



UNLEASH Annual Impact Report

2025



Message from our Chairperson



In 2025, we focused on a simple but urgent question: what does it take for young people to move from intention to impact? At UNLEASH, we have always valued passion as a driver of change. This year reaffirmed that passion matters most when paired with the ability to act consistently, collaborate effectively, and navigate complex, real-world conditions. Across our programs, young changemakers did more than engaged with sustainability challenges – they developed the skills, confidence, and community needed to address them.

This insight shaped how we design our programs. From the UNLEASH Philippines Innovation Lab, which gathered 150 participants, to 20 localized UNLEASH Hacks around the world, 4 Facilitator Trainings, and the continued development of the UNLEASH Innovation Hub, 2025 was about strengthening the full journey of a changemaker. Not as isolated experiences, but as connected steps that support learning, experimentation, and application over time.

As a result, Alumni are applying the UNLEASH Methodology in professional and local contexts, launching initiatives,

mobilizing communities, and delivering measurable environmental and social progress. These outcomes reflect a growing capacity among young people to take ownership of the challenges they face. At the same time, the year reminded us that impact is rarely linear. We must build clearer pathways from early ideas to implementation, strengthen mentorship, and provide more accessible tools that meet changemakers where they are.

UNLEASH is sustained by a global network of partners, supporters, and 10,000 Alumni who share this mission. Together, we are creating conditions that catalyze sustained, youth-led impact. As we move into 2026 and beyond, our commitment is clear: to equip and support young people not only to participate in solving sustainability challenges, but to lead that change in their own communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Flemming Besenbacher".

Prof. Flemming Besenbacher
Chairperson of UNLEASH

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Our Impact

Our Impact to date



75 locations across
52 countries for Hacks

50K* emissions avoided or
reduced by initiatives
implemented by Alumni
tons of CO2

88%
of Alumni
Have used the UNLEASH
Methodology in work,
school, or personal projects

90%
Alumni report UNLEASH has
meaningfully influenced their journey

49705*
people impacted on average per Alumni
by their implemented initiatives

661*
jobs created by initiatives
implemented by Alumni

1054
Facilitators trained

9934
Talents

114
Hacks

8
Innovation Labs

6662*
initiatives implemented by Alumni

*Indirect impact as self-reported via 2025 Annual Impact Survey Data that does not account for all Alumni and their impact

2025: A year of impact



UNLEASH Partner Hacks

that engaged **518** changemakers,
organized by UNLEASH in
collaboration with partners



UNLEASH Philippines

Innovation Lab that engaged
150 changemakers



Innovation Hub

launched new innovation learning
resources and improved users'
experience



January - July



February - September



September



July - December



All year



UNLEASH Facilitator Training

to train **254** Facilitators to support
UNLEASH Innovation Labs and
UNLEASH Hacks



UNLEASH Community Hacks

that engaged **346** changemakers,
organized by Alumni



2

**UNLEASH
Philippines**

UNLEAS
PHILIPPINES

UNLEASH Philippines

High-level results

99%

will recommend others to join an Innovation Lab

14

Facilitators representing 8 nationalities

32

Early-stage solutions

137

Talents

96%

increased confidence to start or continue working on sustainability challenges

From September 19–25, 2025, UNLEASH hosted a regional Innovation Lab in the Philippines, selecting 150 Talents from all 18 regions of the country to co-create solutions to pressing challenges in health, food, and infrastructure.

The Innovation Lab served as the first stage of LIF Launchpad, which was a partnership with the Royal Academy of Engineering's Leaders in Innovation Fellowships (LIF) Program. Co-hosted by the University of Santo Tomas and its TOMASInno Center, the Innovation Lab built bridges between academia and locally rooted Filipino innovation.

What made UNLEASH Philippines unique was its design as a pipeline program that plugged directly into a Prototyping Program aimed at supporting young innovators to advance both new solutions developed at the Innovation Lab and existing ones.

As a result, the Innovation Lab attracted nationwide representation and diversity – both in geography and background – with Talents from across the archipelago and from disciplines spanning engineering, science, health, agriculture, and more.

While the Philippines has a vibrant innovation culture with many hackathons hosted each year, the week-long format of UNLEASH Philippines provided a rare opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the innovation process, moving beyond short sprints to deeply understanding problems and developing context-driven solutions.



Health Equity and Biomedical Innovation



Resilient Agriculture and Food Systems



Sustainable Cities and Communities Through Engineering Innovation

A week of innovation

During the week, Talents worked in teams across three Thematic Tracks: Health Equity & Biomedical Innovation, Resilient Agriculture & Food Systems, and Sustainable Cities & Communities through Engineering Innovation. The challenges they worked on were grounded in lived experiences, ranging from rural healthcare access and agricultural livelihoods and to sustainable urban systems.

The UNLEASH Innovation Methodology (outlined in the recently updated UNLEASH Activity Cards) provided Teams with guidance, and this was complemented with dedicated support from 14 trained Facilitators representing 8 nationalities. Teams progressed throughout the week from problem framing to ideating, prototyping, and pitching – resulting in 32 early-stage solutions aligned with the SDGs.

In alignment with the Royal Academy of Engineering, UNLEASH placed particular emphasis on hands-on prototyping. Talents spent time testing and refining their ideas, including a visit to the University of Santo Tomas' new Innovation Center in Santa Rosa.

To support continued development beyond the Innovation Lab, UNLEASH secured partnerships to provide makerspace access and travel stipends for Talents across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Adapting innovation in a complex context

UNLEASH Philippines underscored the importance of adaptability in innovation. During the week, two typhoons, venue closures, and flight cancellations required rapid program adjustments.

The Secretariat and participants responded quickly by reconfiguring available spaces, schedules, and workflows in real time, ensuring continuity of the innovation process.

These challenges reinforced a core UNLEASH value: that innovation rarely happens under ideal conditions. By navigating uncertainty together, the cohort demonstrated resilience, collaboration, and a problem-solving mindset essential for sustainable impact.

LIF Launchpad Prototyping Program

UNLEASH Philippines marked the first stage of LIF Launchpad. From January to March 2026, Talents continued with stage two: a Prototyping Program that combined online workshops, mentorship, and access to makerspaces across the Philippines. This phase supported teams to advance their ideas from early-stage concepts to scalable engineering-led solutions.

Solutions

UNLEASH Philippines culminated in a Solutions Festival that filled the room with optimism and energy as teams pitched to peers, partners, and judges. Seven promising teams advanced to the pitching finals, with three of them receiving special acknowledgements at the Pitching Finals & Closing Ceremony.

“UNLEASH was a transformative experience, being surrounded by passionate change makers challenged me to think beyond my usual frameworks and reaffirmed my belief in the power of youth-driven innovation. Wherever I go, I will carry these lessons to build inclusive communities and make the world a better place”

Talent

UNLEASH Philippines





MOST INNOVATIVE SOLUTION

Alalay-Ani

In the Philippines, soybean farmers – many over 40 years old – face steep labor demands during harvest and lack access to affordable machinery. Alalay-Ani introduces a practical, all-in-one mechanical reaper and binder designed for soybean production.

Combining a starter motor, precision reaping blade, and automatic bundling system, it reduces harvest time, labor costs, and post-harvest losses. Adaptable to local conditions, the innovation supports aging farmers, boosts productivity, and makes soybean farming more profitable and sustainable.



Resilient Agriculture and Food Systems

MOST IMPACT POTENTIAL

Project SAFE (Safe Alternatives for Flood Evasion)

Flooding frequently disrupts the lives and livelihoods of nurses and healthcare workers in urban areas. Project SAFE is a mobile navigation app that uses real-time data and intelligent routing to help essential workers travel safely during floods.

By integrating weather updates, traffic information, and flood mapping, it identifies accessible, flood-free routes and provides a communication hub for healthcare teams – ensuring continuity of care during crises.



Sustainable Cities
and Communities
Through Engineering
Innovation

PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

Cropsure

In Bukidnon's highlands, wholesalers lose significant amounts of perishable produce due to heat and poor ventilation during long trips to market.

Cropsure offers a retrofitting system that converts standard bongo trucks into temperature-controlled transport units using a stainless-steel frame, insulated covers, and battery-powered ventilation fans.

The result: reduced food waste, extended shelf life by up to 30%, and a practical solution to strengthen local food supply chains.



Resilient Agriculture
and Food Systems

The Finalists

Alongside the winning teams, four additional finalists presented outstanding solutions that exemplify innovation rooted in local realities.

BLIP

Many rural health centers waste diagnostic materials due to bulk expiration. BLIP introduces modular, single-use blood testing kits, reducing waste and improving inventory efficiency.

This innovation cuts costs, ensures reliability, and enhances diagnostic access in underserved communities.



PACKIT!

A digital app and smart sensor system that helps small online sellers optimize packaging use.

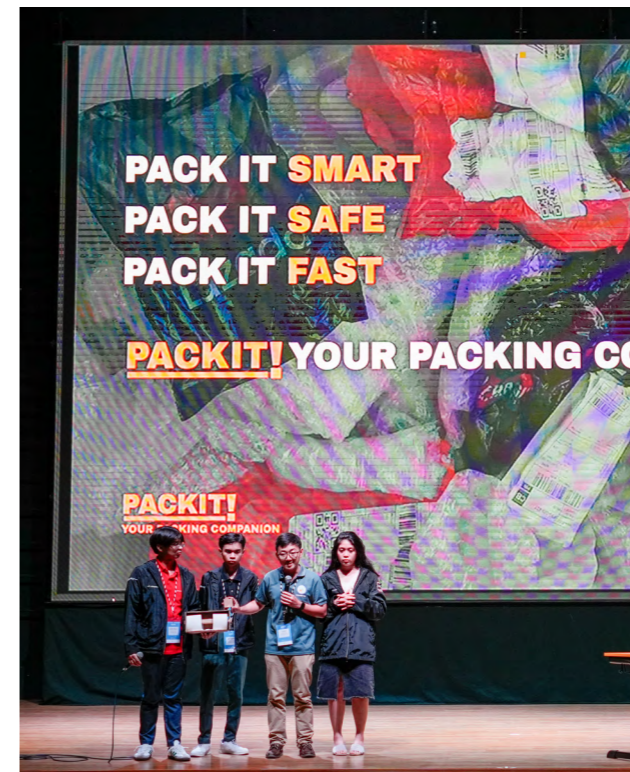
By scanning items and dispensing only the necessary amount of materials, PACKIT! minimizes waste, reduces unsustainable e-commerce practices.



ArthSense

A wearable sleeve that measures fat deposit buildup to detect early signs of cardiovascular disease in working-age adults.

Designed for rural health workers, the device enables on-the-spot screening and early intervention, strengthening local health systems and helping prevent life-threatening conditions.



Dahum sa Tubig

In Negros Oriental's disaster-prone mountain barangays, clean water becomes scarce after typhoons and landslides.

This initiative trains families to build low-cost water filtration and disinfection systems using organic materials and solar disinfection methods, enabling communities to access potable water within 48 hours after a disaster.



3



UNLEASH Prototyping Program

UNLEASH Prototyping Program

High-level results

22

early-stage ideas developed into prototyped solutions

80

Mentors

131

Talents

3

Local makerspaces engaged



In 2026, UNLEASH implemented a structured 3-month Prototyping Program designed to support Talents in moving from early-stage concepts to functional prototypes tested in controlled environments.

The program served as a critical bridge between the Innovation Lab and longer-term acceleration pathways, ensuring that promising ideas move beyond ideation into tangible experimentation and validation.

The core objective was to help teams build, test, refine, and demonstrate meaningful progress on their solutions, thereby strengthening their readiness for further development and partnership opportunities.

Program Design

The 2026 Prototyping Program was structured around a six-workshop learning cycle, intentionally designed to guide participants through at least two full rounds of rapid prototyping and testing. The workshops followed a disciplined build-test-learn progression aligned with the UNLEASH Innovation Methodology.

Each workshop combined:

- Expert presentations from practitioners and technical specialists
- Guided learning modules grounded in the UNLEASH Methodology
- Global collaboration, enabling participants to receive peer feedback across contexts

This structured format ensured that participants moved beyond theoretical exploration and into tangible experimentation. The requirement to complete two rapid prototyping cycles reinforced disciplined iteration and continuous improvement.

Complementary Support Structures

Between workshops, participants engaged with the UNLEASH Innovation Hub, which provided practical toolkits, templates, and learning resources. The Hub reinforced core concepts and allowed innovators to apply structured methods directly to their solutions.

Each team also received targeted mentorship throughout the program. Mentors supported participants to narrow their prototype scope, identify essential components, and design realistic testing approaches.

This guidance helped teams prioritize validation over complexity. The program was intentionally embedded within the local innovation ecosystem in the Philippines.

Engagement with universities, ecosystem actors, and technical experts strengthened contextual relevance and long-term viability.

Connecting innovators to local institutions and networks increased access to feedback, infrastructure, and continued support beyond the program timeline.



Key Learnings

During the Prototyping Program, we aimed to emphasize that clarity around validation and structured testing is a driver of stronger execution; and so, we introduced simple frameworks and rapid iteration cycles to shift teams from focusing on idea expansion to disciplined validation.

This resulted in clearer assumptions to test and visible improvement on prototypes. Another area we focused on was to reduce over-ambition that leads to unfocused prototypes. To help teams avoid this, we focused mentorship on how to prioritize critical components as a way of accelerating meaningful progress.

The 2026 Prototyping Program reinforced UNLEASH's commitment to innovation as a structured learning journey grounded in experimentation. By embedding disciplined iteration, mentorship, and ecosystem integration, the program strengthened the quality and maturity of early-stage solutions.

As the program evolves, continued refinement of validation tools and local partnerships will further enhance its ability to transform promising ideas into tested, impact-ready innovations.

“This program also helped me bring to life a project idea that I have been carrying for a long time. I never thought I would be able to develop it into an actual solution. Although it is still only a prototype and not yet a fully polished product, it has been very meaningful for me to see it take shape.”

Mary Anne Kristel Maicong

UNLEASH Philippines Talent



UNLEASH Innovation Hub

UNLEASH Innovation Hub

High-level results

In 2025, the UNLEASH Innovation Hub continued to strengthen its role as the digital backbone of the UNLEASH journey, ensuring that the motivation sparked during our in-person programs translates into sustained action, learning, and collaboration. Throughout the year, the Innovation Hub continued to evolve into a more structured and user-centered ecosystem.

Central to this was the revamp of the platform interface. By better incorporating the experience of the Innovation Hub's three core pillars, it now aims to reflect how UNLEASHers progress on their impact journeys.



Learn



Connect



Collaborate



180
nationalities
represented in
the community

500+
new users
in 2025

5300+
Active users

Learn

The LEARN pillar included a complete redesign of the navigation menu and user experience, making it more intuitive, accessible, and action oriented.

A key milestone within this pillar, was the finalization of the e-learning library, which offers both curated changemaker e-learning journeys (Entrepreneurs, Intrapreneurs, Change Agents, and Community Leaders), and on-demand access to 20 innovation learning modules.

These resources are available to Alumni to help deepen their capabilities across the full lifecycle of the UNLEASH Innovation Methodology – from Problem Framing to Implementation – while also building the mindset required to lead change in diverse contexts.

By making the LEARN content more accessible and modular, UNLEASHers are now able to engage with relevant tools more flexibly, reinforcing a continuous learning mindset beyond Innovation Labs and Hacks.



Connect

The CONNECT pillar gained momentum through increased emphasis on mentorship and peer-to-peer exchange. A key highlight of the year was Mindforward, a mentorship program piloted in partnership with RIVET and delivered through the Innovation Hub. This initiative brought together 15 young changemakers and 15 mentors from across the globe to co-create solutions utilizing digital tools to address youth mental health challenges.

The program demonstrated the power of combining structured workshops, disbursement of microgrants, and e-learning with human connection. Participants not only gained practical tools to develop their ideas, but also benefited from guidance, accountability, and diverse perspectives through mentorship.

This pilot reinforced the importance of mentorship as a core component of the Innovation Hub experience and laid the groundwork for scaling similar programs in the future.



Collaborate

The COLLABORATE pillar continued to support UNLEASHers who apply and localize the UNLEASH Methodology within their own contexts. Through access to toolkits, resources, and support from the Secretariat, Alumni were equipped to organize initiatives such as UNLEASH Hacks, extending the reach of UNLEASH to local communities around the world. This reflects a broader shift towards scaling our impact through community-led initiatives, where Alumni are not only participants, but also active drivers of innovation in their local ecosystems.

Alongside these developments, 2025 focused on preparing the next phase of programming within the Innovation Hub. This included the design of a Prototyping Program, developed as a follow-up to the UNLEASH Philippines Innovation Lab. The program combined online workshops, mentorship from UNLEASH Community members, and access to makerspaces across the Philippines, enabling participants to further develop and test their solutions. This marked an important step in strengthening the continuity of solutions and ideas developed during UNLEASH programs.





Key Learnings

Several key learnings emerged throughout 2025. First, clarity of user journey is critical: simplifying navigation and aligning content with clear pathways significantly improves engagement and usability.

Second, mentorship is a powerful accelerator of impact – the Mindforward Program pilot highlighted how combining tools with human support enhances both learning outcomes and motivation.

Third, flexibility in access remains essential as Alumni engage with the Innovation Hub across different geographies, time zones, and levels of connectivity.

Looking ahead, the Innovation Hub holds significant potential to further scale UNLEASH's impact. By continuing to invest in the Innovation Hub as a space where tools, mindset, and community intersect, UNLEASH is enabling young changemakers not only to develop ideas, but to sustain and scale them over time, contributing to a more sustainable and equitable world.



UNLEASH Hacks

UNLEASH Hacks

High-level results

UNLEASH Hacks are sprint-like innovation programs designed to address localized sustainability challenges – are organized by the UNLEASH Secretariat or by Alumni, to bring together young people together leverage design thinking principles to work on a challenge that they care about.

In 2025, 20 UNLEASH Hacks happened that received almost 2000 applications, and engaged more than 1000 young people as Organizers, Talents, and Facilitators.

131

Ideas to solve sustainability challenges

92

Organizers

20

Hacks

90%

Talents advanced leadership skills through their participation

837

Talents

100

Facilitators



UNLEASH Community-driven Hacks

In April 2025, UNLEASH organized a 4-part series of “Build-Your-Hack workshops” for UNLEASH Alumni and their network to learn about various elements of an UNLEASH Hack project: program design, participant mobilization, communication, execution, and reporting. Around 250 aspiring Organizers joined these workshops, resulting in 24 Organizing Teams formalizing their engagement with UNLEASH for Hacks in 2025. Organizers reported gaining new competencies in coordination, communication, and innovation programming, as well as a great sense of fulfillment in seeing months of preparation come together for a successful program.

Talents and Facilitators also reported a high degree of satisfaction from their participation. They shared about learning new ways of approaching problems, gaining a deeper understanding of the sustainability challenges that the Hacks focused on, and developing new professional and personal connections.

At the end of the program year, a total of 12 UNLEASH Hacks took place in the USA, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Afghanistan, Singapore, Kenya, Lebanon, India, Jamaica, and Finland, with themes such as reimagining management of food packaging waste, healthcare for ageing populations, and finding solutions to urban pollution.

“My biggest takeaway was seeing how enthusiasm fuels innovation. My teams started with brilliant tech solutions, and while I had to guide them back to sticking with and investigating the problem rather than reverse-engineering from solutions, their openness to being challenged was refreshing.”

Gayathri Nair

UNLEASH Hacks Facilitator





“It was a very rewarding experience, full of learning and networking opportunities. I also thoroughly enjoyed the journey and the unique UNLEASH hackathon approach.”

Maryem Gorbalmous

UNLEASH Hacks Talent

Secretariat-run UNLEASH Hacks

In addition to supporting UNLEASH Alumni to run their Hacks, UNLEASH engages with a range of partner organizations to run Hacks on relevant thematics with various expected outcomes such as seeding fresh thinking within an organization, designing youth-focused programming, or providing an engagement pipeline for specific target audiences.

UNLEASH partnered with UNDP Timbuktoo’s UniPods (University Innovation Pods) to co-create a series of UNLEASH Hacks as a mobilization pipeline to generate engagement within UniPods in Rwanda, Benin, Lesotho, Zambia, and Botswana. Focusing on themes ranging from youth mental health to smart technologies for agriculture and strengthening public healthcare through innovation, these Hacks provided an avenue for upskilling UniPod staff with new programming to engage more youth meaningfully.

Another partnership was with the National League of Cities’ Congressional Cities Conference (Washington DC, March 2025), where UNLEASH’s innovation programming was leveraged to co-design the Youth Conference experience of 200 young people. The 2-day program focused on themes co-created with their youth leaders and included civic engagement, political participation, diversity in youth spaces, and leadership.

In partnership with the Northern Council for Global Cooperation, UNLEASH gathered 60 youth from Canada and the Circumpolar North for UNLEASH Hack Canada (March 2025) in Whitehorse, Yukon. With strong Indigenous youth representation, the Hack focused on climate action, self-determination, and community wellbeing. Participants created locally grounded solutions to challenges like youth outmigration, mental health, and land and cultural connection – blending user-centered design with Indigenous worldviews to reflect the region’s evolving social and environmental realities.

UNLEASH and OpenEPI hosted a virtual Hack in July 2025, engaging 133 youth from Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia to develop data-driven solutions addressing climate adaptation, agricultural innovation, and sustainable resource management. After the Hack Talents built prototypes using the open data platform, which they pitched in an UNLEASH-led semi-final in August. The top three teams advanced to OpenEPI’s bootcamp and pitching finals in Kigali, Rwanda.

Key Learnings

The 2025 UNLEASH Hacks program benefitted from the extensive Toolkit to plan and execute UNLEASH Hacks efficiently. 2025 thus offers a picture into the potential for multiple iterations of UNLEASH Hacks in different locations and on different themes; and the capacity to reach more youth to equip them as changemakers.



UNLEASH Facilitator Training

UNLEASH Facilitator Training

High-level results

In 2025, UNLEASH delivered a series of Facilitator Trainings designed to directly support the implementation of its innovation programs around the world. Each training was tailored to the specific context and ambition of the program, from university-based innovation ecosystems to community-driven Hacks and regional Innovation Labs.

Trainings were delivered through a mix of in-person sessions and online modules, ranging from short workshop series to intensive, hands-on trainings. Across all formats, participants engaged in applied learning through real-case practice, roleplay, and peer exchange. This ensured that Facilitators were not only introduced to the UNLEASH Innovation Process but trained to actively guide teams through it.

94%

improved their ability to facilitate an innovation process

254

upskilled Facilitators

4

Trainings



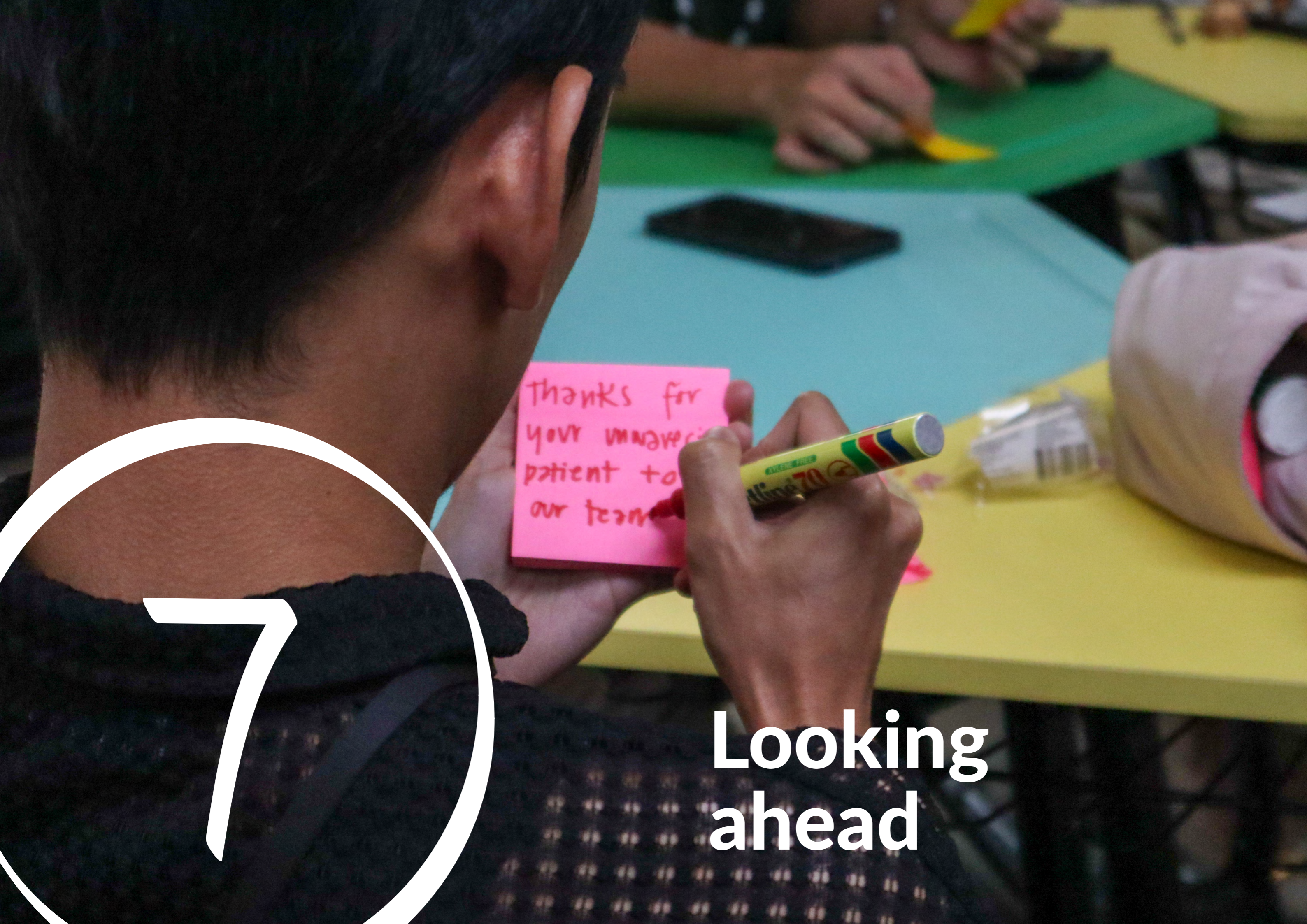


In 2025, particular emphasis was placed on strengthening facilitation of the full innovation journey. While maintaining a strong foundation in Problem Framing and Ideating, trainings expanded to focus more deeply on Prototyping and Testing. Facilitators were equipped to support teams in conducting user interviews, developing and iterating prototypes, and validating solutions in real-world contexts – ensuring that ideas progressed into actionable and tested concepts.

Each training was closely linked to a specific program. Facilitators supporting UniPod initiatives were prepared to engage university innovation staff and youth across multiple African contexts. Community-driven Hack Facilitators were trained to guide locally organized, sprint-based innovation processes. At DTU, Facilitators were embedded within a master-level engineering course, supporting student teams in applying innovation methods in technical contexts.

In the Philippines, Facilitators played a key role in guiding participants through a week-long Innovation Lab addressing challenges in health, food, and infrastructure. Facilitators turned the training experiences into real-life action by immediately supporting innovation processes ranging from intensive multi-day innovation sprints to weeks longer programs. In doing so, they played a central role in bringing the UNLEASH Methodology to life by guiding teams, maintaining structure, and enabling collaborative problem-solving across contexts.

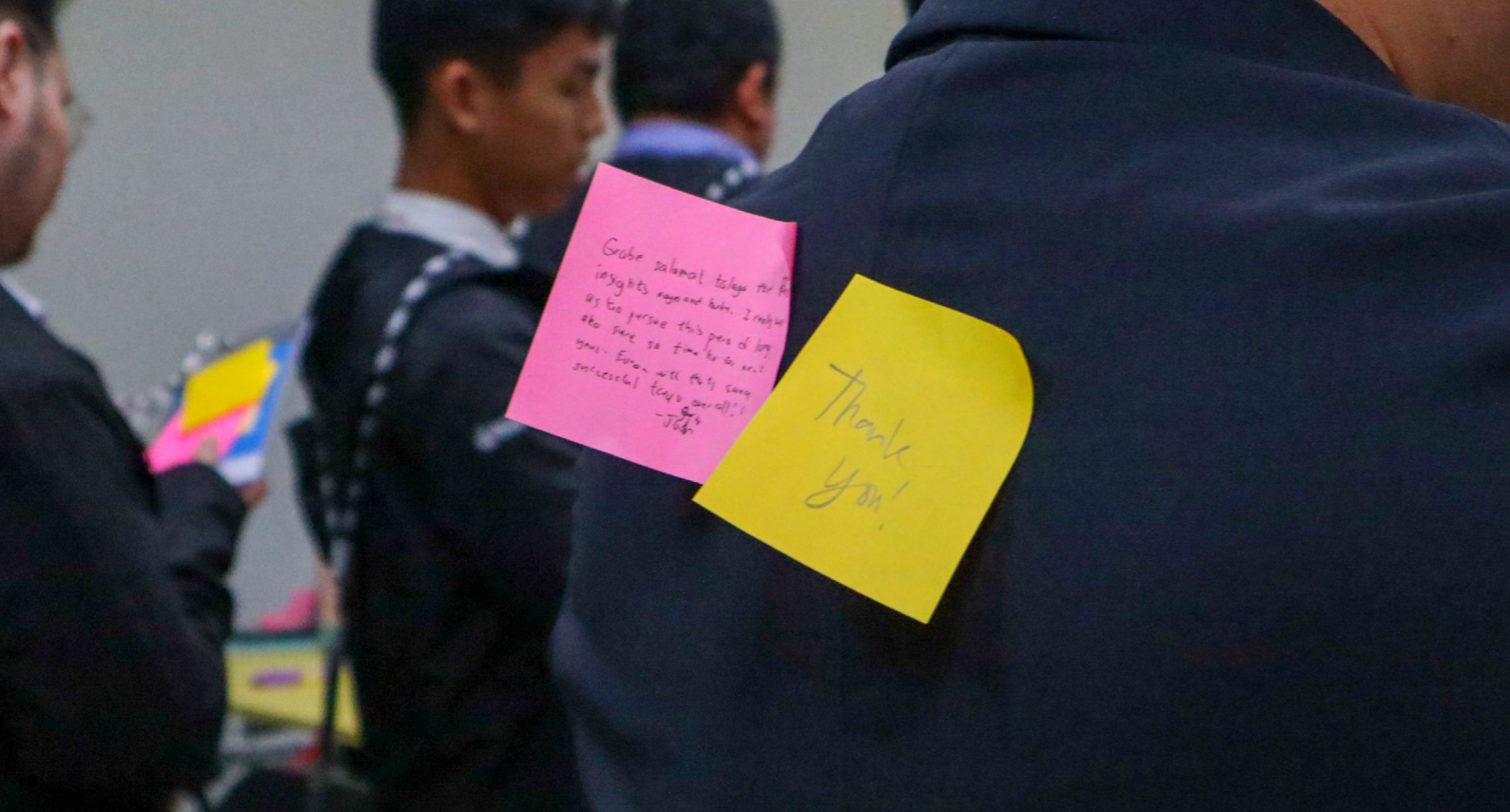
Through this approach, the UNLEASH Facilitator Training continues to serve both as a development pathway for the UNLEASH community and as a critical enabler of program delivery so that teams are effectively supported to move from challenges to tested solutions.



Thanks for
your unwavering
patient to
meet our team



Looking
ahead



In the coming year, we will continue to scale our impact by mobilizing and equipping more changemakers through our core programming of UNLEASH Innovation Labs, UNLEASH Hacks, and the Innovation Hub. By expanding access to youth across sectors, geographies, and lived experiences, we aim to strengthen the quality, relevance, and impact potential of the solutions developed.

At the same time, we are focused on strengthening the connections between our programs to create a more seamless and sustained changemaker journey. Innovation Labs and Hacks will continue to serve as entry points where participants build skills, ideas, and community, while the Innovation Hub provides the ongoing support, mentorship, and ecosystem connections needed to advance those ideas over time.

By linking these experiences more intentionally, we aim to move beyond one-off engagements and build a continuous pipeline where changemakers can develop, collaborate, and contribute to real-world impact across sectors and regions.

To realize this mission, we will expand and strengthen our partnerships. We invite companies, foundations, and local actors to join us in co-creating programming, supporting talent, and connecting solutions to real-world opportunities.

These partnerships are essential to unlocking the full potential of youth-driven innovation and enabling UNLEASH to reach more communities, deepen impact, and ensure that the ideas and energy of young changemakers are translated into meaningful, lasting change.

Thank you to our partners

Core partners



UNLEASH Phillippines



UNLEASH Hacks



UNLEASH Innovation Hub





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