

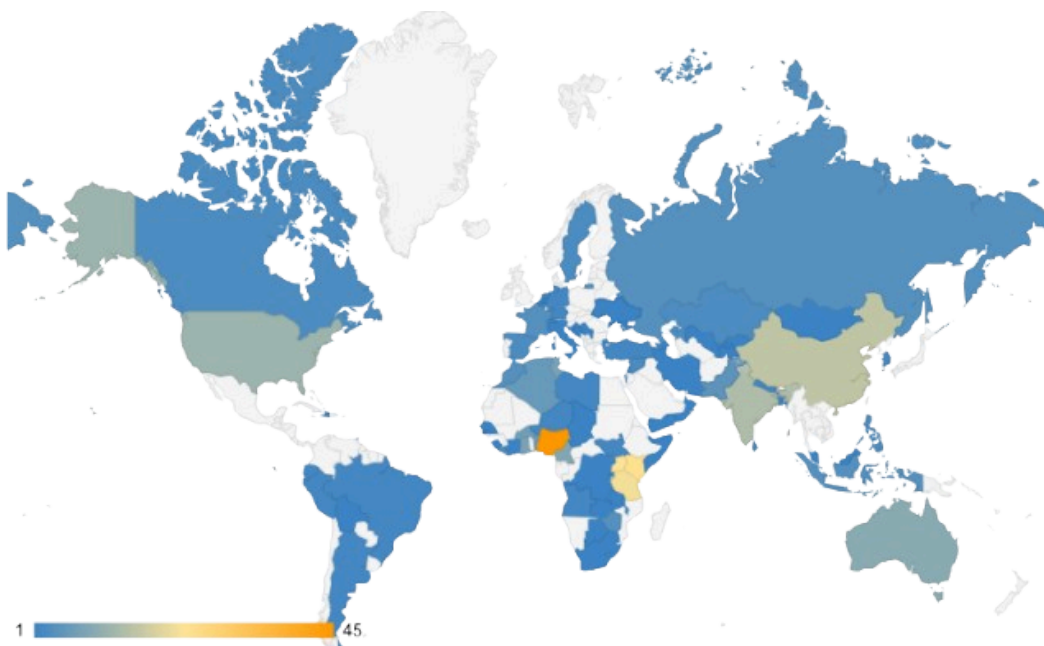
# KEY INSIGHTS

## UN STI Forum Call for Innovations 2025

The UN STI Forum Call for Innovations is a global platform that showcases successful technology implementations in challenging environments, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange among diverse stakeholders to promote innovative solutions and build capacity, particularly for low-resource settings. This year's forum received 338 applicants, representing a wide array of countries, totaling 70 unique nations, demonstrating a broad global interest in the initiative.

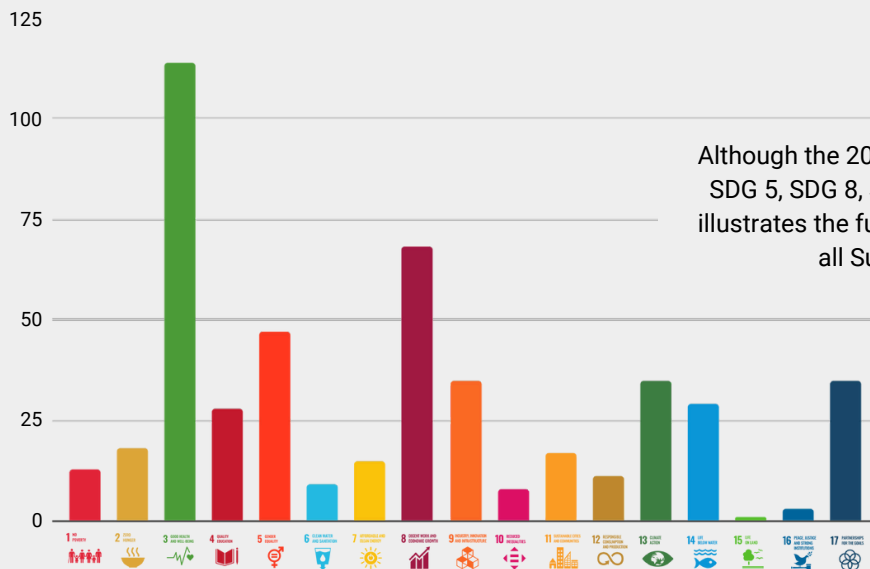
### KEY APPLICANTS INSIGHTS:

- The leading five contributing countries—Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, India, and China—together represent around 38.78% of the total innovations submitted, reflecting a notable concentration of applications from these nations.
- African nations showcase a strong presence, submitting about 66.35% of all innovations, which underscores the continent's substantial engagement.
- Youth-led initiatives make up a significant portion of the total applicants, representing nearly 44% (148 out of 338). Concurrently, women-led initiatives also play an important role, contributing over 26% (89 out of 338) of the total applications.



**GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF UN STI FORUM 2025  
APPLICANTS**

# INNOVATORS AT THE 2025 UN STI FORUM



Although the 2025 UN STI Forum theme focused on SDG 3, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 14, and SDG 17, the following graph illustrates the full breakdown of applicant alignment across all Sustainable Development Goals.

## INNOVATORS FROM 2025:

- **Peace Therapist:** AI-powered mental health platform for refugees and marginalized communities, providing culturally sensitive support.
- **RAC Training Initiative:** Formalizing South African refrigeration technicians, including women, for job security and environmental safety.
- **Global Cerah:** IoT-supported platform integrating organic waste management with alternative protein production for Southeast Asian farmers.
- **Enset Starter Culture:** Ethiopian innovation dramatically reducing Enset post-harvest loss through improved fermentation technology.
- **Laboratoria:** A social enterprise empowering Latin American women through technology and coding bootcamps to close the tech gender gap and foster economic mobility.
- **ECOBANA:** Manufactures biodegradable sanitary pads from banana fibers, addressing period poverty in East Africa by providing pads to over 2 million girls and women in Kenya, significantly reducing school absenteeism, and creating employment.
- **Alkemio:** Specializes in efficient and pure rare earth element extraction using organic acid leaching and selective adsorption technology, enabling on-site refining for streamlined logistics and closed-loop domestic supply chains.
- **Sentinel Forensics Sexual Assault Kit (SFSA Kit):** A cost-effective, culturally tailored forensic solution distributed to 40 centers in Nigeria, achieving a 95% success rate in preserving evidence to combat sexual violence and support survivors.
- **HyaPak:** Transforms invasive water hyacinth into biodegradable alternatives for single-use plastics, simultaneously tackling pollution, controlling weed proliferation, and creating green jobs.
- **Elzian:** Precision aquaponics system with IoT monitoring and AI for Sri Lankan smallholder farmers and fishing communities, maximizing resource efficiency, boosting aquaculture productivity, and improving livelihoods for over 60,000 farmers.



# 2025 ROUNDTABLE Capacity Building Discussion

Engineering for Change, the Major Group for Children and Youth, and UNDESA, with the UN 10 Member Group, hosted a roundtable at the UN STI Forum 2025 with the innovators. The discussion focused on policy and governance conditions for inclusive collaboration, responsible experimentation, and scaling social innovations, aiming to strengthen regional ecosystems and support hardware-led entrepreneurs.



## CORE THEMES IDENTIFIED

- **Challenges with Government Engagement:** Innovators face significant difficulties accessing public resources due to governmental instability (leading to cancelled grants), a perceived lack of concrete support ("empty talk"), and issues with transparency or usability of public data. Political interference and obstruction from the public sector were noted as barriers.
- **Alternative Funding Models:** Suggestions included leveraging UN-managed grants, pooling funds from large corporate foundations, and potentially bypassing traditional institutions for faster funding processes in less developed countries, alongside concerns about corporate tax evasion.
- **Data Accessibility and Usability:** While data might exist (e.g., from satellite agencies), it is often in non-digital formats or unusable, requiring responsible digitalization and efforts to overcome political reluctance towards transparency.

- **Government as a Facilitator:** Government intervention is crucial for innovators to engage effectively with large private sector entities (e.g., mining companies), especially regarding issues like environmental impact assessments where journalistic efforts might otherwise be the only recourse.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2026 CAPACITY BUILDING:

There were two key areas identified for capacity building for innovators:



### Communicating and Leveraging Impact

**Data for Innovation Scaling:** Innovators, particularly those in pure science fields, often lack essential skills in marketing, sales, business development, and team balancing, which are critical for the successful commercialization and scaling of their solutions.



### Intellectual Property and Market

**Expansion:** Innovators face significant hurdles in understanding and navigating intellectual property rights, as well as in strategically planning and executing the expansion of their solutions into new regional or international markets.



## About the Call for Innovation

The Call for Innovations, co-organized by UN DESA and Engineering for Change, serves as a global platform to spotlight practical, scalable technology solutions that address sustainable development challenges in low-resource settings. It reflects the Forum's commitment to inclusive, action-oriented collaboration that bridges the gap between innovation and implementation.

The selected innovators participated actively throughout the Forum—delivering lightning talks during thematic sessions, showcasing their solutions in designated exhibition spaces, and contributing to high-level roundtables with experts and policymakers. Their participation provided real-world, grassroots perspectives on how STI can accelerate progress on the SDGs, particularly in areas such as health, gender equality, ocean sustainability, and inclusive economic growth. Sharing key insights from this Call for Innovations ensures that the Forum captures the breadth of innovation-driven engagement and helps amplify promising solutions that can inform future policy dialogue and partnership building.

## Disclaimer

All information of innovations was provided by the innovators. The United Nations Secretariat is not responsible for the content provided by the innovators or their companies or in the respective events. The Secretariat reserves the right to remove or amend any content that is not aligned with the UN Charter or the principles and purposes of the STI Forum. For the most up-to-date information, please refer to the official STI Forum website: <https://sdgs.un.org/tfm/STIForum2025>.