



UNDP Egypt Accelerator Labs

Seeding the Future: Transforming Agriculture in Egypt's Nile Delta

Context

The Nile Delta, identified as one of the most climate-vulnerable areas globally, faces potential submersion due to climate change. This critical threat prompted UNDP Egypt's Accelerator Lab to apply strategic foresight to define futures for Egypt's agricultural sector based on Climate Smart Crops (CSCs) like Panicum, Quinoa, and Pier Millets. In the process, they engaged with a wide ecosystem of stakeholders within the sector, opened up a whole new portfolio area for the country office and demonstrated the actionability of the foresight process and its power to affect behavioral change.

Partners



The Process

Understanding the Present

1 Comprehensive Sensing Phase

Objectives:

Gather diverse perspectives on Egypt's agricultural sector to understand the status quo.

Activities:

4 field visits
17 interviews with think tanks, academia, private sector and policymakers

2 In-depth Behavioral Analysis

Understand decision-making processes and behaviors of key agricultural bodies and organizations, and famers.

8 interviews with agricultural bodies that oversaw irrigation, farmers cooperatives etc

3 Socio-Economic Analysis

Gain insights into value chain dynamics and identify those most suitable for CSC interventions

60 interviews with private sector players

Imagining the Future

4 Two-Phase Future-Thinking

Phase one
Map the signals of change, identify drivers, and build immersive scenarios for workshops with the rural stakeholders.

30 interviews with urban stakeholders

Phase two
Understand the needs, concerns, and preferred futures of the rural communities regarding CSCs.

3 Immersive workshops with rural communities using storytelling, gaming and clay modeling to envision future scenarios.

Tangible Impacts

- Demonstrated UNDP's foresight expertise to government partners which led to an additional request from the Ministry of International Affairs for UNDP's support in developing futures for private sector exports.
- Two MoUs signed on agrotourism development with Knowledge Economy Foundation and women's empowerment in agriculture with Egyptian Food Bank.
- Private sector player Tseppas, an important stakeholder throughout the exercise, expressed interest in exploring contract farming agreements for CSCs.
- Expanded UNDP portfolio to include food system and sustainable agriculture.
- Inspired rural communities to embrace the new possibilities presented through agrotourism, shifting mindsets and expanding opportunities for supplementary income.
- Established the value of the Accelerator Labs in developing, testing and validating new approaches to solve complex, multi-stakeholder problems and produce actionable outcomes..

Learnings & Advice

- Challenge the assumptions of your own team by recognizing that some of the most valuable insights can emerge from unexpected stakeholders.
- Make the scenarios immersive through engaging videos, storytelling and games to bring them to life and make them 'tangible'
- Be mindful of cultural sensitivities like different attitudes towards gender, age group or background in your workshop. Ensure the design of your workshop is inclusive and emphasize the value of the diverse perspectives of different stakeholders, creating a safe space for all to voice their opinions.
- Leverage foresight as a mechanism to assemble government partners that may not ordinarily collaborate with each other and use it as a tool to align diverse agendas.
- Leverage the power of foresight as a tool for behavioural change. Immersive, realistic and well researched scenarios can secure the buy-in and cooperation of even the most skeptical of stakeholders enabling true systems-level transformation.

Check out the full case study with an in-depth video interview with the project team here.

For more details, check out the project blog posts here.