



**Project full name:**  
Core Support to Ifakara  
Innovation Hub

**Priority:**  
Improving Youth  
Livelihoods

**Phase I:**  
2025 - 2028

**SDC contribution:**  
CHF 650'000

**Implementing partner:**  
Ifakara Innovation Hub (IIH)

**Main Partners:**

- Fondation Botnar
- Ifakara Cluster members
- Tanzania Medicines and Medical Devices Authority (TMDA)
- Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH)
- Innovation Office University of Basel
- EPFL EssentialTech-Center
- AfriLabs Network
- Villgro Africa
- Robotech

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## Project Overview

Rural areas in Tanzania face a range of challenges that hinder sustainable development, making locally driven and context-specific solutions essential.

The national development vision and policies recognise innovation as a key driver in tackling persistent health, environmental, and socioeconomic issues. Realising this potential requires coordinated collaborative initiatives and long-term investment to strengthen local capacity in health, science, and technology.

Innovation hubs based in rural areas can play a transformative role in finding and scaling solutions by (i) accelerating the development of value chains; (ii) offering accessible financing options for youth and women entrepreneurs; (iii) educating local businesspeople on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and fund management; (iv) supporting the creation of locally made technologies for various sectors; and (v) catalysing the design and production of medical devices and other health solutions to improve well-being and livelihoods.

Established in 2019 with support from Switzerland and Fondation Botnar, the Ifakara Innovation Hub (IIH) is the first of its kind in rural Tanzania. It brings together scientists, prototype developers, start-up entrepreneurs, and local users to co-create innovative, homegrown solutions for community health and economic development.

Swiss support to the IIH Strategic Plan 2023 – 2028 as an independent institution prioritises institutional development, resource mobilisation, support to local innovators, and generating evidence for policy influence. By empowering rural innovators, IIH is helping shape a more self-reliant and resilient future for Tanzania - starting at the grassroots.

## Approach

### **Supporting Innovators and Entrepreneurs:**

IIH helps turn ideas into impactful, market-ready products and services. Support includes:

- Entrepreneur-in-Residence programmes where Tanzanian innovators are hosted in a Swiss institution
- Advisory services and proof-of-concept incubation
- Assistance with product development and commercialisation focused on health and rural livelihoods

### **Building Institutional Strength and Financial Sustainability:**

IIH aims to grow into a self-sustaining, independent organisation by strengthening governance, management systems, and revenue models.

### **Growing the Innovation Ecosystem:**

IIH works with government, private sector, research institutions, and other innovation hubs to shape a supportive environment for innovation. Activities include ecosystem research, policy advocacy, and community engagement. It also hosts bootcamps and trainings to apply human-centred design, build business skills, and select startups for incubation.

## Overall Goal

To contribute to national development goals by strengthening the local innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. Young rural innovators, entrepreneurs, and researchers are supported to transform creative health and livelihoods ideas into market impact-making products and services
2. Internal systems, institutional development capacity and sustainability of IIH are strengthened
3. The innovation ecosystem in Tanzania is supported to flourish through policy influence and knowledge sharing

## Beneficiaries

- Local and international innovators, researchers, and end-users
- Research and academic institutions public and private, local and international
- Policy makers such as ministries of health, education, and finance
- Private companies and makerspaces
- Investors