



GLOBAL PULSE

**Harnessing innovation to protect the
vulnerable**

**Innovation Pulse Labs – Building capacity from
the ground up**



This note provides a broad overview of the United Nations Global Pulse Initiative (Global Pulse). It specifies the initiative's outcomes and outputs and describes the overall strategic approach.

GLOBAL PULSE: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Recognizing both the urgent need for more timely and actionable information and the unparalleled opportunities, the Secretary-General called on the UN system in April 2009 to establish a monitoring system (Global Pulse) to better track the impact of compound crises on vulnerable populations. He asked the Deputy Secretary-General to lead this effort and establish a small Team in his office to spearhead the project.

2. World leaders – from both developing and developed countries – have expressed their strong support for the Secretary-General's initiative. At the G20 Summit in London last year, the heads of twenty of the most powerful economies re-affirmed the UN system's central role in tracking the wellbeing of vulnerable populations, calling on the United Nations "to establish an effective mechanism to monitor the impact of the crisis on the poorest and most vulnerable".

SUMMARY – INNOVATION PULSE LABS

Pulse Labs are national facilities established to support the work of government in protecting vulnerable populations by strengthening capacity for early detection and rapid response and developing policies

for sustainable crisis resilience. Through strong partnerships with Member States, Global Pulse will build a global network of innovation laboratories, or Pulse Labs, to train the best and brightest minds in the country to develop, test and scale innovative tools for evidence-based decision-making, ensure that technological developments serve the most vulnerable, improve information flow between government and vulnerable communities, and address local needs within the context of national priorities. Pulse Labs will develop partnerships with civil society and the private sector to build national capacity for innovation in data collection, real-time information analysis, and evidence-based decision-making. This will assist governments to develop policy and use resources efficiently and effectively to protect vulnerable populations with agile targeted responses.

BACKGROUND

Although the concept of a laboratory as the primary vehicle for public- and private-sector research and development goes back decades, the systematic use of iterative experimentation to drive innovation in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for global development has appeared only within the past few years. Several academic institutions and non-governmental organizations have established innovation labs, and among UN agencies, UNICEF has recently begun experimenting with the approach.



WHAT DO PULSE LABS DO?

A Pulse Lab is a trusted hub of grassroots innovation known for excellence in accelerating progress toward the MDGs, generating sound information that was previously not available, and delivery of cutting-edge professional development in open source software engineering. The success of a Pulse Lab depends not only on its ability to deliver a steady stream of high-impact solutions through its process of participatory design, rapid prototyping, and experimentation.

Members of the team are trained to:

- Elicit solution requirements from a range of users, including both those in government and those in vulnerable communities,
- Work with end users to co-design innovative, sustainable, scalable solutions within the context of national priorities, while taking into account local structures, capacities, incentives for participation, infrastructure, processes, culture and languages.
- Think creatively about how to gather information from areas that are traditionally very difficult to capture, in particular the informal sectors of employment, financial services and health care.
- Develop open source software solutions using modern software engineering methodologies,
- Test and evaluate these solutions at sentinel sites,

- Train decision makers to use these new sources of information and analytical tools and work with them to develop appropriate processes and policies for use.
- Roll out those solutions with the greatest promise to national scale, and
- Share lessons learned and best practices with the broader community

INITIAL DELIVERABLES

During the first 18 months, Pulse Labs are expected to accomplish the following:

- Adapt the Pulse Analytical Framework to the national context
- Develop an overall approach to defining indicators and define an initial set of core national and sub-national impact.
- Identify and secure access to existing databases and statistical data collection efforts already underway
- Understand gaps in current data collection efforts, and current technological capacities, and design ways to bridge those gaps
 - Establish strategic partnerships with mobile phone carriers and other relevant commercial services providers
 - Customize the Pulse Platform to meet national requirements
 - Install the Pulse Platform on the appropriate government network and train priority government teams on how to use it.

