

UNDP Call Seeks Innovative Ways to Make Communities Safer from Hidden Underwater Explosives

Global innovation challenge seeks bold, practical solutions to help crisis-affected communities recover and rebuild



New York, NY, 3 December 2025 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has launched a global innovation challenge to identify bold, practical solutions that can help crisis-affected communities recover and rebuild. Through these open calls, UNDP is seeking fresh ideas from scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs around the world – ideas that can make recovery faster, safer and more sustainable in some of the world’s most complex crises.

Partnering with UK-based innovation platform Wazoku and consultancy SeaFreight Labs, UNDP will crowdsource ideas through a series of open-innovation challenges to find simple solutions that can give communities the tools they need to restart their lives.

The [first challenge](#) focuses on detecting and mapping underwater mines and unexploded ordnance, from current and historic conflicts where the UN system has an ongoing mine action programme.

Millions of tonnes of explosive ordnance continue to endanger lives, block recovery, and damage ecosystems worldwide. Clearing rivers, lakes and coastal areas affected by conflict are one of the most complex and costly aspects of mine action. Finding new and innovative ways to identify and mark underwater explosives would help to safeguard communities while clearing activities are planned and actioned.

“Rivers and coastlines are lifelines for communities recovering from conflict, but they’re often littered with dangers beneath the surface,” said Steinar Essen, UNDP’s Global Advisor on Mine Action. “By tapping into global innovation, we can find faster, safer and more affordable ways to make these waters safe again, helping communities return and rebuild with confidence.”

UNDP has supported mine action for more than 30 years across 50 countries, helping governments and communities clear contaminated land, assist victims and reduce risk. The new initiative seeks

practical, affordable technologies capable of identifying concentrations of submerged ordnance in both saltwater and freshwater environments. Submissions are open until March 9, 2026.

The challenge will be supported by Wazoku's Innocentive global solver community, a network of over 700,000 problem-solvers that has delivered breakthroughs for partners such as the International Rescue Committee and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This marks the first collaboration between Wazoku and a United Nations agency.

"Our community has a strong track record in supporting humanitarian and development initiatives," said Simon Hill, CEO of Wazoku. "We're excited to bring that expertise to the UNDP Challenge and help translate innovative ideas into real-world impact."

The UNDP Challenge series will be supported by SeaFreight Labs, who is serving as Project Advisor following successful series with the IRC, Habitat for Humanity, and World Vision.

"The problems that UNDP is bringing to the global crowd are vitally important, highly impactful and extremely difficult," stated Harry Sangree, Founder and CEO, SeaFreight Labs. "We invite solvers from around the world to submit their solutions and to disseminate the challenge far and wide so UNDP has the best chance possible for finding a valuable and actionable answer to their request for help."

Future rounds will address youth-led mental health solutions in crisis-affected settings and community tools for real-time crisis data collection to improve aid delivery.

For details on how to participate, [visit the Challenge page](#).

To learn more about UNDP's innovation initiatives, [visit the UNDP Showcase](#) on Innocentive.