



United Nations Climate Change Global Innovation Hub

Tenth Systemic Innovation Workshop

Workshop Report

Date: 26 September 2024

Venue: Rockefeller Plaza, 1221 Avenue of the Americas,
Manhattan New York, United States of America



United Nations Climate Change
Global Innovation Hub

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1 Executive Summary

The UN Climate Change Global Innovation Hub (UGIH) successfully conducted its Tenth Systemic Innovation Workshop at the Rockefeller Plaza, 1221 Sixth Avenue Manhattan, New York, USA on September 26th Thursday, 2024.

The Systemic Innovation Workshops are part of a wider Systemic Innovation Framework that aims to accelerate the identification, development, and effective deployment of innovative technologies, policies, financial instruments, and business models, as well as cooperative approaches and products from culture and creative industries. This framework supports transformative climate and sustainability innovations to address the needs of the many people and the planet.

Since its launch, UGIH has successfully organized ten workshops in the following cities that have resulted in the ideation of twenty-eight global innovation projects¹:

- Bonn, Germany (June 2023 and June 2024)
- New York, USA (September 2023 and 2024)
- Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (October 2023)
- Dubai, UAE (December 2023)
- Bangalore, India (May 2024)
- Johannesburg, South Africa (July 2024)
- Shenzhen, China (September 2024)
- Brasilia, Brazil (September 2024)

The UN Climate Change Global Innovation Hub, in collaboration with a broad range of partners, including X PRIZE, UN SDSN, GESI, WGEO, ICLEI, Expo City Dubai, HBAR foundation, and IDG is working on the design and implementation of a city challenge, a \$1 billion prize to inspire cities to showcase impactful climate and sustainability actions through media content, expected to be announced at COP 29 in Baku and launched at COP 30 in Belém. This city challenge will have a ten-year duration. It will be need-based, vision-driven, and divided into three phases:

- A first phase to build the cities' vision and determine the climate and sustainability innovations they need
- A second phase to develop the missing climate and sustainability innovations
- A third phase to deploy these needed climate and sustainability innovations

The objective of the tenth systemic innovation workshop was to finalize the design of the first phase of the city challenge and get ready for its operationalization.

¹ Urban Mobility, Fashion, Resilient Earth Settlement for Tomorrow (Shelter), Personalised Natural Living (Health), Waste2Wealth Catalytix, Framework For Measuring Alignment Of Businesses To Human Needs, Sustainable Innovative actions/practices for solving Water Crisis induced by Climate Change in Bengaluru City, Handprint campaign, City Solution Playground, eKasi Trade, Battery Passport, Mobility as a Service, Future of Mobility, Security of Energy Transition in Cities, Building industry chain for future energy, Net Zero Campus, Providing Energy And Food Support For Developing Countries, Greening of Smart Computing Infrastructure, Development and Implementation of a Green Building Skills Training Program for Enhancing Climate Resilience in the Construction Workforce of South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia, and Rwanda, Gef, Fish Export, Councilors' Engagement Program with the Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs, Innovation of Sustainable Mobility, Green Finance distribution mechanism, Mindset transformation through deep listening, Gas-COOP: Blueprint for a regionally interconnected, globally scaleable Biogas - Plant – Cluster, Agents of Change: Orchestrating the Recycling Chain, Sustainability methodologies for Tropical Agriculture

Massamba Thioye, Project Executive of UGIH, delivered the opening remarks, gave a comprehensive overview of UGIH, highlighting its vision, mission, core values, and operational framework, and introduced the UGIH's City Challenge project, and its components, setting the stage for further discussions.

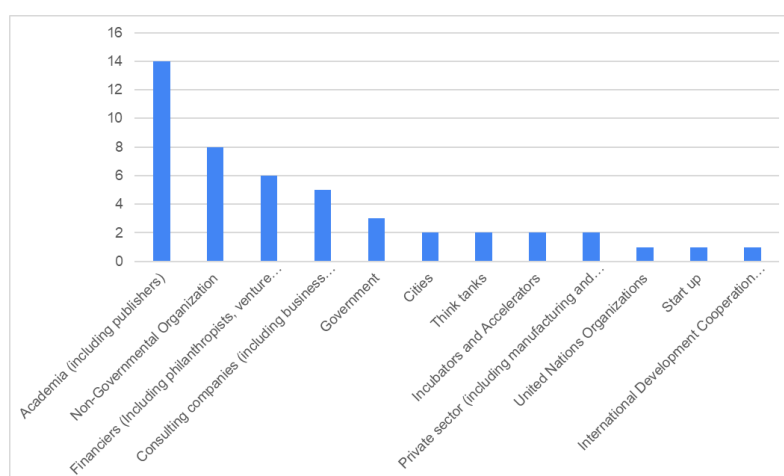
The workshop featured plenary sessions and breakout groups. Keynote speeches were delivered by Mr. David Babson (X PRIZE, Executive Vice President, Climate & Energy), Prof. Phoebe Koundouri (Chair of SDSN Global Climate Hub, Co-Chair of SDSN Europe), Mr. Haitham Al Beik (Director, Human-Centric Innovation and Solutions, Expo City Dubai), Mr. Jan Artem Henriksson (Executive Director, Inner Development Goals), Mr. Wes Geisenberger (Vice President, HBAR Foundation), and Ms. Laura Frances (Senior Research Associate, SDSN Global Commission for Urban SDG Finance), addressing various aspects of designing and implementing the first phase of the City Challenge.

Following the keynote speeches, the participants responded with their views on the city challenge and the discussions further continued in focused breakout groups. The workshop had breakout discussions on the following topics:

- **The prizes:** Whether one or several prizes will be granted. In case several prizes will be granted, how to categorize the cities participating to the different prizes? What will be the size of the different prizes?
- **Creating value addition for all the relevant entities including the funders of the prize:** What business model and fundraising strategy should be applied for this first phase?
- **Communication:** What communication strategy before COP 29, at COP 29 and between COP 29 and COP 30?
- **Activities and entities to enable the operationalization:** What are for cities the enabling activities and partners that are needed to operationalize the first phase, with the participation of as many cities as possible?
- **Contribution of the many people:** How to ensure the involvement and excitement of the citizens from this first phase

Facilitators of breakout groups summarized the discussion outcomes during the plenary sessions. The overall outcomes from the breakout sessions helped shape the first phase of the City Challenge and provided a clear pathway for the next steps in realizing the project.

The workshop saw a diverse mix of 47 participants, with 85% attending in person and the remaining attending virtually. The participants included cities, UN organizations, incubators and accelerators tech companies, foundations, VC firms, research centers, publishers, start-ups, and companies from the culture and creative industries. The figure one below shows the organization types of the participants.



2 Designing and Implementing the First Phase of the City Challenge

Breakout group discussions were conducted during the workshop, focusing on key components essential for designing and implementing the first phase of the City Challenge. The summary of the discussions is as follows:

2.1 The Prizes

During the discussion group participants focused on characterizing innovation prizes internally. The conversation centered around identifying innovation tracks that would be consistent across all of the global cities when they are developing their sustainability goals. Initial track ideas, such as Energy Systems & Grid Modernization, Circularity & Waste Management, Decarbonized Mobility, Resilient & Adaptive Built Environments, Water Security & Management, and Data-Driven Climate Solutions, that were shared during the keynote presentation were used as guiding topics to facilitate brainstorming, allowing for modifications and additions. Participants also deliberated on the selection and evaluation criteria for cities and entities involved in the competition, aiming to assess their responses to various innovation tracks and their future visions. Key criteria identified in the discussion included population size, density, geographic region, GDP, and developmental status.

Participants highlighted the importance of designing flexible and focused annual challenges. They emphasized considering the varied capacities and capabilities of different cities, acknowledging that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be suitable. Instead of imposing rigid objectives like solving a specific issue, they suggested setting broader key performance indicators (KPIs), allowing cities to choose the most relevant goals for their context. This approach would enable cities to pursue "low-hanging fruits" and prioritize initiatives that align with their strengths and needs. The discussion highlighted the need for a balance between specificity and flexibility, allowing cities to decide which industry sectors or projects are most achievable for them. The feedback process would play a crucial role in shaping the prizes based on cities' evolving needs and progress.

2.2 Creating Value Addition for All the Relevant Entities Including the Funders of the Prize

During the discussion, participants explored the potential of a global competition aimed at enhancing climate sustainability ambitions in cities. They highlighted that such a competition would not only accelerate progress towards ambitious sustainability targets but also create significant long-term demand for solutions from corporations, NGOs, and philanthropies. This demand would span various sectors, including energy services, grid management, and sustainable food systems, thereby attracting interest from solution providers who could identify gaps in different cities globally. The transparency of Phase One results would enable these providers to determine where their technologies would be most effective, presenting a strong value proposition for a larger prize initiative. Additionally, participants discussed the idea of hosting an annual global summit to convene competitors, benefiting cities, and interested solution providers. This summit would showcase the progress of individual cities, highlight ongoing and upcoming prizes, and foster collaboration across the innovation tracks, thereby enhancing the overall impact of the competition.

2.3 Communication

The discussion focused on developing a communication strategy before and after COP 29, aiming to build broader interest and buy-in from society. Given the limited time before COP 29, the group agreed that a large-scale campaign would be challenging. Instead, they proposed creating a messaging platform for entities to share information and engage the public. This platform would prompt users to identify their location, interests, challenges, and local leaders, facilitating the onboarding of various societal layers. The communication approach should emphasize transparency, with clear concepts and rules. At COP 29, a press conference would announce the full project, involving different stakeholders such as youth, government representatives, community leaders, and businesses.

Following this initial communication at CoP 29, the strategy would shift to top-down engagement from UNFCCC and local governments, complemented by a grassroots viral campaign to ensure broad participation. The team suggested conceptualizing "heroes" rather than traditional ambassadors to inspire community involvement, with potential participants ranging from young individuals to local leaders. While celebrity endorsements could enhance visibility, the focus would remain on genuine community engagement. The importance of transparency, accountability, and adaptability in communication was underscored, with the goal of empowering local stakeholders to contribute effectively. The team emphasized that successful communication is about fostering collaboration and flexibility rather than dictating a fixed message.

2.4 Activities and Entities to Enable the Operationalization

The discussion on activities and entities to enable operationalization focused on setting a phased timeline and action plan leading up to and beyond COP 29. The group outlined a four-stage framework: (i) preparations before COP 29, (ii) initiatives during the first year from COP 29 to COP 30, (iii) a 10-year Phase 2, and (iv) a further 10-year Phase 3. The initial phase at COP 29 aims to announce the collaboration and the intention for the initiative.

To generate interest, the communication strategy will focus on presenting the vision for transformational change through short videos of 2-3 minutes, with potential contributions from champion cities like Dubai Expo City and cities from each continent. A communication platform under the UGIH will be established. It will help to engage potential cities by asking if they have the capacity and skills to contribute and if they would be willing to participate with training and capacity-building support.

The first year (COP 29 to COP 30) will emphasize creating demand for the project by guiding cities to through templates that will identify what cities need to have in place to create the vision and create an action plan and to identify the gaps. Training will be offered to cities lacking the necessary skills or resources to complete the template. After COP 30, the competition details, including themes and relevant combinations of the thematics, will be announced, with continued efforts to inspire participation and refine the project's communication strategy.

2.5 Contribution of the Many People

The discussion focused on strategies to engage citizens in the project, emphasizing meaningful participation and creating a sense of belonging. Participants highlighted the importance of appealing to human emotions and showing how the project impacts daily life. Engagement efforts should span educational, community, corporate, and government levels, using workshops and demonstrations that offer an end-to-end human experience, providing hope and a vision of a better future.

The discussion also emphasized empowering communities by sharing resources, such as solution blueprints and guidance, allowing people to contribute and feel ownership over the initiative. Local impact

was stressed as key, with communities identifying themselves as part of the broader mission while maintaining their cultural identity. The need for incentives beyond monetary rewards was addressed, suggesting support in areas like education, legal advice, finance, or marketing to help participants realize their ideas.

Crowdfunding and crowdsourcing were noted as crucial methods to enable broader participation without imposing on local lifestyles. The roles were divided into "supporters" (offering financial, motivational, or communicative support) and "actors" (local businesses, startups, creators, and artists taking direct action). The goal is to amplify local efforts, share their progress widely, and keep the focus on humanity and cultural expression to inspire further involvement.

3 Next Steps

- Governance Structure: A draft governance framework will be prepared and circulated among participants for feedback and suggestions.
- Communication Team Formation: A dedicated communication team will be established to coordinate promotion efforts leading up to COP 29 and activities during the event.
- City Challenge at CoP 29: The activities planned for the City Challenge at COP 29 will be shared with all participants to ensure alignment and coordination.
- Operationalization Template Development: A draft template outlining activities and key entities needed for operationalization will be developed during COP 29.
- LinkedIn Group Creation: A LinkedIn group dedicated to the City Challenge will be set up to facilitate idea sharing and collaboration among stakeholders.
- Engagement with Committed Participants: The UGIH team will follow up with participants who have expressed interest in helping to onboard cities for the initiative.

Photo Gallery

