



UNITED NATIONS  
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

# The UNIDO Approach to Cluster Development

KEY PRINCIPLES AND PROJECT EXPERIENCES



Technical Paper

DEPARTMENT OF DIGITALIZATION, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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Key Principles and Project Experiences

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**TECHNICAL PAPER**

Department of  
Digitalization, Technology and Innovation

Vienna, Austria  
2020



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## Acknowledgements

This document was prepared by the Department of Digitalization, Technology and Innovation of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), under the supervision and technical inputs of Mr. Fabio Russo, UNIDO Senior Industrial Development Officer, and by Ms. Manuela Eyvazo, UNIDO Expert on Value Chain and Cluster

Development and Ms. Clara Mayer Kaibitsch, International Expert on Cluster Development, Monitoring and Evaluation. The authors wish to acknowledge the valuable comments provided by Ms. Ebe Muschiali, Ms. Nuria Ackermann and Mr. Nima Bahramalian.



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# Content



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**Cluster Development  
for Inclusive Economic Growth**



**The potential of cluster development resides not just in its capacity to stimulate high rates of growth, but also in the conducive environment it provides for the promotion of broad-based and inclusive forms of development.**

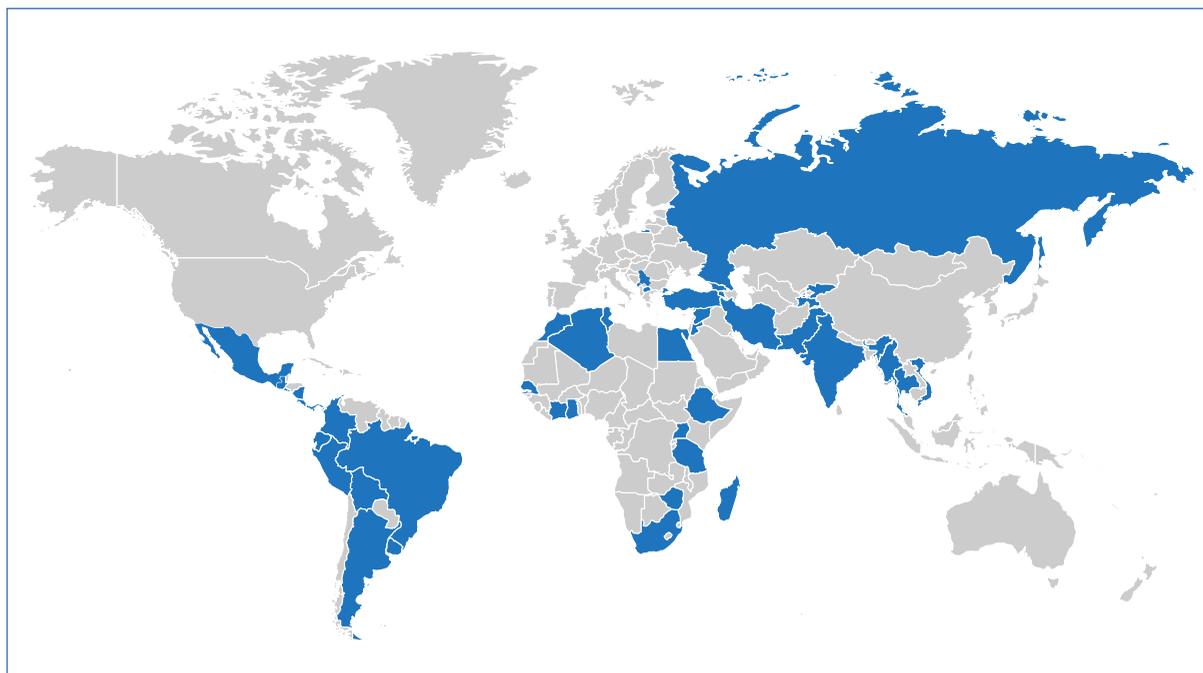
The underlying concern of UNIDO’s cluster development approach is the promotion of private sector based inclusive growth, defined as a pattern of economic growth that creates equitable opportunities and benefits for every section of society.

The potential of cluster development resides not just in its capacity to stimulate high rates of growth, but also in the conducive environment it provides for the promotion of broad-based and inclusive forms of development. This is partly because clusters constitute socio-economic systems where the population of enterprises often overlaps

with the communities living and working within a specific area or territory.

Cluster-based entrepreneurs and workers often share a similar social, cultural and political background and practice reciprocity and self-help. This tends to lend itself to growth patterns that are likely to be more inclusive than in most other economic contexts.

Over the past 30 years, UNIDO has been involved in the implementation of cluster and network development projects in several countries around the globe.



Based on lessons learned from theory and practice, UNIDO cluster initiatives provide technical assistance designed to foster the undertaking of joint actions among firms and support institutions.

The rationale behind this approach rests in that joint actions allow cluster stakeholders to overcome limitations and reap opportunities that are beyond their individual reach.

Bottlenecks that constrain the growth of small-scale business are thereby removed, triggering performance improvements under economic, social and environmental aspects. A performing private sector will turn into an engine of growth in the local economy, thus generating benefits and opportunities for participation for a wide range of economic actors.

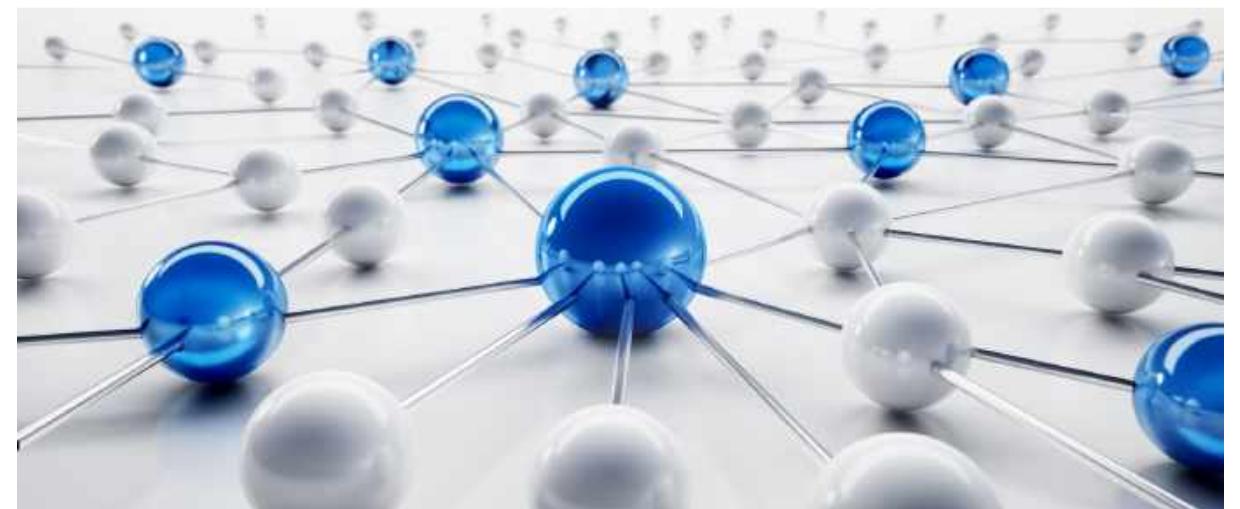
UNIDO follows an approach to cluster development aimed at addressing the root causes of cluster

stagnation and help unleash their growth potential. Support to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate cluster development initiatives is provided to local institutions in countries and regions where clusters have been selected for support.

The focus lies on initiatives that encourage enterprises and institutions in these clusters to undertake joint actions that could ultimately yield benefits to the cluster as a whole and the communities in which they are embedded.

Getting there requires a strategic approach. UNIDO has developed a step by step methodology to assist cluster stakeholders throughout the complete cycle of cluster development initiatives which is presented in what follows.

For further information on the methodology, please refer to [www.clustersfordevelopment.org](http://www.clustersfordevelopment.org)



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## Cluster Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



**UNIDO's approach to cluster development contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in various ways.**

UNIDO helps cluster entrepreneurs to overcome barriers to growth by increasing their collective efficiency and helping them to access new markets, thereby promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth (SDG 8). Cluster Development encourages cluster firms to develop new products and improve production processes. It thus contributes to innovation and ensures inclusive and sustainable industrial development (SDG 9).

In many cluster projects, UNIDO works together with support institutions to develop educational programs that directly contribute to improving the quality and / or marketability of cluster products. Cluster initiatives can thus also have a positive

impact on improving education in project countries (SDG 4).

In cluster initiatives, UNIDO often works with micro enterprises in peripheral areas and marginalized populations, in particular young people and women. Supporting them will hence have a positive impact on reducing poverty (SDG 1) and enhancing gender equality (SDG 5). By promoting the development of agro-food, tourism and creative industries, which are often concentrated in peripheral regions, the Integrated Cluster Approach contributes to reducing regional inequalities within national borders (SDG 10). Better communication between stakeholders of the three sectors together with a collaborative



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decision making and governance structure fosters regional development not at the expense of but by preserving natural and cultural heritage, through raising awareness about the importance

of biodiversity sustainable utilization of resources for valorization of territorial assets (SDG 15).



Introducing a gender perspective within cluster development programmes is a necessary element to enhance gender equality (SDG 5) and thus contribute to ensuring inclusive and sustainable industrial development.