



Fund for Innovation
and Transformation

Fonds pour l'innovation
et la transformation

The FIT Program

Looking Back on Innovations




Achieving a Meaningful Impact

Adaptive, creative, collaborative – and especially innovative. Together, Canadian small and medium-sized organizations (SMOs) and partners in the Global South demonstrated these traits and more while testing solutions to advance gender equality and empower women and girls.

Supported by funding, coaching and capacity-building from the Fund for Innovation and Transformation (FIT), more than 50 innovation teams tested solutions in a short 6 to 15-month timeframe. The results and learnings are as insightful as they are remarkable. The FIT program has created spaces and opportunities for innovators to share their insights and learnings with one another now and into the future.

From Africa to Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, innovation testing directly impacted nearly 75,000 people over the last 4 years in 33 countries. Advancing gender equality was central to each initiative. FIT is guided by Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

 [Click here to view video.](#)



Piloting a Program

At the same time as FIT was hiring and establishing a new team, it was quickly developing its program. Launching in May 2019 and adapting over time, FIT supported SMOs from across Canada.

Participation was open to civil society organizations, post-secondary institutions, the private sector and social enterprises. There was plenty of excitement and curiosity about how FIT would take shape.

And FIT accomplished a lot – launching and contracting 5 intakes 3 years!

“ We’d been given funding to develop and pilot this initiative as a small organization as well. As we developed, we didn’t really know what would happen. We didn’t know if we’d get a lot of applicants, we didn’t know if people would understand the purpose of this fund, and we certainly didn’t know what kinds of ideas people were percolating on...but over time, and the caliber of the work that we’ve been seeing...it’s just been amazing.”

–Christina MacIsaac, Director, The Fund for Innovation and Transformation

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Pivoting & Adapting


Some essential ingredients to the FIT program are open communication, flexibility and continuous learning. Adjusting and adapting at every step supported the FIT team and SMOs alike.

Early in the program the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic brought both challenges and opportunities. The FIT team gave flexibility and responsiveness priority, in order to support SMOs navigating unique challenges in their projects and regions.

Many testing projects were compelled to either adapt approaches or pause testing. Collaboration with local partners had to shift, and new ways were found to connect remotely. Flexible approaches to testing meant activities could continue and innovative solutions could be responsive during a global pandemic.

For example, Lestari Sustainable Development Consultants re-evaluated the ethics of international travel during COVID-19. They decided to cancel travel plans for their Canadian experts, and instead increase their local partner's involvement in leading project activities.

Also, due to travel and gathering restrictions in Jordan put in place because of COVID-19, Lessons Learned Simulations and Training worked on adapting their simulation workshops for humanitarian workers to be delivered completely online and managed remotely.

 [Click here to view video.](#)




Learning Together

A FIT-facilitated Community of Practice (CoP) is a critical part of the program. This networking hub supported knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities for SMOs and partners.

As more organizations were selected for funding, events became more frequent. Connections are made in all types of ways – from informal coffee chats to ask questions and share information, to more formal presentations to peers on testing challenges, discoveries and results. Innovators also liaise outside of the FIT CoP events where they had similarities in their work or regions.

“ The local team members were able to attend webinars on Gender Equality training. It was helpful to learn about FIT’s partners’ innovations and hear about their implementation of gender strategy. The team also accessed the online resources on the FIT website. These resources were valuable particularly the case studies which provided a wealth of information.”

–Participant

 [Click here to view video.](#)




Monitoring Innovations

At different phases of innovation testing, the FIT team had the opportunity to connect in for monitoring evaluation and learning (MEL) discussions and visits.

While some visits were possible in person, COVID-19 travel restrictions encouraged FIT to adapt to virtual visits. Virtual meetings proved to be helpful, maximizing outreach to SMOs and local partners and were an effective way to learn more about testing work. Many SMOs and their partners in the Global South found creative ways to engage project participants in these updates and sharing sessions.

Available as a support system to innovators, the FIT team followed up with one-on-one guidance throughout each project's timeframe. These check-ins were meant to build relationships and share learnings in an informal way.

 [Click here to view video.](#)



Sharing Findings

Sharing results and learnings is important public engagement for the sector and others interested in innovation work and international assistance.

In the latter part of the program FIT had the opportunity to offer knowledge-sharing grants to SMOs so they and partners could share their findings and results from their innovation testing. It's exciting to see stories and activities unfold with audiences across Canada, the Global South, and beyond.

FIT-funded innovators have also been featured speakers for public-facing FIT-led sessions. Their lessons learned and lived experiences are valuable in highlighting the impact of their innovative solutions. As well, SMOs and partners are seizing opportunities to present at conferences, publish articles in social innovation and medical publications, launch impact videos, host public awareness events among other activities.

 [Click here to view video.](#)



What Innovators Say About FIT


“ We will always be grateful for the FIT opportunity, as the learning from the testing has been impactful on many levels and has deeply assisted the strategic direction of our work.”

“ Being encouraged to report not just the success, but also the learning, has really helped to build our capacity.”

“ Thank you again for your support and partnership through this process. It was truly one of the more productive, forward-thinking and collaborative funding relationships we've had, especially for an innovation-focused project!”

“ Thank you FIT for embodying and reflecting the program's ethos, we appreciate the opportunity to learn from our activities and then have the flexibility to pivot and make adjustments where necessary.”

“ Thank you for all your support through this wonderful project. The support from FIT has allowed us to gather a lot of very important data, and to provide a more robust and complete program for the testing. We are very grateful to have had this opportunity.”

 [Click here to view video.](#)

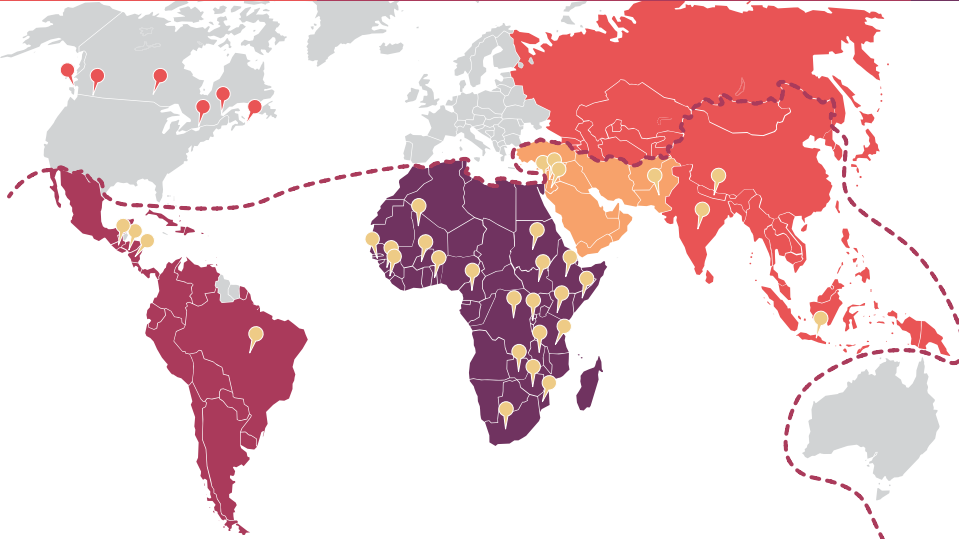


About FIT

5 intakes
in 3 years

Testing projects between
6-15 months

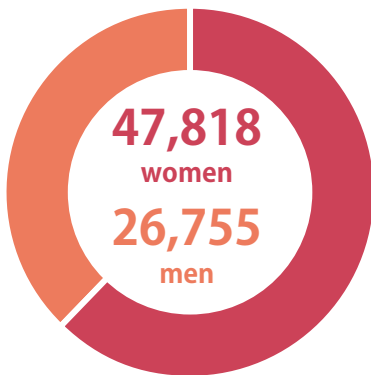
Funding between
\$150-\$250 K



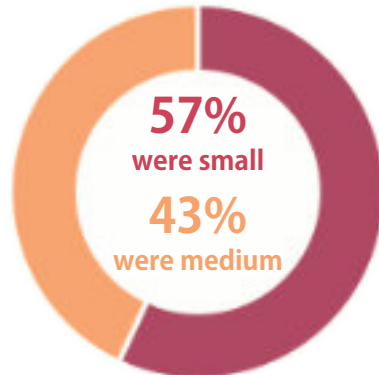
Testing in:

- Africa (67%)
- Latin America (17%)
- Asia (11%)
- Middle East (5%)

33
Testing
countries



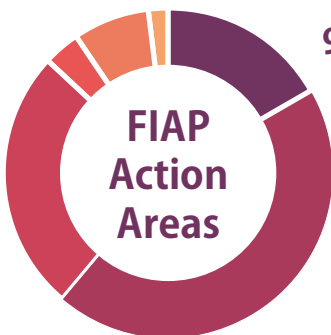
74,573
Total direct participants



54
Canadian SMOs supported

\$11M+
Funding

Of the 54 SMOs supported,
there were 52 completed projects:



- 9: Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls
- 23: Human Dignity
- 14: Growth that works for everyone
- 2: Environment and Climate Action
- 3: Inclusive Governance
- 1: Peace and Security

69%
of funds
were used in the
Global South



Resources

Learn About FIT Projects



[Impact Stories](#)



[Innovation Results](#)

Discover SMO Learnings



[COVID-19 Adaptations: Learnings from FIT SMOs](#)



[Localization - An Example From a Short Testing Project](#)



[The Impact of a Holistic 3-Pronged Approach](#)

Find Ways to Strengthen Capacity



[FIT Rapid Gender Scan for the Social Innovation Space](#)



[FIT Gender Equality Strategy for the Social Innovation Space](#)



[Fishbone Diagram](#)



[Stakeholder Analysis](#)



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About FIT

The Fund for Innovation and transformation (FIT) is a national pilot program of the Inter-Council Network of Provincial and Regional Councils (ICN) made possible through funding from Global Affairs Canada and administered by the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC). FIT supports Canadian small and medium sized organizations (SMOs) with funding for short-term testing projects and creates space for building knowledge, collective learning and knowledge-sharing.