

## CALL FOR PARTNERS

# Empowering Southern researchers and evidence professionals through an AI-enabled social learning platform

## The challenge

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Climate crisis, technological transitions, pandemic diseases and the changing nature of work are all affecting different countries and communities in different ways. The world needs new forms of knowledge, produced in new ways: knowledge that is relevant, responds to needs, and is embedded in local research systems.

But producing, accessing and curating knowledge that can serve society and policy making is far from easy.

It can be challenging to identify the existing knowledge base, to identify the right questions with which to build on this knowledge, and to identify the best methods and approaches that will allow us to go from problem to solutions.

It is often difficult for researchers and users to find the best ways to work together, so that research responds to real needs and so that knowledge and evidence are accessible and effectively communicated to those who need it – whether in policy or practice.

These challenges are often acute when resources are limited and access to training and support is scarce.

- Knowledge produced in the North dominates in search results, and in the papers and reports that can be easily accessed online. Northern expertise is often more visible and sought out more often by decision makers – Southern and Northern – as a result.
- Limited digitisation of research reports and data makes it difficult for users to access and build on relevant existing work in their field, and to combine insights and data from across disciplines and countries.
- Southern researchers, knowledge producers and users of knowledge often struggle to access support, skills-development, advice or to connect with peers across countries and across disciplinary boundaries.
- The global nature of these challenges, the urgency with which knowledge needs to be brought to bear, and limited investment in global research, means that we need to find ways to meet these needs more economically and at scale.

## The possibility of technology

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Digital technologies have provided new ways to build, share and use evidence, and new ways to connect individuals and communities together.

Open data and digital communications tools are already changing research and knowledge production and offering new ways to get knowledge into the hands of users.

A year of pandemic-induced restrictions has shown where technology can help us overcome the barriers of distance to enable collaboration across professions and across regions. But it has also highlighted the additional barriers that technology can pose to accessibility and equity, and the problems that technology alone cannot solve.

We hear regularly that machine learning and artificial intelligence will change the way we live and work. What do they mean for knowledge systems, and for redressing global inequities in knowledge?

- Can we leverage these technologies better to enable Southern knowledge systems?
- Can machine learning and AI take us further?
- Can we use these technologies to connect creators and users of evidence more effectively and to provide tools for new knowledge communities?

- Can we use them to make existing knowledge and insights more visible and discoverable, and to communicate it more effectively?
- Can we use these technologies to break down the silos between disciplines and communities, to connect knowledge produced in different ways, so that we can bring the most useful knowledge to bear on the most pressing, intractable problems?

## Call for workshop proposals

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INASP believes there is an opportunity to leverage new technologies in service of Southern knowledge systems, and we seek partners to work with us to identify possibilities and to test and build new tools.

Using our own reserves, we are offering five small grants of approximately \$3000 (£2,100) to enable groups to organise and host a series of discovery workshops to explore these ideas further. Workshops can be face-to-face (where Covid restrictions allow) or online, or blend face-to-face and online components. They can include 'live' events, or a combination of live and asynchronous sessions.

We seek proposals from groups which:

- bring together knowledge creators (researchers) and knowledge users
- are multidisciplinary (crossing academic disciplines) and transdisciplinary (crossing professions)
- bring together individuals from more than one organisation

Groups should devise a method that will enable them, in one or more workshops, or combining 'live' and asynchronous sessions, to:

- identify and rank the most pressing challenges that producers and users of evidence face in producing better knowledge
- identify which of those could be served by technology
- generate ideas for how technology might address those problems

Groups can choose to concentrate on a specific thematic area (e.g. marine conservation or agriculture or social policy) or on a geography (e.g. knowledge use in Uganda or Indonesia) or knowledge related to an issue that cuts across thematic areas (e.g. youth, education and employability).

We seek proposals from Africa, Asia and Latin America. We hope to offer up to five grants. To ensure good global coverage, we intend to fund a maximum of two grants from any region.

INASP can provide advice and support to workshop convenors, such as advice on facilitation methods/approaches.

The grant can be used to cover the costs of face-to-face or online workshops (or combinations of the two). It can be used to cover the time of facilitators and organisers as well as direct expenses incurred. INASP cannot cover sitting fees or payments to participants for attendance, but for travel costs, or data/airtime costs can be covered for virtual events, or other direct expenses incurred can be included.

## Eligibility to apply

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We regret that, due to banking regulations which prevent INASP from making financial transfers to accounts in the following jurisdictions, we are currently unable to accept applications from countries on the list below:

Afghanistan	Eritrea	Sierra Leone
Armenia	Guinea	Somalia
Belarus	Iran	South Sudan
Congo, Democratic Republic of	Iraq	Sudan
Cote d'Ivoire	Islamic Republic of Korea	Syrian Arab Republic (Syria)
Cuba	Lebanon	Ukraine/Crimea
Democratic People's Republic of (North Korea)	Liberia	Zimbabwe
	Libya	
	Myanmar (formerly Burma)	

## How to respond

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Please send a proposal of 1-2 pages (no more) outlining:

1. **How your workshop will seek to answer the questions outlined above** (what facilitation methods and workshop tools will you use?)
2. **Who you propose to bring together to do that** (i.e. what expertise and roles will your group cover?)
3. **How you propose to structure and facilitate your workshop(s)** and which collaborative methods or tools you propose to use (synchronous or asynchronous) to answer the questions
4. **Your experience of convening similar learning and discovery processes** (and links to any reports or other outputs that might be useful)
5. **A budget** setting out how you will spend the grant.
6. **Whether you would need any further support from INASP to run the workshop** (e.g. advice on design/methods or facilitation support).
7. **When you expect to run your workshop(s) and report back** (i.e. a proposed schedule and timings for your workshop and when you hope to report back)

**Deadline:** 09.00 BST (08.00 GMT), Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July

**Submission to:** [slp@inasp.info](mailto:slp@inasp.info)

**Further questions:** [jharle@inasp.info](mailto:jharle@inasp.info)

## About INASP

INASP is an experienced, capacity development organisation, with a base in Oxford but a network of partners and associates across the world. We have 30 years' experience of working with universities, research institutes, national science academies, government agencies and parliaments, across Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Our vision is of a development process where decisions are informed by high quality and relevant evidence. We place particular emphasis on equity: we ask whose knowledge counts, and whose voices are included and excluded. We promote equity by actively addressing the needs of both men and women across all our work and addressing issues of power within the research and knowledge system.

Working with government departments, parliaments and other public bodies we work to improve the use of knowledge in policy making. Over the last 15 years we have supported hundreds of civil servants, senior officials and parliamentary staff in to access, understand, and communicate evidence throughout the policymaking process, and to adapt their institutional processes, policies and behaviours to use evidence more effectively. Our approach is founded on contemporary learning theories and practices of adult- and social learning.

**Read more about our work in our 2020-2025 strategy:** *Towards an equitable knowledge ecosystem*  
<https://www.inasp.info/strategy>

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