helping find a solution to reduce waste – to make my life worthwhile I needed to make a difference that matters."

GEORGINA DE KOCK
Founder Munch Bowls

7. APPROACH: INSPIRE, SUPPORT AND CONNECT

Innovative ideas that address social problems are generated every day and everywhere. For social innovation to occur at scale, more than a single idea is needed. It requires the right mix of people, with access to the right support, intervening at the right time. Social innovation is about generating unconventional ideas that trigger change – a natural response to malfunctioning economic, social, and environmental systems.

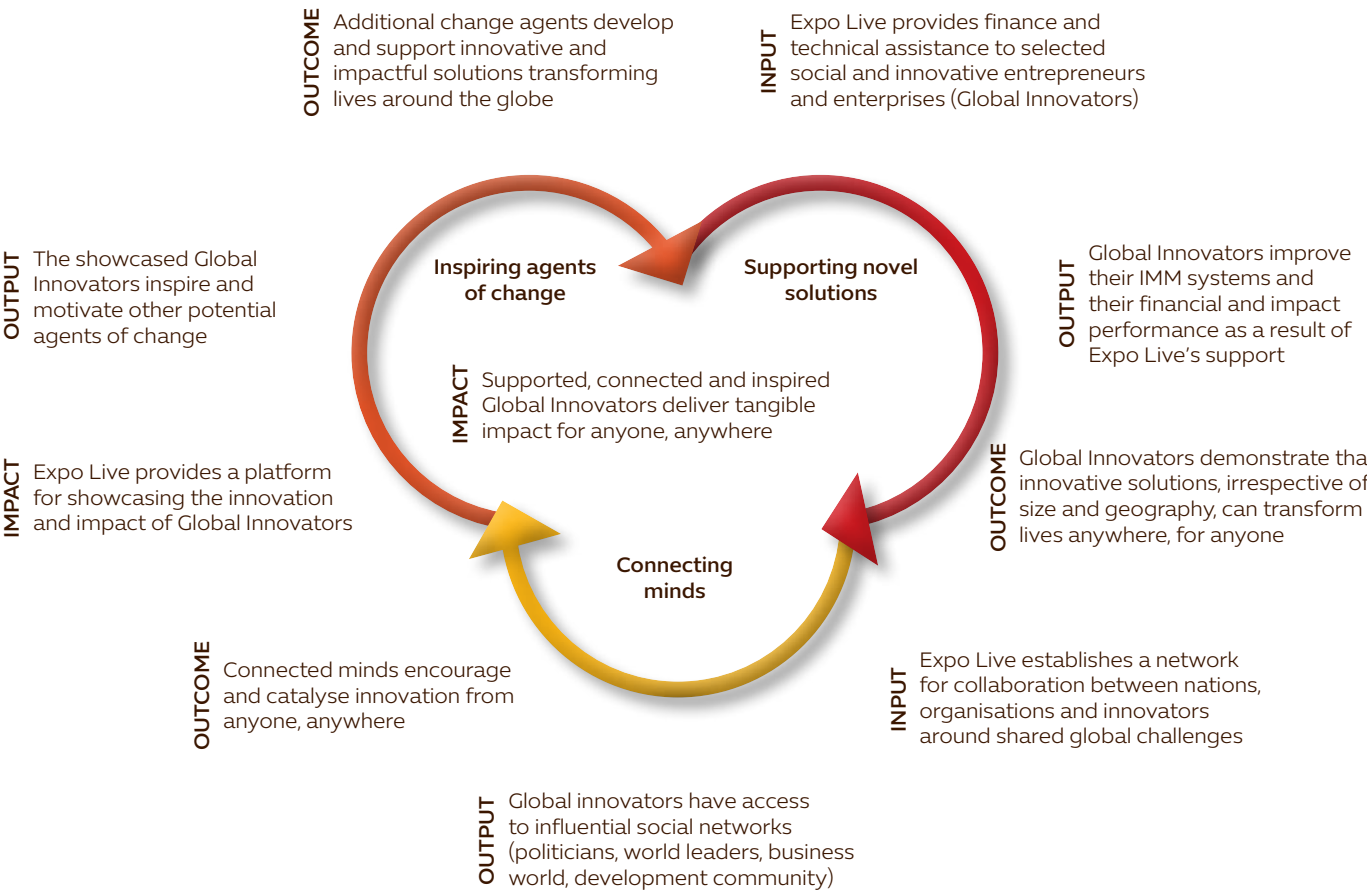


“With everything we do, we try to promote innovation, inclusion, and impact entrepreneurship – that I would say sums up our values. Creating a sense of community with our Global Innovators is essential to the success of our programme.”

ABDULLA KHOORY
Senior Manager, Expo Live

THEORY OF CHANGE

The Expo Live programme follows a three-pronged approach focused on methodically supporting novel solutions from every corner of the world, connecting minds that encourage and catalyse innovation locally as well as globally, and inspiring agents of change by showcasing how GIs successfully market social innovations and deliver tangible impact for people and the planet.



ENABLING EARLY-STAGE AND YOUNG ENTERPRISES

Our innovators come from a variety of diverse contexts, sectors and with specific needs. The Innovation Impact Grant Programme (IIGP), for example, focuses on start-ups and social enterprises in both developed and less-developed markets that need grants of up to USD 100,000 to fuel and scale their projects.

The aim was to build a portfolio that includes solutions from prototype stage (testing and validating a working model), implementation (in-market and continuous product or service improvement), and those building the pathways to scale (expanding the product or service). Funding levels depend on the stage of maturity of the enterprise, its capacity to implement and grow, and the extent of its impact in the subtheme areas, as well as at community level.



“Finding the finance is hard. The investors all sit here in Europe and in the US and they don’t understand the problem we are addressing”

KITTY LIAO
Founder Ideabatic

FOCUS AREAS – OPPORTUNITY, MOBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY AS TIMELESS DRIVERS OF PROGRESS

Opportunity	Mobility	Sustainability
<p>Opportunity is about unlocking the potential of individuals and communities to shape a better future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Employment New industries Financial capital Governance 	<p>Mobility explores the many different ways in which movement can bring the world closer together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation Travel and exploration Personal mobility Logistics Digital connectivity 	<p>Sustainability reflects our commitment to respecting and living in balance with our planet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural ecosystems and biodiversity Resources Sustainable cities and built habitats Climate change Green growth

THOROUGH, TRANSPARENT AND INDEPENDENT SELECTION PROCESS



“An Expo Live grant gives a unique opportunity for a social enterprise to test, grow their solution and at the same time create impact. We work with companies on defining their Theory of Change and help to measure and communicate their impact. This allows them to raise additional funding.”

SOFIYA OSHCHEBSKA
Grant Manager, Expo Live



THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC AND THE EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND

Expo Live launched an Emergency Relief Fund (ERF) in March 2020, aligned with the UAE's wider response to the global pandemic. As an outcome of this initiative, 15 organisations from 13 countries that were facing immediate financial hardship were funded, allowing them to continue making positive change in their communities. The relief fund also sought to support new initiatives proposed by grantees, in response to the impact of Covid-19 on their communities.

Grantees that have received ERF assistance include Kenya-based Selina Wamucii, a global sourcing platform for fresh food and agricultural produce from African smallholder farmers.



"When many programmes were cut to save costs at Expo 2020, we worked hard to extend funding to Expo Live enterprises quickly, knowing that they are the ones on the frontline and need it the most."

SOFIYA OSHCHEBSKA
Grant Manager, Expo Live



"At the beginning of the pandemic, our sales crashed. We almost shut down as a company. The relief funds allowed us to continue working and assisting smallholder farmers. We were also able to protect them with masks and sanitisers. Eventually we increased the number of farmers on our platform by 1,300, the number of farmer co-operatives by 800, and the traffic on our website grew from 20,000 to 60,000."

JOHN OROKO
Co-founder, Selina Wamucii

THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Expo Live incorporated a balanced, independent and diverse panel, including individuals from international organisations, private and public sectors as well as the non-profit sector to ensure that the diverse

innovations were heard and considered from different standpoints. A special thanks goes to our Evaluation Committee members and for the time and passion they dedicated to the programme.



"I look at the team, their background, how it's related to their business, as well as the scaling plan and how they are planning to utilise the grant."

HADI SAEED ALSHAKHORI
Evaluation Committee Member
Advisor Badir programme technology incubator and accelerator





Site Visit at My Shelter Foundation in the Philippines



"A lot of times when we would go on site visits, I would capture some of the projects on my social media and people would ask 'How can we be a part of something like this?'"

YASMIN BAKER
Grant manager



EXPO LIVE'S APPROACH ADDRESSES NEEDS AT EVERY STAGE OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY

STAGE	IDEA			LAUNCH			GROW		
	INSPIRE	EDUCATE	FORM	ESTABLISH	DEVELOP	LAUNCH	VALIDATE	FUND	GROW
TYPICAL NEEDS	Role models	Course, events and training camps	Find co-founders	Legal and technical assistance	Technical assistance	Prototype market	Networks (Industry and Investor)	Pitching opportunities	Infrastructure
	Inspirational stories		Team information	Access to workspace	Product development assistance	Business development services	Exposure to potential partners and clients	Exposure to potential investors	Human capital / team expansion
	Motivation	Build and validate ideas in safe environments		Access to networks	Business development services (pre-seed)	Seed capital / smart capital	Business development services	Seed and series A capital	Expand / new markets
					Early hires				
FOCUS OF EXPO LIVE	UNIVERSITY INNOVATION PROGRAMME			INNOVATION GRANT PROGRAMME					
				CREATING THE FIRST SOCIAL ENTERPRISE LICENSE			PAVILION		
				GLOBAL INNOVATORS COMMUNITY					
				EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND					
				COMMERCIAL PARTNERSHIPS			FUNDRAISING AND INVESTOR CONNECTIONS		

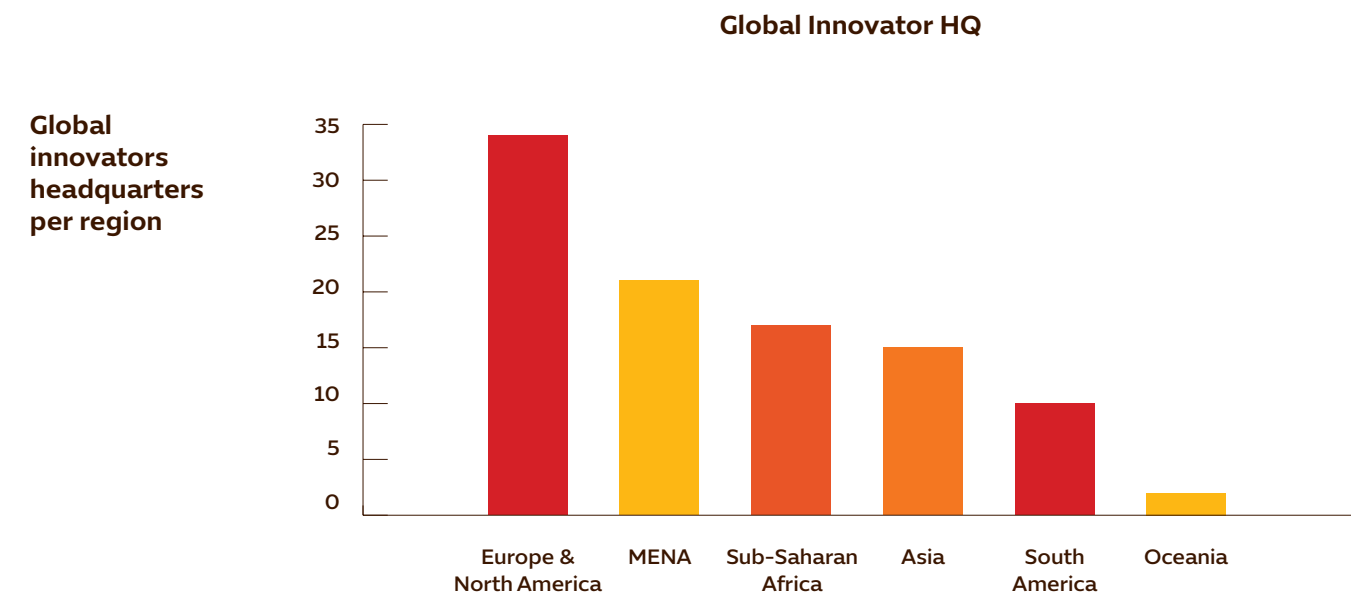
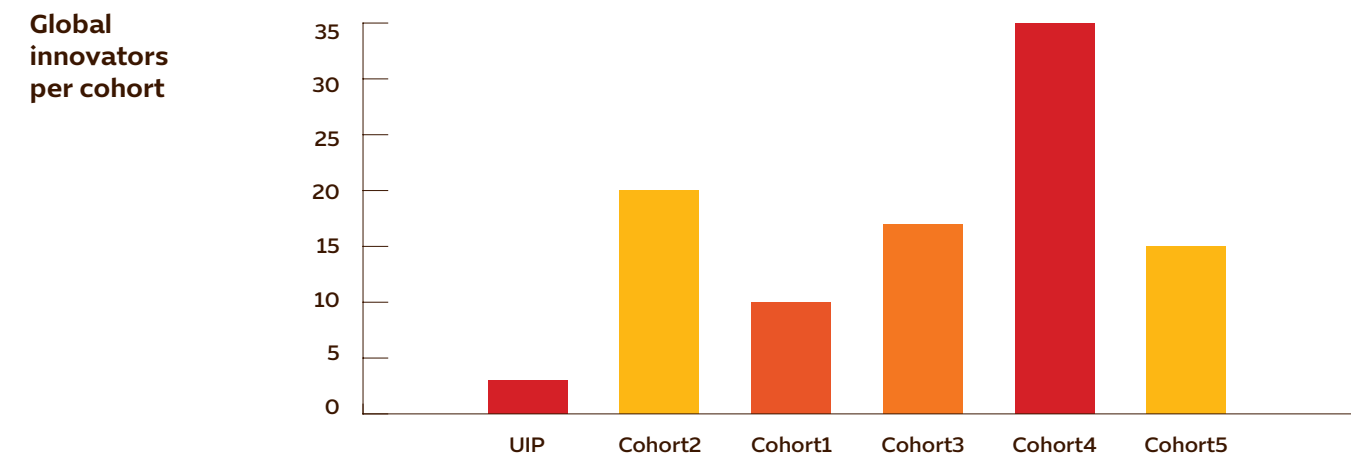


8. RESULTS: FROM DREAM TO REALITY

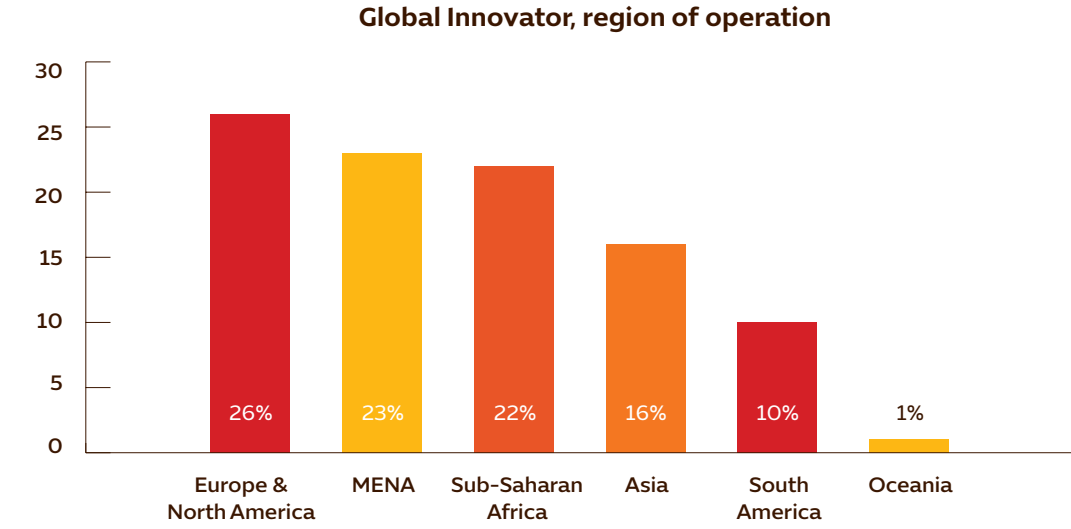


	Application	Countries	Shortlisted	Pitch presentation	Global innovators	Percentage of total applications
Total	11,011	184	1,148	193	140	1.3%
Cohort 1	576	71	155	35	29	5%
Cohort 2	483	87	52	18	14	3%
Cohort 3	1,246	113	171	36	25	2%
Cohort 4	4,661	167	500	73	50	1%
Cohort 5	4,045	170	271	31	22	0.5%

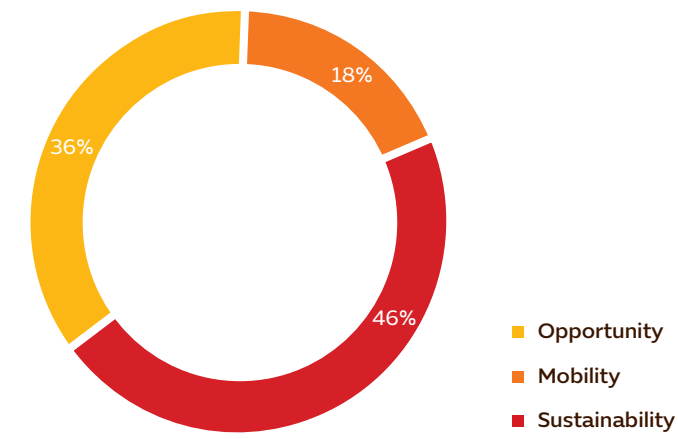
EXPO LIVE SUPPORTED A DIVERSE GROUP OF GLOBAL INNOVATORS IMPACTING PEOPLE'S LIVES ACROSS THE PLANET



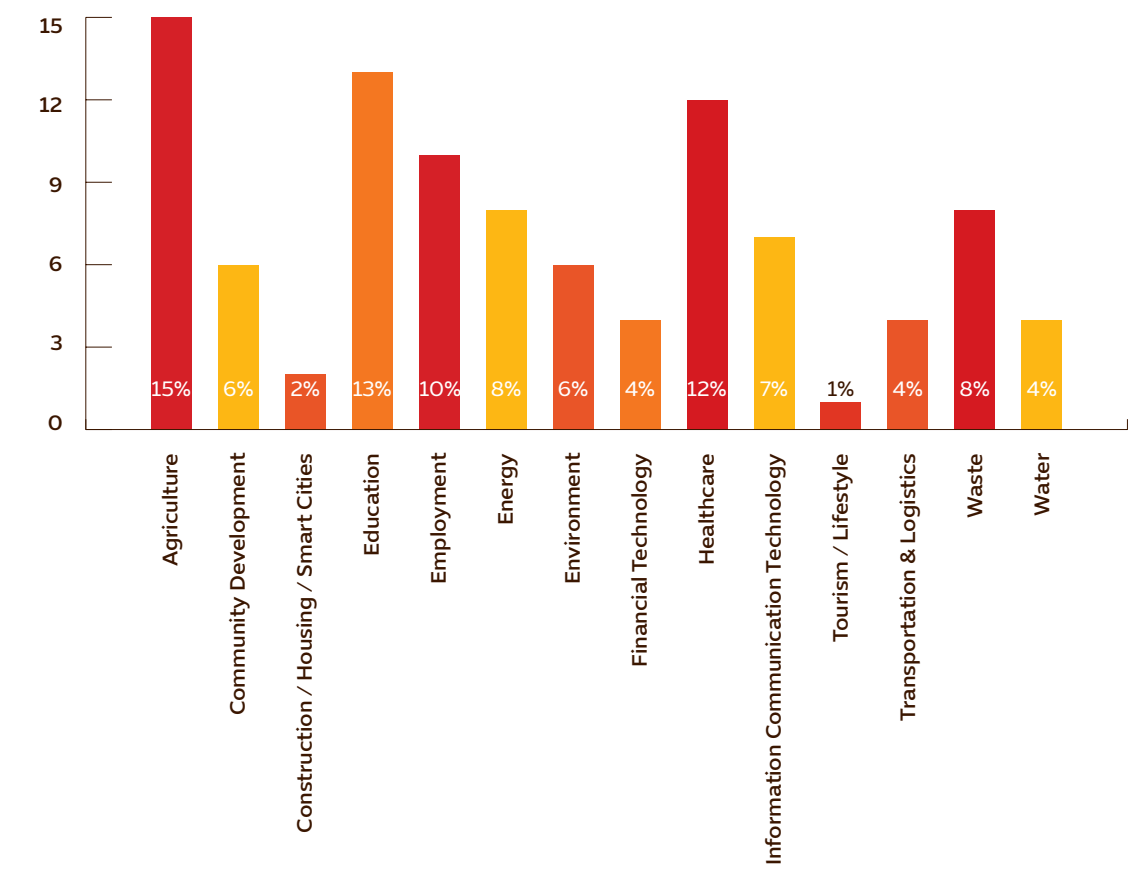
Global innovators country of operations per region



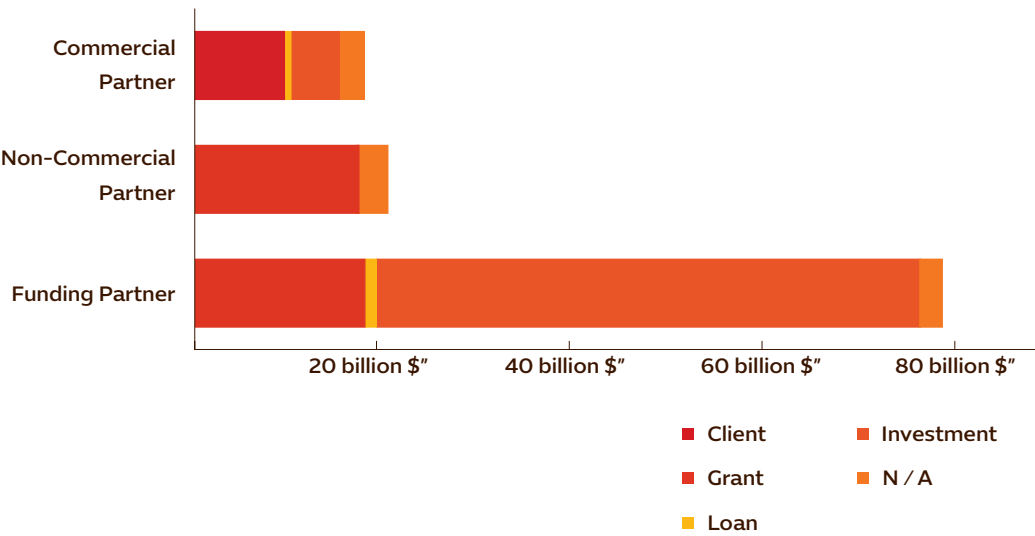
Global innovators per sub-theme



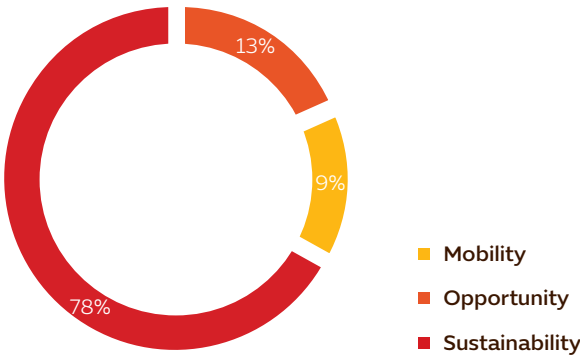
Global innovators per sector



Type of funding (in USD) attracted by global innovators per type of partner



Funding raised per scheme



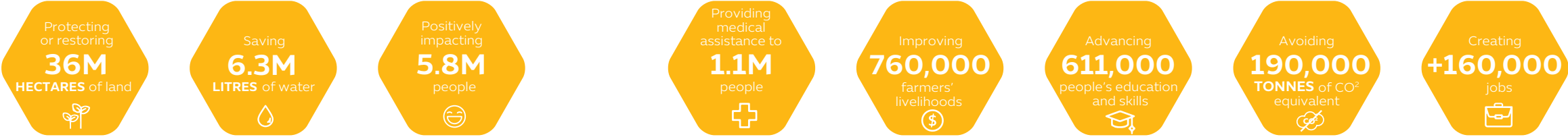
"We measure our impact based on the farmers' improved livelihoods. By the third season we started to see yields double and now our farmers have, on average, seen their yields grow from just under two tonnes per hectare to almost five."

MANKA ANGWAFO
Founder Grassland Cameroon




DELIVERING TANGIBLE IMPACT FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

TOGETHER 140 GLOBAL INNOVATORS FROM 76 COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTED TO:



SUPPORTING NOVEL SOLUTIONS

	Input	Output	Outcomes
	Expo Live provides financial and technical assistance to selected social and innovative entrepreneurs and enterprises	Supported enterprises improve their impact measurement and management (IMM) systems and their financial and impact performance as a result of Expo Live's support	Social entrepreneurs demonstrate that innovative solutions, irrespective of size and geography, can transform lives

ENABLING EARLY-STAGE AND YOUNG ENTERPRISES

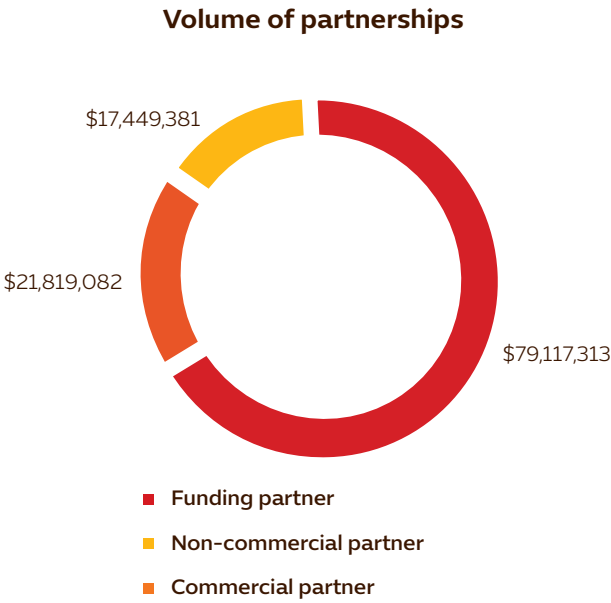
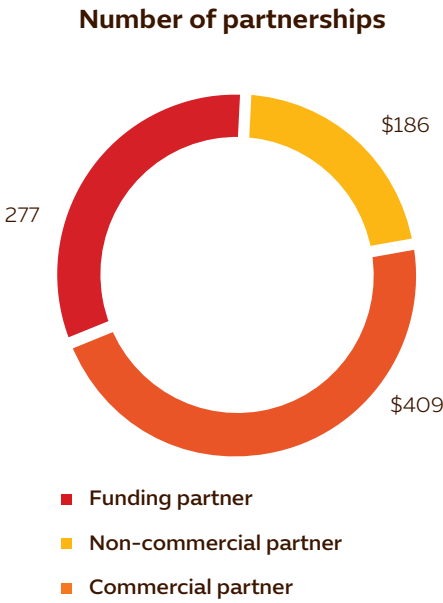
At the core of our programme was the intention to support novel solutions. This required us to reach across geographies, institutional boundaries, industry clusters, cultures, and disciplines. We made a distinct effort to reach people in remote areas and those less digitally connected.

The selected Global Innovators benefited from Expo Live funding and assistance, allowing many of them to strengthen their businesses and improve their performance.

Improvement of IMM practices	As part of the Expo Live Grant programme, grant managers collaborated with each global innovator to identify appropriate impact KPIs, define the measurement practices, and implement data tracking and reporting systems.
Increasing investment readiness	The Expo Live team worked with selected Global Innovators to improve their investment readiness, among others by developing investment and fundraising documentation to investors.
Access to influential networks	Through Expo Live, Global Innovators gained access to potential clients, partners and investors (see more further down).

Global Innovators were able to initiate hundreds of financial, commercial and non-commercial partnerships, as well as mobilise significant resources by improving their investment readiness and accessing influential networks. Connections and partnerships were realised between grantees and powerful networks of corporates, investors, universities, and development partners.

Altogether, the supported innovators managed to raise over USD 160 million between 2016 and 2021 – with funding partners primarily providing investments, non-commercial partners providing grants, and commercial partners becoming clients.



“When I first came to Haiti and experienced the need to use a bathroom – and the fact that there wasn't one – it became clear to me what a fundamental dignity issue sanitation is.”

SASHA KRAMER
Founder, SOIL





InvestEd offers affordable and flexible loan products to students from low-income households in the Philippines. Instead of loan processors, students applying for a loan at InvestEd are accommodated by financial counsellors. Once repayment begins, students primarily deal with coaches instead of collectors.

Location
PHILIPPINES

Theme
OPPORTUNITY

Sector
EDUCATION

With the right funding and support at the right time, Global Innovators scaled their businesses and impact 10x

In 2018, when InvestEd applied for the Expo Live grant, the company was just past pilot, the co-founders were not able to pay salaries to themselves and no one in the region believed in the idea of pro-student loans. The grant allowed InvestEd to test and further develop their loan products to vulnerable target groups such as young mothers, hire nine additional employees over the following 12 months, and catalyse additional funding. Through the network of global innovators, InvestEd found a supporting community with whom they have exchanged stories, learned from and increased their resilience.

As the pandemic hit, InvestEd's newly formulated business became irrelevant within the blink of an eye. With the emergency support from Expo Live, InvestEd was able to take a step back and reconsider what learning in the face of a pandemic would look like and what that would mean for a student's financial and non-financial needs. By doing so – and doing so quickly – InvestEd has been able to grow the organisation to 50 employees and finance more students in 2021 than in the three former years combined.



CONNECTING MINDS

	Input	Output	Outcomes
	Expo Live establishes a network for collaboration between nations, organisations and innovators around shared global challenges	Global Innovators have access to influential social networks (politicians, world leaders, business world, development community)	Connected minds encourage and catalyse innovation from anyone, anywhere

Connecting minds that encourage and catalyse innovation has been a key ambition for the Expo Live programme. We have partnered with catalysers of social innovation, collaborated with regional and local innovation ecosystems, and facilitated connections and partnership among innovators, nations and organisations, to establish influential social networks where innovation can flourish.

PARTNERING WITH CATALYSERS OF SOCIAL INNOVATION: STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

When we started, we had plenty of ideas and excitement but also limited experience on how best to build and support a community of Global Innovators. We learned from others and immediately experienced the power of collaboration first-hand.

We were privileged to be able to partner with Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN) and visit their conference in Bahrain. Our partner F6S, provided the platform to receive and evaluate applications. In addition, we visited Badir in Saudi Arabia and tapped into the invaluable knowledge, experience, and relations of the global innovation ecosystem. This has proven invaluable, allowing us to reach more than 11,000 innovators from 184 countries.



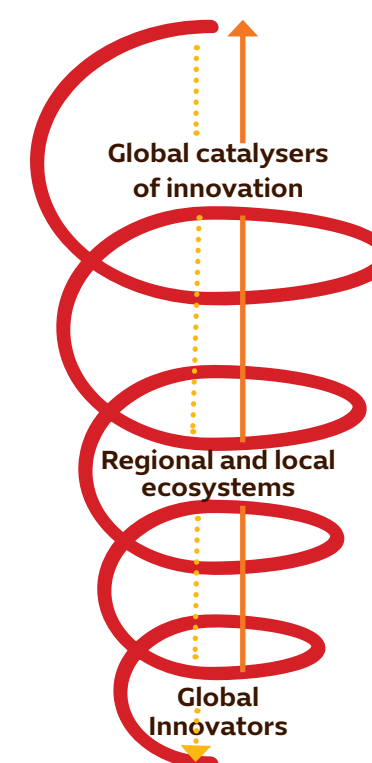
"Expo Live believed in our idea when no one else did. As our first significant funder, they allowed us to really focus on the business and product. This was the instrumental piece in growing the business to where it is today – and, ultimately, serving more vulnerable students year on year."

CARMINA BAYOMBONG
InvestEd



"Beyond being a grant programme, Expo Live is a community. Innovators, beneficiaries, and of course the wider network of ecosystem partners have all supported and believed in the Expo Live vision. Our community is the epitome of 'connecting minds'."

DANA AL MEHZA
Grant Manager, Expo Live



	What we did	Effect
Partnering with global catalysers of social innovation	Connecting with existing and experienced actors and ecosystems to leverage their learnings and networks	Expo Live has been able to reach Global Innovators in every corner of the world and bring global resources to regional and local ecosystems as well as to Global Innovators directly
Raising awareness of social entrepreneurship in local and regional ecosystems	Presentation, talks, workshops, including contributing to the formulation of a social entrepreneurship certificate	Local and regional innovation ecosystems recognise the power of social innovation and are better equipped to support Global Innovators
Providing access to influential networks and facilitating connections and partnerships among Global Innovators	Allowing Global Innovators to access influential networks and facilitating connections and partnerships among Global Innovators and corporates	Global Innovators have mobilised significant resources through financial, commercial and non-commercial partnerships



Throughout the Expo Live journey, we have actively pursued partnerships with international stars of innovation and impact. For example, we partnered with the Sharjah Entrepreneurship Center, with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on a collaborative fund for Humanitarian Innovation, as well as organised a joint summit with Acumen in Nairobi with leaders from across the corporate, impact investment and



"Sheraa is committed to transforming the passion and curiosity of young entrepreneurs into innovative solutions that can be scaled up to address real world needs and help build more inclusive and resilient societies. Our partnership with Expo Live's University Innovation Programme was an opportunity to work towards our shared goal of empowering future generations of entrepreneurs, by providing them

social enterprise spheres in Kenya on the theme of 'Delivering for the Future of Smallholder Farmers'. We also built valuable partnerships with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Ashoka, Endeavour, Cambridge Centre for Global Equality, and USAID, to name only a few.

with the essential skills and resources to bring their creative ideas to life. We are proud of our collaboration with Expo Live, knowing that it has not only helped youth realise their full potential as changemakers, but has helped cement the UAE's position as a home for Global Innovators."

NAJLA AL MIDFA
CEO, Sharjah Entrepreneurship Center (Sheraa)



PARTNERSHIP WITH BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

In August 2020, Expo 2020 Dubai teamed up with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support grassroots innovators in improving the lives of people living in challenging environments. The collaboration promotes innovation in global humanitarian and development responses. The Gates Foundation's Emergency Response Programme helps communities build strong systems to strengthen their ability to build back better in the wake of a crisis – shared expertise, best practices and technical assistance with a specific focus on water, sanitation, health, agriculture and financial inclusion. Learnings from the Expo Live Global Innovators will help the Gates Foundation's Emergency Response Programme assess how grassroots solutions can be applied elsewhere in the world, spreading optimism for the future and inspiring further action towards the SDGs.

Grantees identified under the initiative include PichaEats, a Malaysia-based catering and meal-box service powered by Picha chefs – refugees who create authentic delicacies and cuisines from their homelands; myAgro, which uses cell phone technology to enable smallholder farmers in Mali to set aside funds for the purchase of high-quality agricultural supplies and training; and finally, Seenaryo, which supports life skills and academic achievement for children in refugee and local communities across Lebanon and Jordan.



"More than ever before, the world is in need of innovative solutions to support the millions of people living through challenging environments caused by natural emergencies or complex emergencies with people displaced by war and civil unrest.

The partnership helps fund and develop ideas from across the world that have the potential to save lives during an emergency or enable affected communities to build back better and safer, and become more resilient over the long-term. We look forward to working with Expo Live and social entrepreneurs globally to spotlight solutions that can deliver a positive impact within some of the world's most challenging humanitarian settings."

VALERIE BEMO
Deputy Director for Global Development
Emergency Response programme, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation



"Before trying to influence mindsets or create change, our efforts focused on understanding the region around us. To achieve that, we met with numerous stakeholders. I still remember the trips I took and the conversations I had in our early days at Expo Live with neighbouring countries. The essence of Expo Live sparked passion within their communities and I personally witnessed how

RAISING AWARENESS OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECOSYSTEMS

We learnt that while we could tap into a global network for insights in many regions of the world, that was not the case in our own region. We realised during the first grant cycles that fewer applications were coming from GCC countries. We learnt that the idea of impact investing was still in the early days in the region. As part of our own adjustments, we started getting much more involved with local partners. We reached out to accelerators and incubators to address this gap, in addition to participating in start-up events to inform people about our programme. We partnered with universities to start the UIP and eventually got involved at the policy level to support the development of the first-ever Social Entrepreneurship Certificate.

a conversation influenced the shift in an entire economy, that lacked the existence of the term social entrepreneurship, and eventually led to the establishment of social enterprises and government-led programmes to support them."

FATMA IBRAHIM
Grant Manager, Expo Live

THE SUMMIT – WHEN INNOVATORS FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE PLANET UNITE

The Global Innovators Summit is a flagship event that gathers grantees from all cohorts to meet and network with each other. It is an opportunity to come together and network, share ideas and learn from each other's experiences and ongoing journeys. Attendees also take advantage of opportunities to network with Expo 2020's Premier Partners such as Accenture, Cisco, DP World, Emirates NBD, Etisalat, PepsiCo and SAP, plus Official Partners DEWA, Emaar Hospitality and UPS, who offer support and advice throughout the Summit.

In 2018, 70 Expo Live Global Innovators came to Dubai for a three-day programme. They participated in networking events, one-on-one meetings,

presentations, business coaching and mentorship provided by different organisations. The 2019 Summit was held under the theme 'Passion Meets Capability'. It was the largest gathering of Global Innovators to date, bringing together more than 200 participants, including Expo 2020 Dubai official participants, experts, and ecosystem players.

Feedback from the events has shown that participants gain significant learnings and are inspired by the stories and journeys of their fellow Global Innovators. Moreover, the event enabled the Global Innovators to identify new opportunities for collaboration and expansion.





Habaybna (Jordan) is the first online platform to provide specialist Arabic content supporting parents of children of determination. The platform aims to improve the lives of children dealing with Autism, Dyslexia, Down syndrome and Cerebral Palsy and other challenges. They work across the MENA region providing free expert content, as well as direct access to experts through remote support as needed.



Location
JORDAN



Theme
OPPORTUNITY



Sector
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Ustad Mobile

Ustad Mobile is an open-source mobile learning app that supports almost any device - smartphones, tablets, laptops and even feature / simple phones. It aims to create an inclusive open-source digital learning platform that reaches educators and learners, including those with limited internet access, limited device access, disabilities. Ustad Mobile enables education providers including governments, NGOs and the private sector to improve the delivery of inclusive and equitable quality education and reduce inequalities.



Location
UAE



Theme
OPPORTUNITY



Sector
EDUCATION

Facilitating partnerships among Global Innovators


In September 2019, Expo Live invited regionally based Global Innovators to participate in the GITEX event in Dubai. At the Expo Live stand, Benita (Co-founder of Ustad Mobile) and Reem (from Habaybna) met for the first time. Benita reached out to Reem for advice on working in Jordan, where Ustad Mobile had just expanded its offering. This conversation blossomed into brainstorming the many ways to collaborate, and the two promised to continue the dialogue in Jordan on Benita's next trip.

Their collaboration was further motivated by a partnership Ustad Mobile had with Plan Jordan, an inclusion programme that offers support to refugees in Azraq, Jordan. Plan Jordan's offering was a perfect fit with Ustad Mobile's platform; however, it also required resources for children of determination, for which Habaybna was the ideal source. Four months after meeting in Dubai, Habaybna and Ustad Mobile launched free, offline, regionally specific content. Both Global Innovators actively scope their networks to determine how to expand the use of their content in Jordan and other vulnerable communities.

³GITEX is the Middle East and Africa's largest startup gathering of global tech entrepreneurs, international investors and influential corporate buyers with more than 750 SMEs participating annually. Since 2017, Expo Live has showcased the Innovation Impact Grant Programme and its Global Innovators at the annual event some of which have received significant attention.



INSPIRING AGENTS OF CHANGE

	Input	Output	Outcomes
	Expo Live provides a platform for showcasing the innovation and impact of social entrepreneurs around the globe	The showcased social and innovative entrepreneurs inspire and motivate other potential agents of change	Additional change agents develop and support innovative and impactful solutions transforming lives around the globe

We wanted to empower new agents of change, act as a multiplier, and transform more lives around the globe. We did so by providing a platform for showcasing the Global Innovators. Their stories inspired others to follow suit and gain the courage to act on their own ideas.



"Seeing the stories of people whose lives have been impacted or seeing the change on the ground with things like landscapes or reforestation projects... this is profound and rewarding."

YASMIN BAKER
Grant Manager, Expo Live



Incluyeme.com is the first job portal in Latin America aimed at helping people with disabilities find work.

Location
ARGENTINA

Theme
OPPORTUNITY

Sector
EMPLOYMENT

Uniting in the quest to solve some of the world's pressing challenges

During the Global Innovator Summit in Dubai in 2018, Gabriel Marcolongo (founder of Incluyeme) met with Thea Myhrvold (founder of TeachMeNow).

TeachMeNow is a one stop destination to choose, connect with, and learn online from qualified mentors. The platform offers learners one-to-one personalised sessions or the flexibility to collaborate in groups with other learners of similar interests.

On the sidelines of the summit, both Global Innovators mapped out a new collaboration for Incluyeme to leverage TeachMeNow's technology to deliver high-quality online training sessions to people of determination.

To bring even more impact to the trainings, Accenture, as a part of their 'Skills to Succeed initiative', is now providing Incluyeme with a pool of corporate mentors to improve training quality and assist people with determination in job placements.

This is a shining example of triangular cooperation, where not only Global Innovators, but also Expo's Premier Partners, unite in the quest to solve some of the world's pressing challenges.



UNIVERSITY INNOVATION PROGRAMME (UIP) - INSPIRING YOUNG INNOVATORS

Apart from global social innovators, Expo Live’s Innovation Grant programme also attracted numerous applications from university students which prompted the University Innovation programme (UIP). In line with Expo Live’s feedback culture, this idea was further developed with support from the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) and through many brainstorming sessions with universities, faculty members and students across the UAE. The successful launch of the UIP was through a collaborative process of engagement with our end-users and innovators.

UIP is a short-cycle, grant-making innovation competition for students and mentors on social impact challenges that are relevant to the UAE



“It’s a wonderful experience, especially when you get to witness the other projects.”

U-LIGHT
Student team from American University of Sharjah

Since the UIP was launched, Expo Live has gone out into the market – across all seven emirates – to meet students face-to-face and understand their needs. Access to a platform that believes in their creativity and offers long-term support was a common request among young innovators. In response, Expo Live joined forces with the Sharjah Entrepreneurship Center (Sheraa) to provide a bespoke programme that

and the Middle East region. UIP rewards innovative and promising conceptual solutions that can be accelerated through the innovation curve, moving from ideation to validation and prototyping. The primary objective of the programme is to change the mindset of young people in the UAE and trigger their interest in social innovation. Expo Live has awarded 46 grantees from 19 universities research and development grants and exposure to networking opportunities.

empowers young innovators with the tools necessary for the next stages of their entrepreneurial journeys. Specifically designed to support UIP grantees, this programme saw innovators mentored by Sheraa’s in-house team of experts, helping them to develop skills and strategies that can be applied across all stages of future growth.

CHANGING THE MINDSET OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UAE TO BELIEVE THAT SOCIAL INNOVATION COULD BE A WAY OF DISCOVERING THEIR MISSION IN LIFE



“One thing that motivated me to go into social entrepreneurship was asking myself – if I choose not to pursue a career in aviation, how quickly am I replaceable? What makes me different from another junior engineer? Project You is a very unique experience and very few people are lucky enough to

We strongly believe that we owe the success of the UIP programme to the process through which it was born – through continuous dialogue and brainstorming with universities and students across the UAE. This in turn informed changes in the Expo Live programme, which evolved and developed its process based on the feedback from innovators.

continue to do something like this. Was it easy? Absolutely not, but we’re starting to see the fruits of the sacrifice, the hard work and development over those years”

ABDUL MATHEEN,
co-founder, Project You



Project You is a collaborative platform to facilitate self-discovery and capacity building of skill and talent. Project You offers individual mentorship and guidance through a robust programme involving schools, national and international strategic organisations, passionate psychologists, and industry leaders. The aim is to uncover and harness the best in youth potential. Project You is building systems that bridge the gap between schools and the real world through programmes that are relevant, impactful, and experiential.



Location
DUBAI - UAE



Theme
OPPORTUNITY



Sector
EDUCATION

Facilitating partnerships among Global Innovators

In 2017, Abdul Matheen was a final year student studying Aeronautical Engineering from Emirates Aviation University. During his final months in the course, he came across a poster titled, ‘If you have the power of Expo behind you, what would you do?’ After having a discussion with his friends, the key theme of education came up. They realised that there was a gap in how students perceived education and learning, and its effect on their future. This was further reinforced by the existing state of youth unemployment and youth underemployment in the region. With this, they realised that current systems lack the agility to keep pace with the world and the needs of learners today.

The team successfully pitched the idea of a parallel curriculum that could bridge the gaps in school curricula, to the Expo Live UIP. The question posed - ‘Why isn’t education adapting to the needs of the world?’ revealed a gap in two areas: people skills and real world learning.

- People skills: “...we’re not taught people skills in school but at the end of the day the biggest challenge that corporations face is related to people... it’s the soft skills that really make a difference to the development of these organisations, and yet we are not teaching this in school...” - Abdul Matheen, co-founder, Project You
- Real-world learning and career-centred learning: The team successfully tested a four-week programme with 37 students from one school that attracted interest from the Ministry of Education. There was potential to incorporate the programme into the public school system, and with additional funding from Expo Live they were able to reach 1000 students from eight schools in a period of 1.5 years, leading to a full year programme called Build and Guild.

Project You has grown and now functions under three arms: Project You Schools, Project You Government and Project You Community. Through local and private partnerships, they are working on establishing Talent Incubators and Schools of Life which leverages the power of libraries.



“When the Project You team applied to Expo Live, all they had was an idea on a piece of paper. They are now a registered start-up in the UAE. Project You is living proof that if you are dedicated and passionate, you maximise your chances of finding the right people to back you. The team’s success just goes to show that there’s no such thing as a small idea.”

FATMA IBRAHIM
Grant Manager, Expo Live⁴

⁴Project You grows to UAE start-up (2019, April 8). Khaleej Times. Retrieved from <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/local-business/project-you-grows-to-uae-start-up>

**THE GOOD PLACE PAVILION BY EXPO
LIVE – A PHYSICAL PLACE THAT ROSE UP
FROM THE DESERT SANDS TO BECOME A
SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR MILLIONS
OF PEOPLE**

The Good Place Pavilion, located in the Opportunity District, was created to share real stories and inspire everyone. It introduces visitors to extraordinary innovations by ordinary people, and inspires visitors to join the community.

A human-focused experience, 'The Good Place Pavilion' was designed by Ahmad Abdulrahman Bukhash, founder of Dubai architecture practice Archidentity and a UAE national. Its design was inspired by the traditional Bedouin tent where a pivotal 1968 meeting took place between the late His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and the late His Highness Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum. This momentous meeting, which led to the birth of the UAE in 1971, was to achieve a common vision and a sustainable future for their people.



"Most visitors to the Expo are here to have fun and discover something exciting. Every pavilion has a positive note, celebrating either achievement, progress, crafting the future... Our visitor experience was crafted to inspire and shed light on social innovation. It's interesting to tackle serious matters yet exemplify how people selflessly work in the context of Expo."

NANCY CARDA
Pavilion Director



"Architecture is about bringing the inside, outside. The Expo Live Pavilion is a showcase for exactly that, exemplifying the notion that an idea is not limited by a single box – it is transformative, outreaching and radiant, and can affect all people around it. One of the challenges in designing the 'The Good Place' was capturing – and captivating audiences around – the idea of Expo Live. As visitors enter, they will see a mirage of visuals where their reflections appear alongside images of Global Innovators. The design, co-created by Takeshi Maruyama and Sireen Ali, empowers visitors to see that those seeking to do good are ordinary people, like you or me."

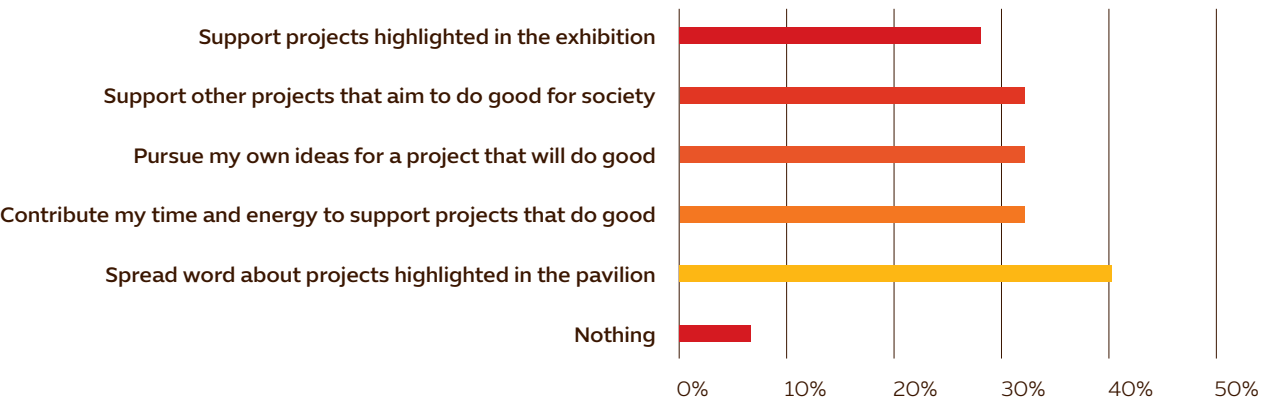
AHMAD ABDULRAHMAN BUKHASH
Chief Architect and Founder, Archidentity

The pavilion's exhibits aim to touch hearts, hands and minds, leading to action. Through a thoughtfully designed immersive experience, each aspect of the space invites visitors into the stories of Global Innovators, and their journey from idea to reality. The heart section of the pavilion profiles heroes of the community, and their actions taken from a perspective of selfless good. The hands section showcases the community of Global Innovators. Themed around the idea of a market, this section explicitly focuses the spotlight on countries that are not regularly in the headlines as sites of innovation. The mind section is the most powerful part of the pavilion because it suggests to the audience that they can make a difference. The cumulative effect is a space that makes real the dreams of innovators, their journeys and their role as catalysers of change.



PAVILION SATISFACTION AND IMPACT REPORT

Visitors were asked about their experience at the Expo Live Pavilion. About 80,000 respondents mentioned that they felt inspired to:



"All it takes is the first step. And you too can help keep this map of good people shining above our heads."

NANCY CARDA
Director - Exposure, Pavilion

YALLAGIVE AND THE POWER OF A SMILE



Visitors to the pavilion can choose a cause they want to support. Their selection is followed by a request to pose for a picture with a smile! A smile inside the pavilion is equivalent to a dirham. With one kind gesture, you make a donation to children in need.

YallaGive was founded by UAE-based social innovator Abdulla Al Nuaimi and is Middle East's first online fundraising and donations platform.

A PLACE FOR IMAGINING THE FUTURE

The events organised at The Good Place Pavilion are part of Expo 2020's Programme for People and Planet. The Programme for People and Planet is a platform for the free and open exchange of new ideas and innovations. Its design helps reimagine the global economy. It places equality, universal respect and human dignity at the centre of human progress and instils a sense of responsibility to live in harmony and balance with the natural world. Through five tracks – Build Bridges, Leave No One Behind, Live in Balance, Thrive Together and UAE Vision 2071 – humanity's most pressing challenges are explored through a cultural, social, environmental and economic lens.

Expo Live Impact Series – These are conversations and networking events designed to bring together like-minded individuals to discuss how purposeful innovations can play a meaningful role in creating a better future. At the heart of these events are the 140 Global Innovators whose stories and innovations are the essence of the Good Place pavilion. The Impact Series is organised along eight Theme Weeks: Climate, Global Goals, Food, Health, Knowledge, Tolerance, Urban and Rural, Water. Over the six months of the Expo, 40 panel discussions were conducted by Expo Live Global Innovators, as well as other Expo participants and ecosystem partners.



Oscar Wood Founder at Seenaryo during Expo Live. How to make learning a meaningful experience at The Good Place Pavilion by Expo Live.

REFLECTION IN HINDSIGHT

Expo Live Meet the Innovator Sessions - Expo Live invited 115 Global Innovators and three UIP Grantees to become a part of Expo Live Programming at Expo 2020 Dubai. Innovators were invited to deliver a Meet the Innovator Session. This is an opportunity for Expo Live Global Innovators to present themselves and their innovations to a wider audience, including country representatives, Expo 2020 Dubai partners, regional and international ecosystem experts, fellow Global Innovators and of course the general public.

Networking Events - A flagship networking event was hosted each Theme Week, bringing together the participants of the week with a chance to connect and create partnerships. Other events and initiatives include the Global Innovators Opening the Expo gates, the solar lights making workshops by Liter of Light, guided tours of other Expo pavilions (Women’s Pavilion, Vision Pavilion, Dubai Cares Pavilion) as well as media interviews and exposure for Global Innovators.

We reflected on how we might do things differently in the future. With the benefit of hindsight, we believe that if we had a second chance, we might direct our energies towards three actions.

- Increase partnerships with other impact investors and philanthropic organisations
- Focus on adapting our strategy to local contexts
- Introduce different financial instruments including loans, equity and guarantees depending on the size and stage of the enterprise

These insights gained from experience prompt us to better ourselves. Perhaps these impressions are also found in the people whose perspectives have been altered, communities built, and lives changed.



“Without the Expo my project would just not be where it is today. I was able to transform just a little prototype, go to the field and test, because that’s really what was needed... Going to Nigeria, seeing how the vaccines were really delivered... understanding problems first-hand in the field”.

KITTY LIAO
Founder and CEO Ideabatic



“I was honoured, humbled and extremely proud to be part of the Expo Live family. We have grown and matured as a company and personally for me as founder and CEO.”

CHRISTIAN ERFURT
CEO, Be My Eyes



9. SCALING OUR IMPACT:
OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

It seems yesterday when we started with a promise to be inclusive about innovation, and now Expo 2020 is already coming to an end in March 2022. The world out there has changed, and so have we. We are energised by the journeys of the Global Innovators, but there is also so much more to be done.

There has been a transformation in the way we engage with each other. There is a sense of community and togetherness created with the Global Innovators that goes much beyond funding. What we have experienced is a transition from a mindset of competition to a mindset of a community, collaboration, inspiration and growth. There is a sense of being part of something bigger.

There is also a collective responsibility to support not just the 140 Global Innovators but the thousands of potential innovators yet to be reached. We know they are out there, ingenious and courageous. They all face challenges and are at different stages in their innovation lifecycle. They need us to grow and scale, as much as we need them to safeguard our future.

Some of them, like the smaller and younger enterprises, will still rely on grant funding to prove their case with a prototype. They may bring to market their solutions, attract first investors and commercial partners – as we have seen throughout the Expo Live programme. Some of these enterprises will become profitable and no longer reliant on grants.

That is where they will need to access investment capital and integrate into the economic world. Investment capital provides discipline because financing is provided only to enterprises that can demonstrate how they will be able to scale and operate profitably. It puts pressure on the enterprises to improve processes, focus on core values and continuously innovate. It is also a chance to access a larger financing envelope, necessary to scale the solutions across the globe. This is in line with the increased global appetite for impact investing – investments that provide not only financial return, but also social and environmental impact.

There is an urgent need for the global community to nurture innovation from everywhere, to support social innovations to become viable enterprises and for investors to start integrating impact considerations into their investment decisions. Many of these Global Innovators have viable and profitable business propositions. From an impact perspective there is an opportunity to complement grant funding with impact investments, enhance impact by providing access to more capital, and by reinfusing capital as loans are paid back.

There is a real opportunity to generate sound financial returns while building a better future.

YOUSUF CAÏRES
Senior Vice President, Expo Live

