



# UnLtd India - Project Report

Scaling up UnLtd India's Incubation Program effectively to ensure quality delivery of incubation services to outstation investees

Lauren Koenig | Donnas Ojok | Anja Rangette | Tracy Wilichowski



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# 1 - Introduction

A successful start-up requires access to a wide range of resources such as capital, infrastructure, networks and expertise. Not all entrepreneurs possess the full range of these resources and, as a result, face significant constraints in starting a business and developing it sustainably. This is a challenge for social entrepreneurs working at the Bottom of the Pyramid (BOP).

Business incubators aim to address this obstacle by providing essential resources like mentorship, funding, infrastructure and networks. UnLtd India, a Mumbai-based incubator, works with aspiring entrepreneurs serving the BOP (Appendix 1). Its incubation program is built around an extensive one-on-one coaching system, which advises early stage entrepreneurs from ideation to growth. The aim of the program is to build the entrepreneur's capabilities, enabling them to launch high

impact and sustainable businesses with no dependency on UnLtd India after exiting the program. Since 2007, UnLtd India has primarily focused on supporting investees inside of Mumbai; however, it has recently expanded its incubation program to individuals in other areas of Maharashtra.

The objective of this report is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of UnLtd India's current business model and provide recommendations for how quality incubation can be scaled to other parts of Maharashtra. This report finds that, contrary to the mentorship literature, formal mentorship – one-on-one coaching – is more effective than informal mentorship – peer networks. As a result, the expansion of the investee pool must be accompanied by a more accountable, formalized coaching structure in order to maintain the benefits of coaching to outstation

investees. This report also finds that the perceived value of incubation services depends not only on the investee's distance from the hub, but on a number of other factors such as business experience, educational background and stage of incubation. These findings suggest that there are weaknesses in UnLtd India's current incubation program, which have the potential to become more significant under conditions of scaling. Therefore, recommendations are focused on improving the foundations of the program to provide better service to all investees.

The report begins by introducing the conceptual framework, which includes a literature review of business incubators in emerging markets, a theoretical analysis of barriers to social entrepreneurship as well as a synthesis of literature on non-financial support mechanisms of incubation. This provides a framework to analyze UnLtd India's business model, including its value proposition and customer group. This research provides the foundation to support our methodological

framework and findings. The methodology section outlines the purpose of using semi-structured qualitative interviews and thematic analysis. The analysis of these themes then provides the basis for the recommendations.

# 2 - CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



## Overview

The conceptual framework examines business incubators operating in the developing world. It provides an analysis of informal and formal mentorship mechanisms and analyzes UnLtd India's model within this broader theoretical context.

## 2 - CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. Business Incubation

Early-stage entrepreneurs require funds, infrastructure, networks and expertise to successfully set up a business. The lack of any of these resources is a significant hindrance to the realization of even a well-designed business plan. Incubators provide these resources and are central players in the social enterprise scene both in Western and non-Western contexts (Vij, 2013). Although incubators seek to fill this resource gap, the effectiveness of incubation models varies (Voisey, et al. 2006). This mixed effect is attributed to incubators not providing a comprehensive range of services that address the entrepreneur's individual needs (infoDev, 2002).

Incubators in developing countries face additional barriers to providing quality services. One key problem is that non-Western incubators often adopt a Western model

without first considering local culture and resources (Mubarak AL-Mubarak & Busler, 2014). This creates a model that is disconnected from the target community and often results in their exclusion (Adkins, 2001; Obaji, et al., 2015). Based on these experiences, incubators such as ENSPIRE in Nigeria and Angels Hub in Uganda involve locals by researching community-specific dynamics before opening a new incubator (for a brief list of non-Western incubators, see Appendix 2).

Similarly, UnLtd India mitigates these constraints, as it is one of the only incubators in India that engages with entrepreneurs from rural, low income backgrounds. Unlike other incubators, which only provide support to an urban and upper middle class customer segment (Koshy, 2010), UnLtd India is able to engage with a range of individuals by adapting its model to local contexts.



## 2.2. Business Incubation: UnLtd India

Early stage entrepreneurs are constrained in establishing a business for a variety of reasons; however, the root cause is usually attributed to a lack of economic or human capital. Max Weber (1922) and Pierre Bourdieu (1973) understood poverty as lack of human and economic capital that arises from social exclusion and opportunity-hoarding based on class, inter-generational life chances and varying opportunities to succeed. They saw the poor as victims, trapped in a system that dictates their fate. This conception of poverty is particularly applicable to the Indian context as Indian society is highly stratified based on class, caste, religion and language. These factors influence one's life opportunities and determine the parameters for social mobility (Bourdieu, 1973). Bourdieu suggests the most appropriate intervention requires an "implied social transformation" that provides low income individuals improved access to education and services (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977: 204-205).

UnLtd India acknowledges and draws upon this by targeting people who are lacking the knowledge and context to successfully start a social enterprise. It has identified three different segment groups based on education level, network and contextual knowledge (Figure 1; Dalberg, 2012). UnLtd India recognizes there are two gaps that exist as a result of social exclusion: knowledge of business and knowledge of context. Entrepreneurs from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to be less familiar with the BOP, whereas those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds possess greater contextual knowledge but lack the skills to properly implement their ideas. UnLtd India mitigates this discrepancy by offering services that provide investees with the tools to succeed, including business advice, access to capital and relevant contacts within broader and local networks. This provides formerly excluded entrepreneurs with the ability to become producers in society.

FIGURE 1



Aneel Karnani (2009) understands the poor as individualized producers that lack the productive features, education, skills, loans and assets to succeed. However, unlike Bourdieu and Weber, Karnani places less emphasis on how social structures impact the poor and highlights that they succeed when given the appropriate tools. Investing in human capital by providing skills-training and capacity building is how UnLtd India creates producers and enhances social mobility within Indian society.

### 2.3. Informal and Formal Mentorship

UnLtd India provides support through both formal and informal mechanisms of mentorship. Mentorship is a relationship in which an individual with more experience guides an individual with less experience (Kram, 1985). This relationship is reciprocal in nature, creating a psychological contract between the mentor and mentee; however, it is also asymmetric, where the mentor is often expected to give more than the mentee (Haggard & Turban, 2012; Eby & Lockwood, 2005).

Formal mentorship, such as UnLtd India's coaching, is "structured and has a series of formal processes designed to create effective mentorship relationships" (Murray & Owen, 1991: 5). Informal mentorship, on the other hand, is unstructured and has no visible formal processes (Schandua, 1998). UnLtd India's peer learning sessions are informal mechanisms for investee's to gain advice and insights from their colleagues. Informal mentorship is considered to be more valuable than formal mentorship; however, formal mentorship is more effective than no mentorship system at all (Allen, et al., 2006).

As UnLtd India scales, it is important to gauge how distance will impact the quality of mentorship programming. If outstation investees are not provided with the same experience as those in Mumbai, they may interpret a break in their psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989). This can lead to a dysfunctional and unproductive mentorship relationship, with serious consequences. Therefore, it is important for UnLtd India to

understand the implications that distance may have on their mentorship model before scaling.

Kram (1985) argues that dyadic structures underpin a strong mentorship program. This framework is comprised of two elements: meaningfulness and frequency of interaction (Kram, 1985). Festinger, et al (1950) assert that the proximity of a mentor to a mentee is associated with the development of strong psychological ties. Thus, when there is a large geographical distance between them it can be difficult to develop meaningful relationships. Eby, et al. (2008) suggest that in order to overcome this, mentors and mentees should be paired in close proximity. Allen, et al. (2006) dispute this, finding no correlation between quality of mentorship and proximity. They do note, however, that there is a moderate correlation between proximity and frequency of interaction, indicating that those paired close together tend to interact more frequently. They suggest that, "perhaps mentors and protégés who are not geographically close recognize the potential difficulty of such a relationship and

work hard to make their time together more meaningful” (Allen, et al. 2006: 575).

The impact scaling will have on the value of incubation for investees depends on how distance affects the mentoring relationship in the specific case of UnLtd India. The next section uses data from interviews with investees and employees of UnLtd India to investigate the extent to which the conceptual framework applies to the case of UnLtd India, where it diverges, and what drives this divergence.

# 3 - METHODOLOGY



## Overview

Semi-structured, qualitative interviews were conducted to derive themes from. These themes were extracted using thematic coding and analyzed to draw recommendations.

## 3 - METHODOLOGY

Interviews with UnLtd India employees and investees impart the foundation to explore the themes discussed in the conceptual framework. The main questions guiding the interview process were, firstly, what quality of incubation means for UnLtd India and its investees and, secondly, how distance from the Hub affects the experience of incubation.

A key challenge of the interview process was the lack of a quantifiable definition for quality incubation. UnLtd India defines successful incubation in terms of personal growth, which it currently does not have an impact measurement tool for. Therefore, a qualitative interview format was used to develop an understanding of investees' experiences, values and motivations (Gaskell & Bauer, 2000). Thus, quality of incubation is defined by the perceived value interviewees derive from the incubation program.

Fourteen interviews were conducted between 25 and 30 March 2015 using a semi-structured format (Appendix 3). The flexibility of this format allowed respondents to expand on topics they felt were important while also guiding the interviewer (Seale, 2006; Byrne, 2006). The interview guides (Appendix 4-7) were created through an examination of literature and supplemented by interviews with non-Western incubators (Appendix 8).

The two central limitations of the interview methodology are small sample size and opportunity sampling. Informal discussions with Mumbai investees and a non-participant observation of two in-house sessions mitigated the small Mumbai sample size. The use of a gatekeeper is a more significant limitation, as it may have introduced a selection bias. In addition, not all relevant groups were included, in particular, non-English speakers and non-urban, outstation investees. This bias was

partially mitigated by gathering information on the progress and development of these investee groups through employees. For those respondents in the sample, consent forms with an anonymity clause were provided prior to the interview to encourage honest and comprehensive responses (Appendix 9; Ali & Kelly, 2006).

The interview data was then analyzed using thematic coding (Appendix 10). Through careful reading and re-reading of interview

transcripts, patterns relevant to the research question were identified and organized into themes (Daly, et al., 1997; Rice & Ezzy, 1999). A definition of quality incubation was extrapolated from patterns produced across the three respondent groups, which was done via data-driven, deductive coding (Attridge-Stirling, 2001). A comparison of themes between interview groups revealed shared and diverging experiences of incubation.





# 4 - INTERVIEW ANALYSIS



## Overview

Interview responses are grouped into four major categories: interpersonal relationships, value of time, target group and informal resources. These form the organizational themes of the thematic coding.

## 4 - INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

### 4.1. Interpersonal Relationships

Both Mumbai and outstation investees described the relationship with their coach as central to the value derived from the incubation program, while peer communication was only of limited value. Hence, investees' experiences diverged from those suggested by the mentorship literature, which argues that informal mechanisms are more effective than formal mechanisms (Allen, et al., 2006). This divergence is partially due to the limited extent of the informal mentorship system, compared with a thoroughly structured and revised formal mentorship system. Several investees stated that they perceived networking opportunities during peer learning and workshop sessions as insufficient. Many, especially outstation investees, expressed an unawareness of peers located in their vicinity. For example, one outstation investee states, "I was surprised to hear that there are six investees in Pune, I

thought ECF and I were the only two. So clearly we need to meet." This is representative of a general desire to increase networking opportunities. Expanding the current informal mentorship system may enhance its value as perceived by investees in the future. Therefore, the divergence from the literature is not an indicator that UnLtd India's investees have systematically different experiences, but rather, it highlights the current imbalance in sophistication of the formal and informal mentorship elements.

Quality of coaching is a result of the relationship between the investee and the coach. Both outstation and Mumbai investees rated the quality of coaching to be high when they had a strong relationship with their coach, whereas a weak relationship produced high levels of discontent. As one investee states, "it depends [on the relationship], sometimes you get good chemistry with someone and other times you don't." Coaches shared this

experience. Both investees and coaches described a lack of proactiveness from either party as one of the most severe strains on the coaching relationship.

Distance from the Hub played only a secondary role in determining the quality of coaching. When the relationship between coach and investee was perceived as strong, quality of coaching was high, irrespective of investee location. This corresponds with Allen's, et al. (2006) argument that meaningful mentee-mentor relationships can mitigate the distance effect. However, in the context of a weak coaching relationship, distance exacerbated negative experiences. The primary reason for this is the reduction of face-to-face contact due to distance. Coaches highlighted that investees differ in their preferred mode of communication. Mumbai investees have frequent exposure to their coach at the Hub, regardless of the strengths or weaknesses of the interpersonal relationship with the coach. This guarantees that investees are engaged and provided with advice. When working with

outstation investees, coaches do not have the option to meet investees personally, narrowing down the set of communication tools at their disposal. They state that outstation investees capitalize on using other forms of communication, and that this is usually sufficient to guarantee a meaningful connection. However, for those investees with a preference for face-to-face contact, being outstation puts them at a disadvantage. This is in line with Eby, et al., (2008) who find that the proximity of a mentee to the mentor can influence the meaningfulness of the relationship.

## 4.2. Value of Time

Both Mumbai and outstation investees expressed that the content and structure of workshops and peer-learning sessions could be improved, and that, in their current form, the sessions were an ineffective use of time. For example, investees described that questions were often left unanswered due to insufficient time allocated to Q&A per session. Furthermore, participants consisted of investees from all incubation stages, which meant that sessions

were not tailored to the specific needs of the investee. In particular, those with more extensive business knowledge or those at a higher incubation level expressed dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of the sessions. One investee reflects on this by saying, “I have attended quite a few [workshops], and afterwards, I felt it would be much more effective if they were needs-based [...]. The workshops are very generic [...] that is their limitation.”

Discontent had a negative effect on the attendance of sessions. Due to investees’ other responsibilities and time constraints, as well as the financial burden of travel for outstation investees, they were less likely to attend sessions that were not mandatory. This is highlighted by one outstation investee’s comments: “sometimes I have thought it is not worth it to travel all that way for a two hour session from Pune to Mumbai.”

These findings can be contextualized using psychological contract theory (Rousseau,

1989). Investees enter the incubation program expecting to derive a certain amount of value from the workshop and peer learning sessions, which creates a psychological contract between them and UnLtd India. When investees find that UnLtd India does not fulfill their expectations, they perceive this contract to be compromised and become disengaged. This effect is heightened by distance. Due to higher costs of travel, outstation investees are less likely to attend the sessions than Mumbai investees once the contract has been breached.

### 4.3. Target Group

As entrepreneurs of recent start-ups with limited staff capacity, management of time and finances is a key issue for all investees. This is exacerbated by unforeseen delays or incidents that influence the development of the business, which entrepreneurs need to respond flexibly to. Therefore, investees highly value the responsiveness of the incubation program. One outstation investee describes this experience as “the best part of UnLtd India, that they give you

a lot of flexibility - they understand the contexts, situations and everything.” Other investees compared their experience with UnLtd India favorably to previous engagements with other organizations, which they found to be more rigid. Among UnLtd India’s incubation services, coaching, milestone setting and session attendance were perceived as most flexible, while the session format was criticized for being unresponsive.

Outstation investees have a greater degree of flexibility compared to Mumbai investees. Despite this, they still perceived the inflexible elements of the incubation program as a significant strain on their time and finances. For instance, several investees explained that they could only justify the expenditure of traveling from Pune to Mumbai if they had other meetings on the same day. Often, this was not possible because UnLtd India’s sessions were scheduled on short notice. Outstation investees who experienced this explicitly stated feeling disadvantaged in comparison to Mumbai investees, as

highlighted by this investee’s response: “I discuss my problems with my coworkers here. If I was in Mumbai, I would just discuss it with UnLtd India [...] so I think that is something I miss out on.” Investees reported that the higher opportunity costs often result in low attendance of workshop and peer learning sessions. This may be problematic, as L2 investees who attended sessions initially considered to be of limited value reported that they drew on the content at later stages of the incubation process. This suggests that outstation investees miss out on opportunities to expand their business knowledge, resulting in overall reduced value of incubation.

Hindi-speaking investees, particularly those in rural areas, are at an even greater disadvantage, as UnLtd India provides the majority of its services in English. This group was not included in the interview process due to time and logistical constraints; however, their coach revealed “we all try to make a conscious effort to speak in Hindi but obviously you keep forgetting, and also there are moments when

you cannot really express a complex entrepreneurial concept in Hindi.” This language barrier prevents UnLtd India from providing the full value of its incubation services to its Hindi-speaking investees.

#### 4.4. Informal Resources

Investees derived value from visits to the Hub, as it gave them the opportunity to informally consult staff members. Alternative perspectives provided additional context and depth that enhanced problem-solving capabilities. The high value investees place on this informal mentorship mechanism is not only evidenced by the frequent use of this opportunity, but also by their willingness to extend similar informal discussion opportunities to their peers.

All respondent groups suggested that there is potential to leverage investee resources to a greater extent. For instance, investees are willing to act as mentors to less experienced peers. Similarly, employees reveal that alumni

have previously offered to impart their expertise on current investees. In addition to leveraging peer networks, several outstation investees offered to share resources, such as accommodation and office space, with UnLtd India staff. The willingness of current and past investees to support UnLtd India can be explained by the norm of reciprocity, which states that people will want to repay favorable acts (Blau, 1964).

#### 4.5. Discussion

The analysis revealed that distance is only one of several factors that determine the quality of incubation, among which the caliber of the coach, in particular, has a significant effect on the value investees derive from the program. Other factors include the individual's previous experience and skillset as well their stage in the incubation process.

Another central finding of this report is a general dissatisfaction with the content and structure of peer learning sessions and

workshops. In some cases, outstation investees not only had to rearrange timetables but use their seed funding to pay for trips to Mumbai. After traveling for up to eight hours, some expressed dissatisfaction with the sessions, citing irrelevant information and a misuse of time. Investees did find, however, that they derived great value from unexpected run-ins with other coaches when at the office. The pooled expertise of UnLtd India's staff gave investees access to alternative opinions and skillsets that they had not been exposed to before. Given the proximity to the Hub, Mumbai investees are more likely to use this opportunity. Similarly, they have built up a stronger peer network than their outstation peers, who were often unaware of the UnLtd India network present in their area and sought to connect with their peers in a more informal way.

Given the variance in experiences of outstation and Mumbai investees, research must continue to examine the mechanisms through which incubation is most effective. The

diversity of the investee pool will likely increase as UnLtd India moves its program for L1 and L2 investees from Mumbai and Pune to other areas of Maharashtra. This requires recommendations to be based on maintaining a uniform level of quality to all investees. The following recommendations are designed to respond to the weaknesses of the current business model, and specifically highlight where these will be exacerbated by the scaling process. Implementation of the recommendations will lead to a more uniform standard of incubation across all of UnLtd India's customer groups.





# 5 - RECOMMENDATIONS



## Overview

Recommendations are based on the current speed of scaling and highlight weaknesses of the business model that are exacerbated by scaling processes. A general overview is included as well as suggestions for practical implementation.

## 5.1. RECOMMENDATION: COACHING

Sufficient coaching time for each investee ensures engagement. Proactive, confident investees, who have a good interpersonal relationship with their coach, require less time intensive support service; however, the coaching structure and time management should allow accommodation for less confident and less proactive investees. Lack of proactiveness is also a challenge of the scaling process, as it will raise the number of investees who will be situated outside of the stimulating environment of the Hub, resulting in less face-to-face interaction with their coach. Coaches will also require sufficient time to acquire an in-depth understanding of the project, as they become more unfamiliar with the business context as investees from different locations enter the program. Furthermore,

both investees and coaches need to be able to assess whether a coaching performance is satisfactory. This requires a shared, comparable standard of coaching across all UnLtd India staff. As new staff and coaches join the UnLtd India team during the scaling process, it will become more critical to monitor the performance of the team.

### ANALYSIS RECAP

Investees identified UnLtd India's customizable, demand-led coaching services as the most valuable element of the business model. Main points of criticism were: limited experience/skills of some coaches and lack of proactive engagement with investees. In-depth knowledge of the business was identified as important to a successful coaching relationship.

# PRACTICAL APPLICATION

## 1 - Coaching Commitment

Description:	Define coaching commitment per investee by a boundary – a minimum and a maximum – instead of a minimum
Outcome:	More flexibility to accommodate less proactive investees; room for increased research into the business context
Resource intensity:	Medium

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## 2 - Documentation

Description:	Design guidelines for detailed documentation of coaching (for investee and the coach)
Outcome:	Accountability of junior coaches, transition between coaches
Resource intensity:	Medium

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## 3 - Training for Coaches

Description:	Use Knowledge Team not only for disseminating UnLtd India's experience to other incubators, but also to junior coaches as a best practice guide
Outcome:	Leveraging resources; quality of coaching
Resource intensity:	Medium

## 5.2. RECOMMENDATION: SESSIONS

Session attendance has an opportunity cost and the higher the cost, the more attendance will decrease. Therefore, sessions should be structured as time-efficiently as possible and respond to investees' wishes for specific problem-solving value. This standard will become even more important in the scaling process, as investees have to expend more resources, in terms of both finances and time, to attend sessions. The effect of distance on the attendance rates of workshops was identified by both coaches and investees within the limited geographical spread of the current cohort. In addition, announcements of workshop dates need to be set in advance so that those investees with more complicated travel arrangements have an equal chance of attending. Providing multiple access points to the sessions' content will ensure that every investee with an interest in the content has the opportunity to engage with it. In particular, the

ability to access resources throughout the entirety of the program raises its value. This is viewed in light of investees' experiences, that the value of workshops is related to whether the content corresponds to challenges experienced at that time.

### ANALYSIS RECAP

On-site sessions fall short of the in-built flexibility of other modules, which constrains investees from full participation in the program. The value derived from the content of the sessions was higher when sessions were interactive.

# PRACTICAL APPLICATION

## 1 - Workshop Schedules

Description:	Publish workshop schedules ahead of time, including an overview of content
Outcome:	Increased investee understanding of session value; room to accommodate session dates
Resource intensity:	Medium

## 2 - Stacking Sessions

Description:	Stack sessions to minimize multiple journeys into Mumbai for outstation investees
Outcome:	Decreased opportunity cost of attendance
Resource intensity:	Low

## 3 - Alternative Dates

Description:	Set alternative dates for sessions
Outcome:	Increased attendance; increased fit between business challenges and session content
Resource intensity:	High

## 4 - Recordings

Description:	Session recordings (basic skills)
Outcome:	Increased fit between business challenges and session content; focus on interactive sessions
Resource intensity:	High (partnerships can minimize costs)

## 5.3. RECOMMENDATION: FORMALIZATION

Investees derive value from drawing on the pooled expertise of UnLtd India's staff. Currently, this feedback mechanism is informal and open to those investees who proactively seek it out. By formalizing this mechanism, the disadvantage outstation investees have vis-a-vis Mumbai investees can be mitigated and the expertise in UnLtd India can be leveraged to its maximum potential. In addition, the accountability of the incubation program can be significantly boosted by opening formalized channels to staff members. This preserves the committed one-on-one relationship between investee and coach, while at the same time addressing investees' concerns about the impact of inconsistent coaching standards. Accountability mechanisms become more important in the scaling process, as session

attendance decreases and the coach becomes the only point of contact for investees.

### ANALYSIS RECAP

Mumbai investees value the opportunity to informally visit the Hub to discuss their challenges. Currently, outstation investees do not have the same opportunity to engage with a variety of opinions and to draw on the pooled resources of UnLtd India staff.

# PRACTICAL APPLICATION

## 1 - Office Hours

Description:	Set up regular office hours per staff member, based on their expertise; online or via phone
Outcome:	Increased accountability, leveraging staff expertise
Resource intensity:	Medium

## 5.4. RECOMMENDATION: PEER NETWORK

Strengthening peer connections gives investees access to feedback from individuals working in the same or related sectors as them, and provides motivational support from investees at higher stages of the incubation program. They also provide a frame of comparison for the quality investees receive from the incubation program. This will enable them to use it to its full potential. In turn, increased peer discussion can help investees formulate their challenges more precisely, which will benefit the coaching relationship and allow staff to focus their resources. Lastly, a successful peer network increases investees' identification with UnLtd India.

### ANALYSIS RECAP

The peer network in its current form is weak and networking opportunities outside of sessions are limited. Investees express a desire for more contact points to their peers. Both current investees and alumni are willing to take on more formalized roles in the network.



# PRACTICAL APPLICATION

## 1 - Peer Pairing

Description:	Pair L2/L3/alumni with L1 in a peer support relationship
Outcome:	Motivational support, increased accountability of the coaching service, increased understanding of best practices, increased understanding of the potential of UnLtd India's service via a frame of comparison
Resource intensity:	Low

## 2 - Online Platform

Description:	Set up an online platform for peers to discuss and arrange meetings or resource-sharing
Outcome:	Motivational support, increased awareness of investee network, resource-sharing opportunities, increased accountability of the incubation service, increased identification with UnLtd India
Resource intensity:	High (partnerships can minimize costs)

## 5.5. RECOMMENDATION: TARGET GROUP

UnLtd India is one of the few incubators targeting social entrepreneurs at ideation, and one of few avenues for aspiring entrepreneurs from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, currently this group is at a disadvantage both in the application process and as a service recipient, as both require basic proficiency in English, foundational IT skills and a rudimentary understanding of business terminology. Moreover, investees revealed that they had heard of UnLtd India through word of mouth or by attending conferences. This indicates that successful applicants are often qualified individuals with existing networks to the social entrepreneurship field. In turn, it demonstrates a disadvantage for community-based entrepreneurs. This disadvantage has to be mitigated if UnLtd India aims to maintain the current share of community-based investees in

the program, as scaling without substantially increased marketing will decrease the odds of reaching this group. However, restructuring the incubation process to accommodate inexperienced, non-English speaking entrepreneurs will put a considerable strain on resources. If the expenditure required for such an adjustment exceeds UnLtd India's resources, the organization should alternatively work out a long-term strategy for profiling its target group.

### ANALYSIS RECAP

Employees revealed that investees without proficiency in English (mostly Community Connect investees) do not derive the full incubation value.

# PRACTICAL APPLICATION

## 1 - Hindi Incubation Program

Description:	Introduce a holistic Hindi version of the incubation program, including Hindi version of coaching, application forms, and materials
Outcome:	Increased inclusiveness; increased value for community-based entrepreneurs, often
Resource intensity:	High

## 2 - Application Guides

Description:	Terminology guides for application forms
Outcome:	Increased inclusiveness of inexperienced applicants
Resource intensity:	Medium



# 6 - REFERENCES/APPENDIX



## References

### Appendices:

- |     |                                  |
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| 1   | UnLtd India Business Model       |
| 2   | Incubator Chart                  |
| 3   | Overview: UnLtd India Interviews |
| 4-7 | Interview Guides                 |
| 8   | Overview: Incubator Interviews   |
| 9   | Consent Form                     |
| 10  | Thematic Coding                  |

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# APPENDIX 1: UnLtd India Business Model

## Key Partners

*Network of experts* working in a) service delivery as speakers, consultants, mentors, advisers for specific areas/sectors, and b) organizational support in the selection process

*Affiliate network* of entrepreneurs and alumni

*Investees as peers* contribute to pooling of knowledge, problem-solving, point of comparison in both formal and informal settings as well as networking and social events; peer learning sessions are actively encouraged and facilitated by UnLtd India

Donors provide the majority of UnLtd India's funds; four key donors include: GIZ, Edmond D. Rothschild Foundations, Rockefeller Foundation, KPMG

Strategic partners include UnLtd India family and a variety of value-driven organization in India, including virtual platforms; the partner network facilitates networking, provides credibility, forms a pool for experts, etc.

## Cost Structure

Value driven business model – cost dimensions:

1. Fixed costs (salaries, rents, utilities)
2. Variable costs (number of investees impacts sessions needed, paid expert sessions, etc.)
3. Economies of scale (no cost reduction for average investee funding comes from external sources; marginal costs for investees are low compared to fixed overhead costs)
4. Economies of scope (no cost reduction for average services when most services are offered/delivered; cost of marginal services produce is relatively high as it potentially requires additional staff, infrastructure, development and evaluation structures)

## Revenue Streams

Donors and external funding

## Key Activities

One-on-one coaching

Workshops

Peer learning

Networking

Provision of infrastructure (meeting space)

Non-financial support

## Key Resources

*Human:*

Flexible and committed staff with broad knowledge of business development

Administrative staff

Wide network of experts and affiliates

*Physical:*

Office space

Technology support

*Financial:*

Seed-funding support

No fee for infrastructure use and staff cost

### **Customer Relationships**

Structured personal assistance  
On-demand personal assistance  
Facilitation and networking services

### **Channels**

Walk-in/in-house (coaching, workshops, clinics, expert panels, residential retreats)  
Telephone and texting (coaching)  
Visits (coaching, site visits)  
Virtual (blog, Facebook)  
Print (guidelines, feedback, handouts)

### **Customer Segments**

Individuals over the age of 16 with:

- An idea with basic evidence need/demand, theory of change, and social impact (L1: part-time or full-time)
- Operational evidence of need/depend, theory of change, and social impact, and a track record of success as well as a plan for further delivery with organizations not registered longer than four years; scaling potential (L2: full-time)

*Three characteristics of UnLtd India's customer segment differentiate it from competitors:*

1. Emphasis on social impact of applicants' projects
2. Background and sector agnostic
3. Support from ideation stage

### **Value Proposition**

Develop the entrepreneur in respects to knowledge of business and context, so that they acquire skills to create and grow an organization, which facilitates social impact

*"We maximize the development of investee's capacity and minimize their dependency on us going forward"*

## APPENDIX 2: Incubator Chart

Incubators/ Services	Mentorship and Business Model	Challenges: Non-Western Context	Solutions
Angels Hub	Volunteer mentors	Measuring the quality mentorship is difficult	Mentors are offered roles with the board of directors to incentivize them to become active mentors
Co-workspace	Mentee-mentor matched basing on experience and type of business	Communication gap exists between the mentor, mentor and the incubator	
Mentorship Business	Informal mentorship in which mentors and mentees organize meetings informally	High mentor turnover rate creates a gap in the psychological contract	
Business Advice			Repackaged information and to make it more accessible to low-income members of the community
Networking	In-house incubation for 3+months depending on the type and need of business	Hub was initially inaccessible by most underprivileged youth due to lack of knowledge and awareness of services	
		Business incubation is a new concept and many entrepreneurs are wary to join; this is worsened by fees associated with the services	Analyzed the local context to discover existing gaps and challenges faced by entrepreneurs
FinAfrica	After being selected and funded, investees conduct their businesses for two years at the FinAfrica business hub where they receive business development and mentorship support daily	Matching appropriate mentors to mentees is sometimes difficult	Organized e-club meetings to sensitize and train entrepreneurs on relevance of business incubation
Office infrastructure		Investees do not see the value of business incubation in the beginning	
Business skills training			
Advice		Developing a sustainable business incubation model is almost impossible, which puts pressure on the investee to locate external funding	Built trust with continued committed and support
Mentorship	After two years, they independently run their business while receiving less intensive support, which is sometimes facilitated through online mentorship		
Networking			

Incubators/ Services	Mentorship and Business Model	Challenges: Non- Western Context	Solutions
<p><b>ENSPIRE INCUBATOR</b></p> <p>Co-workspace</p> <p>Provides tech advisory services</p> <p>Networking through the Lounge</p>	<p>Use of highly motivated, virtual mentors</p> <p>Track the communications of the virtual relationship</p>	<p>Investees experience reduced entrepreneurial spirit after incubation</p> <p>Tech investees need very creative incubation approaches</p> <p>Getting highly qualified mentors is difficult because of the niche focus of the incubation</p>	<p>Cultural and ecosystem dynamics are a core part of the incubation process</p> <p>Mentors are paid</p> <p>Investees are constantly monitored</p> <p>Feasibility analysis is employed to set benchmarks and further understand the local context</p>
<p><b>Villgro</b></p> <p>Funding support</p> <p>Networking</p> <p>Mentorship</p> <p>Fellowship program</p> <p>Entrepreneur-In-Residence incubation.</p>	<p>4-8 hours of mentoring provided every month</p> <p>High-quality mentorship to entrepreneurs through a structured, intensive process</p> <p>Investees are paired with seasoned entrepreneur or business professional who provides strategic and business support.</p>	<p>Initially, investees faced challenges of identifying, attracting and retaining talented staff.</p> <p>Slow pace of understanding business incubation processes by rural entrepreneurs</p>	<p>Started a program where professionals are attached to incubated businesses for 12 months</p> <p>Investees help in product design, business development, operations and customer acquisition</p> <p>Investees are connected to sector-specific experts</p> <p>Local events and speaker series are organized to train, motivate and inspire investees</p>

## APPENDIX 3: Overview - UnLtd India Interviews

<b>Group</b>	<b>Number of Interviews</b>
Investees inside of Mumbai	3
Investees outside of Mumbai (outstation)	6
Coaches / Employees of UnLtd India	5

## APPENDIX 4: Interview Guide Mumbai Investee

### **Background on Individual**

Tell me a bit about yourself.

Tell me about your social enterprise. Why did you start it?

### **UnLtd India Experience**

How did you hear about UnLtd India? What made you decide to apply?

What has stood out to you the most about your experience at UnLtd India?

What stage of the incubation process are you in?

Starting Perceptions: 'When you applied, what did you think would be the most beneficial aspects of the incubation program and why?

Perceptions changed? Now that you're in the program, which parts of the program do you find most beneficial?

Is there anything you would change about your experience to date?

### **Formal Mentorship / Coaching**

Describe your coach: Can you tell me a little bit about your coach? (Who are they? What do they do? Etc.)

Starting perceptions: What did you think the coaching experience would provide you with at the beginning?

Perception changed? How has your expectations compared with your experience?

Initiation: What was your first meeting with your coach like?

What kind of questions do you approach your coach with?

Lack of support: If you could change anything about the coaching service, what would it be?

Communication: What is your primary form of communication? How often and in what ways do you communicate with your coach?

Coach's knowledge: Do you think your coach has a good grasp of your project and the context in which you operate?

Have you ever been apprehensive approaching your coach with an issue? (because you felt they might not understand your situation fully, perhaps because they're from a different area / come from a different background)? How have you dealt with this situation?'

Do you know how others in the program communicate with their coaches? Do you feel there's any difference between your relationship with your coach and that of your peers? Why do you think that is?

Did the connection to experts help address your needs when your coach couldn't?

### **Informal Mentorship / Peer Review**

Describe Peer Review: Can you tell me a little bit about your experience with the peer review? Effective? Ineffective? Good? Bad?

Starting perceptions: What did you expect from the peer review system when beginning the incubation process?

Comparison with Experience: How has your expectations compared with your experience? What have you found to be the most useful? Least useful?

Travel: Do you have to travel to participate?

How long does it take you?

Does travel time impact your ability to take part in this service?

Interactions with Peers: How do you find the interaction with the other group members?

### **Effects of the Incubation Process**

Better Leader? Do you feel like you're a better project leader now than you were before the program? If so, why (specific skills vs. general confidence)?

Legal and organization structure? Do you have a better understanding of the legal and organizational structures of your project now than you did before?

What do you think is the most important part about building credibility of your enterprise in the sector /communicate it to outsiders? In what way has the incubation program helped you build credibility in the sector?

Workshops, trainings? Were the helpful? Did you encounter any difficulties?

Long-term vision & Incubation: When you started your business, what was your long-term vision a) for your business and b) for the social impact you wanted to achieve? Has your undergoing the incubation program changed this in any way?



## APPENDIX 5: Interview Guide Outstation Investee

### **Background on Individual**

Tell me a bit about yourself.

Tell me about your social enterprise. Why did you start it?

### **UnLtd India Experience**

How did you hear about UnLtd India? What made you decide to apply?

What has stood out to you the most about your experience at UnLtd India?

What stage of the incubation process are you in?

Starting Perceptions: 'When you applied, what did you think would be the most beneficial aspects of the incubation program and why?

Perceptions changed? Now that you're in the program, which parts of the program do you find most beneficial?

Is there anything you would change about your experience to date?

### **Application Process**

Difficulties: Did you experience any difficulties during the application process?

If so, what were they?

### **Targets / Milestones**

Reached Targets: Have you reached all your targets? Have you ever faced any difficulties reaching your targets?

Your role in setting targets: What is your role in setting your targets? What is the coach's role?

Not satisfied with targets: Has there been a time when you would have chosen different milestones?

### **Formal Mentorship / Coaching**

Describe your coach: Can you tell me a little bit about your coach? (Who are they? What do they do? Etc.)

Starting perceptions: What did you think the coaching experience would provide you with at the beginning?

Perception changed? How has your expectations compared with your experience?

Initiation: What was your first meeting with your coach like?

What kind of questions do you approach your coach with?

Lack of support: If you could change anything about the coaching service, what would it be?

Communication: What is your primary form of communication? How often and in what ways do you communicate with your coach?

Coach's knowledge: Do you think your coach has a good grasp of your project and the context in which you operate?

Have you ever been apprehensive approaching your coach with an issue? (because you felt they might not understand your situation fully, perhaps because they're from a different area / come from a different background)? How have you dealt with this situation?

Do you know how others in the program communicate with their coaches? Do you feel there's any difference between your relationship with your coach and that of your peers? Why do you think that is?

Did the connection to experts help address your needs when your coach couldn't?

### **Informal Mentorship / Peer Review**

Describe Peer Review: Can you tell me a little bit about your experience with the peer review?

Effective? Ineffective? Good? Bad?

Starting perceptions: What did you expect from the peer review system when beginning the incubation process?

Comparison with Experience: How has your expectations compared with your experience?

What have you found to be the most useful? Least useful?

Travel: Do you have to travel to participate?

How long does it take you?

Does travel time impact your ability to take part in this service?

Interactions with Peers: How do you find the interaction with the other group members?

### **Future**

Do you feel well-prepared to continue your enterprise once you exit the program? What do you think will be the biggest challenge once you exit the program?

Alternatively for graduates: Did UnLtd India prepare you for exiting the program? Were you able to build on the skills and milestones you achieved in the program after you exited?

### **Effects of the Incubation Process**

Better Leader? Do you feel like you're a better project leader now than you were before the program? If so, why (specific skills vs. general confidence)?

Legal and organization structure? Do you have a better understanding of the legal and organizational structures of your project now than you did before?

What do you think is the most important part about building credibility of your enterprise in the sector /communicate it to outsiders? In what way has the incubation program helped you build credibility in the sector?

Workshops, trainings? Were the helpful? Did you encounter any difficulties?

Long-term vision & Incubation: When you started your business, what was your long-term vision a) for your business and b) for the social impact you wanted to achieve? Has your undergoing the incubation program changed this in any way?

## APPENDIX 6: Interview Guide Employees

### **UnLtd Employees Questions**

Do you work in partnership with anyone?

Would there be any advantage in having a coach outside the incubator? Has this been considered?

### **Background and UnLtd India**

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

How did you come to work in UnLtd India?

How long have you worked with UnLtd India?

### **UnLtd India**

How would you describe the effectiveness of UnLtd India's Business model in action?

What is the vision for the incubator?

Target groups?

How does the selection process for investees work?

What do you believe the main strengths of UnLtd India's Model are?

Are there some aspects of UnLtd India's business model which you think could be enhanced? If so which and how?

How do you measure effective delivery?

### **Scaling**

What made UnLtd India decide to scale?

How has the experience of scaling been?

What are the major challenges for investees that are from outside of Mumbai?

Are there any additional cultural or communication barriers you have encountered?

From your experience, what do you expect to be the major challenges for UnLtd India in expanding its pool of investees / its operations?

What do you think would be the most effective way to solve these issues?

### **Questions for Coaches:**

How were you matched to an investee?

Did you receive any training?

What was covered in the training sessions?

What do you consider the core activities of your work as a coach?

In your experience, what are the conditions for a good mentorship relationship?

Does this vary based on where the investee is from?

How did you set up expectations in beginning for outstation investees? What were the challenges of mentoring an outstation investee?

Were these outstation investees able to meet the milestones UnLtd India set for them?

Have you ever had difficulties when coaching someone? Why/what were the main obstacles?

Are there further challenges depending on remoteness?

How often do you speak with your investees?

Does frequency of contact make a difference to the value of the coaching aspect of the program?

Do you find that certain investees need more attention than other? why?

Does distance play a role (in the amount of coaching needed)?

(It was reported that the number of times a person contacts unlimited staff varies extensively. Do you know why this would be? Is there a segment of investees that need more support?)

How have you compensated for the distance for your investees?

Online?

Has there ever been a situation when you felt you weren't able to answer a question/deal with a situation an investee presented you with? If so, how did you handle this situation?

How has the other forms of mentorship such as workshops, peer learning, and external coaches, networking (if applicable) aid in the success of the investee's program? Do you think this had any impact on milestones?

How do you go about finding external experts? When are they applicable?

What is the progression rate from level to level?

Does this change depending on distance?

What are some of the most common questions/concerns/issues investees have?

What are the avenues you make use of to deal with them?

## APPENDIX 7: Interview Guide Incubators

### **Background**

What incubation services do you provide to your investees?

How do you select your investees?

### **Mentorship**

What mentorship/coaching models have you adopted to support your investees?

How are mentors recruited? What skills/knowledge are sought for in mentors?

Who ensures mentorship standards?

What incentive structures exist for the mentors?

What mentorship delivery mechanisms?

How successful have your mentorship/coaching model been?

Do you have any particular success stories from investees?

What challenges do you face in your coaching/mentorship model?

What lessons have you learnt from your mentorship/coaching model?

### **Remote Business Incubation**

Do you intend to and/or carryout remote business incubation? If so, how do you do it? If you don't, why don't you do it?

### **Impact**

How do you measure the impact of your business incubation model?

### **Revenue**

How does the incubation generate revenues and sustains itself?

### **Scaling**

Have you attempted to scale your mentorship model?

If yes, how did you do it and what were some of the challenges that you needed to overcome? How did you do this?

If no, was there any particular challenge you from doing so?

Do you have any plans to scale (even further) in the future? How do you intend to do this?

## APPENDIX 8: Interviews Non-Western Incubators

Name	Background	Mentorship	Scaling
Angels Hub	Develops solutions to catalyze enterprise growth in Uganda Provides networking opportunities, business idea generation, co-working space and professional and mentorship business advice	Mentors are volunteers, although some service the board of directors and are part of the advisory team Mentors are matched to investees based on their skills/experiences Mentorship is mainly provided at the hub	Intend to scale but have not yet began the process
Citad	Focuses on producing entrepreneurs in Nigeria's ICT sector Entrepreneur training program gives investees the opportunity to develop their business ideas	Face-to-face mentoring is first employed Online mentoring is employed in which the mentor relationship is mediated by ICT tools Finds that remote mentoring does not usually give the opportunity to establish a strong relationship	With remote mentoring, meaningful relationships can be lacking as face-to-face establishment is crucial
Enspire	Platform for facilitating the growth of viable technology businesses in Nigeria Support tech focused startups	Employs virtual mentors from different parts of Nigeria Enspire is copied in any email to help track the mentorship relationship	n/a
infoDev	A global multi-donor program in the World Bank group that supports growth-oriented entrepreneurs Works with incubators and SME enablers	Challenges of running an incubator in developing countries include: Finding match for investees Instilling value Early opt-out Communication between mentor, mentee and incubator	Model has not been adjusted for different investee groups Face-to-face contact is necessary to establish a meaningful relationship, after, virtual can work

## APPENDIX 9: Consent Form

### **Purpose of the Study**

The research being conducted is for a group project in a master's course on Business Model Innovation at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Members of the the research team are current students at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences.

The project is a collaboration between London School of Economics and Political Science and UnLtd India. The research aim of this project is to investigate how UnLtd India can ensure the quality delivery of its incubations services in the context of scaling up its Incubation Program.

Members of the research team are: Lauren Koenig, Tracy Wilichowski, Donnas Ojok and Anja Rangette.

### **Interview Procedure and Data Protection**

Involvement in this research project is voluntary. You can at any time stop the interview or can choose not to answer any singular question.

The interview will be 45 to 60 minutes long and will be recorded for analysis purposes. Your responses will only be accessible to the research team directly involved with this study. Anonymity and confidentiality will be upheld during the reporting of the results. Your name will be changed on all records to ensure your complete comfort.

### **Consent**

I, the participant, declare that I have read the information provided above and agree to be interviewed for the project.

**Signature of the Interviewee**

**Date**



## APPENDIX 10: Thematic Coding



### THEME 3

■ Mumbai investees ■ Outstation investees ■ Employees

#### FIRST ORDER

#### SECOND ORDER

#### ORGANIZATIONAL

- Incubation is flexible (rescheduling meetings, adjusting milestones, meeting attendance) ■ ■
- Different stages have different needs (L1: broader coverage, L2: more specialized) ■ ■
- Value of workshops is highest if topic corresponds to actual challenge investee faces ■ ■
- Flexible form of communication is useful ■ ■
- Limited value of later sessions with the same group of attendees ■ ■
- Investees are decision-makers (milestones) ■ ■
- Ticking boxes is not as important as procedures to staff ■ ■

Flexibility of incubation model

- No compensation for travel costs is an issue ■ ■
- Investees struggle with session schedules fixed on short notice ■ ■
- Stacking sessions (not worthwhile to travel to Mumbai for one session) would be useful ■ ■
- Applications were not considered a challenge/limitation ■ ■
- Attendance of modules decreases with distance of investee from hub ■ ■
- Translators needed in PL and workshops, but terminology makes translation difficult ■ ■
- Difficult to connect with non-English speaking investees (limited Hindi skills among staff) ■ ■
- Limited English skills are associated with slower progress ■ ■
- Successful applications demonstrate entrepreneurial thinking ■ ■
- Applications require no technology skills/are not sector specialized ■ ■

Feasibility of incubation model

Target group

### THEME 4

■ Mumbai investees ■ Outstation investees ■ Employees

#### FIRST ORDER

#### SECOND ORDER

#### ORGANIZATIONAL

- Discussions with other coaches are beneficial ■ ■
- Investees (L2/L3) are happy to mentor (L1) ■ ■
- Investees are happy to provide accommodation for staff when they visit ■ ■
- Investees are willing to share resources and space ■ ■

Alternative perspectives

Informal resources

- Alumni want to be involved more ■ ■
- Alumni engagement is informal ■ ■

Leveraging resources