

TECH4DEV



© pexels.com/Yuri Meesen(left), Aamir(middle), Santiago Manuel de la Colina (right)

Improving lives in low-resource settings through context-driven innovation

Tech4Dev – A Programme Turning Local Needs into Lasting Solutions

Communities in low- and middle-income countries face complex challenges—from health inequities to climate shocks—that neither NGOs nor science can solve alone. Tech4Dev, a programme by the Swiss Development Agency for Cooperation and EPFL, bridges this gap by offering targeted grants and a practical method that turns field needs into actionable solutions in the near future. By connecting NGOs, researchers, and local stakeholders, it helps create innovations that truly fit local realities. Since 2019, 17 projects across 15 countries have delivered adapted solutions in health, energy, climate resilience, and social development. ***Created with communities. Enabled by science.***

The Challenge

The Missing Link Between Needs and Impact

Across low- and middle-income countries, critical needs are well identified, and promising innovations already exist. Yet too often, they fail to meet. Field-driven challenges do not access the right scientific expertise, while high-potential research struggles to translate into real-world impact. As a result, resources are fragmented, innovations remain underused, and many initiatives fail to deliver sustainable, locally anchored solutions. The core issue is not a lack of ideas or commitment, but the absence of a structured pathway that connects needs, innovation, and implementation – limiting both impact and the return on philanthropic investment.

Our Solution

A Grant Programme Guiding Innovation Between Local Communities, NGOs and Researchers

Tech4Dev is a joint initiative of EPFL and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, designed to turn real-world development needs into tangible impact. The programme provides targeted grants that connect NGOs facing concrete field challenges with EPFL research laboratories capable of developing appropriate solutions.

Beyond funding, Tech4Dev offers a structured methodology and hands-on coaching that guides teams from problem definition to field-ready solutions. Projects are co-developed with local stakeholders (communities, authorities, policymakers, and researchers) and supported through successive grant phases, with a clear ambition to achieve measurable impact in the short to medium term. By aligning scientific excellence with operational realities, Tech4Dev helps promising innovations move beyond prototypes and deliver solutions that work where they are needed most.



© iStock

Our Methodology

Tech4Dev selects initiatives through a careful, structured approach. We identify high-potential innovations that address pressing development challenges and foster collaborations between NGOs and research labs to leverage complementary strengths. Every project is grounded in human-centered design: solutions are developed with and for local communities, ensuring they are relevant, adopted, and sustainable. Teams receive coaching to empower stakeholders to innovate together, while we emphasize local ownership and long-term sustainability so that the most promising solutions can endure and scale.



Concrete Reuse project - Ukraine
© EPFL/Corentin Fivet



Aforestation project - Mauritania
© EPFL/Paolo Perona



Climate Disaster Reduction project - Madagascar - © Medair



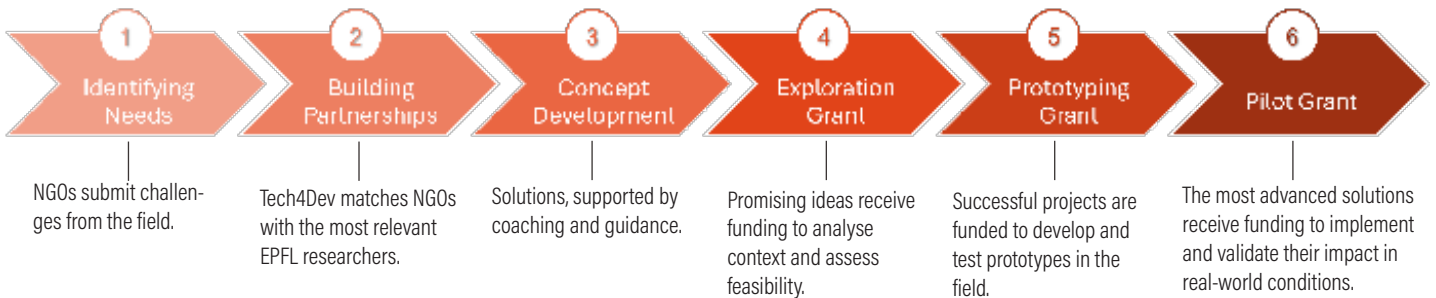
EPFL ALICE Lab Laboratory for Spatial Design - © EPFL

Our Achievements To Date

Since its launch, Tech4Dev has supported 17 projects co-developed with NGOs and local stakeholders across Cameroon, Kenya, South Sudan, Mozambique, Bangladesh, Colombia, Nepal, Ukraine, Zanzibar, Mauritania, among other countries.

- 17 partnerships created
- 15 LMICs involved
- 16 EPFL laboratories involved
- 14 NGOs, 7 local Universities and 6 local entities (Local Authorities, Government, and Private Companies)

How The Programme Works



Call for Philanthropic Support – Multiply Your Impact

We invite donors to partner with Tech4Dev, a programme that bridges world-class research with urgent development needs. Your support helps deliver breakthrough technologies in **health**, **climate resilience**, and **social development**, strengthens partnerships with local implementers, and builds a pipeline of scalable innovations that bring measurable impact to low- and middle-income countries.

EssentialTech Track Record

Based at EPFL (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne), the EssentialTech Centre harnesses innovation to drive sustainable development, support humanitarian action and foster peace, prioritizing extremely vulnerable contexts.

Through a unique methodology and our partnerships with several renowned partners, we have already transferred various solutions to our local stakeholders.

You can read more about the **tech transfer success stories** here:



SmartPPE
For Ebola & more:
MSF (use), SFTech (production)



Agilis
Light, economical prosthetic limbs: ICRC use



HelloMask
Transparent medical face mask



Pristem
Universal diagnostic x-ray machine

Contact & Information

EPFL EssentialTech Centre, +41 21 693 60 68, essentialtech@epfl.ch, www.essentialtech.ch

Nathalie Morandini-Siegrist, Head of Sustainable Development Division, +41 21 693 90 48, nathalie.morandini@epfl.ch

Dr. Tiphaine Detoudeville, Programme Manager, +41 21 693 19 08, tiphaine.detoudeville@epfl.ch

