UPSHIFT in Italy

Skills building, participation, and social inclusion of disadvantaged adolescents.
UNICEF’s flagship skills building initiative designed to empower disadvantaged adolescents to create innovative solutions with social impact.

Adolescent Participation through UPSHIFT has 3 purposes:

1. **As stand-alone objective**
   - Enhancing their **active citizenship and personal empowerment**
   - Providing **voice and space** to share their ideas and propose social impact solutions

2. **As part of service design and implementation**
   - Involving them in defining the challenges that affect them and their communities
   - Services are tailor-made to their needs, profiles, and backgrounds

3. **As a tool to become changemakers**
   - Contributing to local service delivery to combat social exclusion
UPSHIFT in Italy

Started in 2018 and implemented in Sicily, Latium and Lombardy

2 modalities of implementation:

**IN-SCHOOL**

*Upper secondary school students*

Schools selected through proxy indicators:

- School drop-out rate
- Rate of students with migrant background
- Learning outcomes

**OUT-OF-SCHOOL**

Direct targeting of disadvantaged children and adolescents:

*Children residing in institutions*, including unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and migrant and refugee adolescents.
UPSHIFT approach and methodology

UPSHIFT is based on a **learning by doing approach**. The methodology builds on **human-centered design thinking for social innovation**.

- Modular content
- Active participation of teachers and educators
- Mentors from the private sector

In-school programme divided in 3 phases

1. **INNOVATION & CREATIVITY CAMP**
2. **Idee in azione**
3. **Impress in azione**

AND 5 steps

1. **EMPATHY**: Icebreaking & Team Building
2. **DEFINITION**: Analysis of the Challenge
3. **DESIGN**: Concept of the Idea
4. **PROTOTYPING**: Validation with Mentors
5. **PRESENTATION**: Pitch to the Jury
UPSHIFT – Adolescent participation process

1. Launch of a national survey drafted by adolescents
2. Over 2000 adolescents shared their needs & challenges
3. Manifesto for adolescents’ post Covid future,

The Manifesto led to the definition of 3 challenges as identified by adolescents:
1. School & Profess. Training
2. Social Relations
3. Health & Environment

Results as of Dec 2021

- 1,700 adolescents participated to I&C Camps
- of which 650 completed phase II Ideas in Action
- 530 adolescents responded to self-assessment surveys in key participation skills (teamwork, problem solving etc.).
Examples of adolescent-led solutions

- Virtual labs for catch-up classes during Covid-19;
- Loan service for free access to digital devices by families facing economic difficulties;
- App that combats the phenomenon of *catcalling* through an online referral system that locates the victims;
- Multi-functional centre led by adolescents to support victims of domestic violence against minors (self-defense training, psycho-social support, etc.).
- Urban regeneration project to create an ecological park for adolescents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and to promote intercultural exchange.
Plans for continuity and sustainability

IN-SCHOOL

• Continue implementation in upper secondary schools (dual education system), with a focus on disadvantaged students;
• Pilot in lower secondary schools within the civic education programme;
• Teachers’ training on UPSHIFT, through the MoE ToT accredited platform.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL

• Continue piloting with adolescents residing in institutions, specifically unaccompanied foreign minors.
• This requires a strong presence of and collaboration with Civil Society Organizations, Social Services and/or reception facility staff.
Challenges and Lessons Learned

**IN-SCHOOL**

- **Distant learning measures** due to Covid-19 emergency.
- **Lack of internal capacity** of the most disadvantaged schools to access funding opportunities for dual education projects.

**OUT-OF-SCHOOL**

- **High drop-out rates** and low retention rates, due to overlapping priorities.
- **Unaccompanied foreign minors**: language barriers and frequent displacements.
- **Lack of face-to-face interaction**, due to the online modality.

→ Necessity to ensure an effective online transition and digitization of UPSHIFT content.

→ Importance of an effective targeting approach to include disadvantaged schools, working in close collaboration with the MoE Regional Education Bureaus.

→ Necessity of shorter and simpler modules.

→ Importance of face-to-face modality, with the support of cultural mediators.

→ Importance of a strong community network, involving decision-makers, private sector, civil society and adolescents to support financing, mentoring, testing and evaluation of the ideas.
Thank you.