Scaling **UPSHIFT** into Education Systems

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**Cover Photo:** Vitalii, an 18-year-old college student and Upgrade team member from Ternopil in VR glasses. © UNICEF/UN0678699/Filippov
Introduction

The world is currently off track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated school closures have intensified the education crisis, with early data suggesting the pandemic may have wiped out 20 years of education gains.

There is a dual need to transform education systems for future generations while simultaneously providing opportunities for the current generation of adolescents and youth.

**UPSHIFT** is a youth skills development programme that combines workshops, mentorship and seed funding to equip young people to develop entrepreneurial solutions to challenges they identify in their communities. It can help to accelerate education reform through its adaptability into multiple settings, building the competencies of both students and educators.

Through UPSHIFT’s skills and mindset development, young people see that realizing their potential is not a far-off dream but something that can begin immediately. As well, educators are introduced to new pedagogies, which they can implement in their teaching beyond the UPSHIFT programme. For policy makers, UPSHIFT generates tangible results and is a tool that bridges learning to earning, enabling an ecosystem that goes beyond the education sector. By working through formal and non-formal education systems, UNICEF and its partners can reach different groups of adolescents and young people ensuring equitable access for all. The UPSHIFT programme provides an opportunity to turn the agency of adolescents and young people into action and achievement now.

The purpose of this report is to provide practical guidance to UNICEF Country Offices, Government counterparts and Partners on how to integrate UPSHIFT into education systems, and it applies equally to countries that currently deliver UPSHIFT and those planning to deliver UPSHIFT.

Presently, 46 countries are working with UPSHIFT. Among them, 10 have begun integrating UPSHIFT delivery into education systems, 15 are in discussions with their respective Government counterparts, and a further 13 intend to follow suit. UPSHIFT also has a history of being delivered in emergency contexts, initially in Jordan and Lebanon and more recently in Ukraine and some of the surrounding countries receiving refugees. Building upon lessons learnt over nearly a decade of experience, there is space for UNICEF’s Office of Innovation and Education to work with the Education and the Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) teams in Country and Regional Offices to support and accelerate scaling UPSHIFT through education systems worldwide. This collaboration is essential – UPSHIFT’s integration cannot be carried out in isolation from the broader education system reforms that UNICEF is advocating for within a given country. Together, UPSHIFT and UNICEF education sector colleagues can facilitate broader education sector reform and capacity building, thus ensuring UPSHIFT’s successful integration into education systems.


This report contains a brief overview of UPSHIFT and its integration into education systems. It also contains 10 lessons learnt and best practices that have been identified through a literature review and in-depth interviews with UNICEF Country Offices and Partners. The main report concludes with recommendations for UNICEF to accelerate the scale up and impact of UPSHIFT within formal education systems. Finally, there are 5 in depth case studies from India, Jordan, Kosovo, Tajikistan and Uganda which reflect different contexts and implementation models.


This report focuses only on the integration of UPSHIFT into national education systems which cover both formal (schools, vocational training) and non-formal (structured skill-building experience) programmes that are accredited by the Government. The report does not document the existing, highly successful UPSHIFT programmes that work outside of the formal systems and support young people facing multiple forms of disadvantage. Though not included here, these programmes will continue to be highly relevant for UNICEF and partners due to the transformational impact they provide for young people who cannot access the national education system.

What is UPSHIFT?

UPSHIFT is a skills development programme for adolescents and young people that rapidly unlocks the participants’ potential to create real and tangible change in their lives and in their communities. Based on best practices from non-formal education, experiential learning, and enterprise education, UPSHIFT is a learning journey that combines workshops, mentorship, and an entrepreneurial challenge. Participants explore how to analyse and understand community challenges they care deeply about and to build products or services that address them. Young people build a set of transferable skills, including critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, communication and collaboration. UPSHIFT is also designed to foster entrepreneurial mindsets for young people to identify opportunities and innovate to achieve their goals, as well as to foster a growth mindset. Combined, these life skills help young people to succeed in school, employment and entrepreneurship.

The UPSHIFT approach is modular and adaptable, meaning the exact formulation of UPSHIFT is different in each country and defined through a process of co-creation with local stakeholders. The curriculum is adapted and built using an overall approach that strengthens and connects with the existing, local ecosystems.

Typically, there are 4 phases to UPSHIFT, as outlined in Figure 1. Phase 0 focuses on inspiring and engaging young people to participate and may also include a few hours of skills development for a large number of young people. This phase may take place on digital platforms, face to face or through a blended approach. Phase 1 consists of the main UPSHIFT curriculum of around 20-30 hours that is delivered to all UPSHIFT participants by trained facilitators or teachers. It is supplemented through digital platforms in some countries. The globally open-sourced curricula can be viewed online here. Throughout Phase 1, participants will work in teams to put their learning into action, developing ideas for social enterprises or social projects. Phase 1 culminates with each team pitching their idea as part of the UPSHIFT Challenge.

Teams that are successful in the UPSHIFT Challenge pitch progress to Phase 2. It is important that seed funding is only invested in viable ideas and teams. Within Phase 2, there is structured business development content, alongside a strong focus on mentorship to inspire self-initiated learning and action. By this stage, the teams have different needs in order to bring their projects to life. Thus, mentorship and learning can vary from 20 to 150 hours depending on the context.

[4] Also known as life skills, soft skills, 21st century skills, or socioemotional skills.
[5] More detailed country specific information on different adaptations is included in the five case studies.
[6] UPSHIFT Curriculum
What is UPSHIFT?

UPSHIFT's success hinges on partnerships to adapt and deliver the programme within the local context. Working with young people and youth organizations, educators, Ministries of Education and Youth, and also with Ministries of Science, Technology, Innovation and Enterprise, Local Government, the Private Sector, financial institutions, incubators and accelerators, and other multi-lateral organisations, UPSHIFT creates an ecosystem that enables youth move from learning to earning.

A recent Brookings report articulated that the uptake of education innovations at the Government level is influenced by regional histories, political economies, and the potential to contextualise an innovation to a country’s unique context. Thus, the adaptability of the UPSHIFT curriculum and model is a part of its unique appeal to stakeholders in Government.

As the UPSHIFT case studies demonstrate, there are two main models of contextualization. Countries such as India and the Maldives are focusing on scaling UPSHIFT through formal education systems (particularly secondary schools), typically working with younger adolescents and focusing on building transferable skills and an entrepreneurial mindset. Other countries, including Tajikistan, Jordan, Burundi, Türkiye, Morocco and Uganda, are working with older youth (typically 15 to 24 years old) through government run additional and non-formal education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and second chance schools to deliver skills for employability and entrepreneurship. In these countries young people are empowered to transform their community’s everyday challenges into income generating opportunities with positive social impact.

Underpinning the flexible curriculum are seven key principles that differentiate UPSHIFT from other learning opportunities and which should be maintained through any localisation of the approach and curriculum. UPSHIFT is a learning experience rather than a course!

**What is UPSHIFT?**

**UPSHIFT Key Principles**

**Social purpose:** UPSHIFT focuses on solving SDG aligned problems, contributing to UNICEF’s own mission and supporting global citizenship education through engagement in local communities.

**Agency:** UPSHIFT builds on the sense of agency of young people as participants to identify problems they personally care about and work on finding solutions to address them.

**Human centred design (HCD):** The UPSHIFT curriculum is based on the principles of HCD which provides participants with concrete tools that are transferrable to other aspects of their lives.

**Experimental learning:** Putting the knowledge from the UPSHIFT curriculum into practice through addressing a problem that impacts them personally facilitates active participation and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This supports the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

**Mentorship:** The UPSHIFT mentors and facilitators are a core part of programme delivery, and their approach, mindset and support are fundamental to the learning outcomes.

**Teams:** Working in groups of peers is a core aspect of UPSHIFT and allows participants to increase their learning outcomes and build competencies such as teamwork and respect for differences.

**Challenge:** The entrepreneurial challenge where UPSHIFTers compete to receive seed funding and incubation support is a core element of the programme which motivates participants, showcases results and serves as an advocacy platform for key stakeholders.

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[8] In India the focus is largely on working with 10-14 year olds (although up to 18 in one State) and in the Maldives the focus is on working with 13-14 year olds.
The UPSHIFT programme originated in Kosovo in 2014. With support from UNICEF’s Office of Innovation and in collaboration with early adopter countries, it has been adapted for scale over the last nine years. Today, a total of 46 countries are now delivering UPSHIFT globally. Of the 46 countries currently implementing UPSHIFT, 10 have started to integrate UPSHIFT delivery into education systems, 15 are in discussions with Government counterparts, and a further 13 intend to follow suit.

Ministries of Education are key partners, including departments responsible for education delivery (nationally and regionally), curriculum development, in-and pre-service teacher training and those responsible for research, evaluation and best practices. In countries that are integrating UPSHIFT into formal education systems, this is typically part of a modernisation agenda that seeks to develop and deliver 21st century skills and opportunities to young people.

Figure 2: UPSHIFT Global Footprint

[9] Early adopter countries that played a key role in envisioning a model for scale include Vietnam, Montenegro, Jordan, Lebanon and Tajikistan.

[10] As of September 2023 the 46 countries are Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burundi, Cote d’Ivoire, Croatia, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Madagascar, the Maldives, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Niger, North Macedonia, Paraguay, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vietnam.
The Case Study exploring UNICEF’s work with YuWaah in India will elaborate upon a blended learning approach that can accelerate scale into the formal education system.

Ministries of Youth are also strong advocates for UPSHIFT, though the capacity to provide opportunities for young people as UPSHIFT partners through municipalities and youth spaces varies by country. UPSHIFT also provides an opportunity to drive cross-departmental working within Government, as Ministries of Science, Technology, Innovation and Enterprise often have limited engagement with Ministries of Education. Engaging these Ministries in Phase 2 of UPSHIFT and creating linkages to post-UPSHIFT opportunities for young people supports the potential for greater income generation.

"Our goal is simple and clear. Our aim is to provide a holistic education, an education which prepares for life and UPSHIFT provides the tools for this. UPSHIFT signifies hope for a brighter tomorrow."

Dr. Aishath Ali, Minister of Education, Republic of Maldives

Other Case Studies will demonstrate the importance of partnerships with multi-lateral organizations. For example, the European Union (EU) is both a funding and delivery partner. Within EU Member States, UPSHIFT can be delivered as part of the EU’s Child Guarantee, with delivery in Italy and also now Croatia under this programme. In other States, the EU can be a major partner, as demonstrated in Tajikistan.

[11] The European Child Guarantee (ECG) is the initiative of the European Commission that aims to break the cycle of child poverty and social exclusion in Europe. Adopted in June 2021 by the European Parliament, the Child Guarantee aims to ensure that the most vulnerable children have access to healthcare, education, childcare, decent housing, and adequate nutrition, ultimately aiming to guarantee progressive realization of children’s rights in Europe. UNICEF ECARO, as part of the ECG Phase III, has tested and documented a series of models of intervention in seven EU countries, including UPSHIFT in Italy for the 21st century skills building of disadvantaged students.
UNICEF has also partnered with other UN and multilateral organisations which offers new channels for integrating the programme into Government systems. In Tajikistan, the World Bank is investing in scaling UPSHIFT, with UNICEF as a Technical Assistance Partner. In Uganda, UNICEF and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) are working in partnership to focus UPSHIFT on skill building and employability enhancement through developing and implementing income-generating social entrepreneurial projects that will achieve accreditation within the TVET system. In Jordan, there are partnerships with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support incubation and to run thematic challenges, focusing on mutual areas of interest such as food security.

On the journey towards integration and full Government ownership of UPSHIFT, it can be helpful to recognise that there are different roles, pathways and types of Government support, and there should ultimately be a focus on moving from symbolic support into more formal accreditations and resource contribution.

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Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

An enabling policy environment that focuses on building transferable skills for employment or entrepreneurship creates a strong entry point for UPSHIFT.

As highlighted within UNICEF’s Global Framework for Transferable Skills, UPSHIFT builds transferable skills including Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Creativity, Cooperation, Decision Making, Resilience, Communication and Empathy. See Figure 4. Both India and Kosovo have education strategies that focus on building competencies and transferable skills which is important for integrating UPSHIFT into the formal education curriculum. For example, integration in Kosovo was supported when UNICEF undertook a mapping exercise to demonstrate how UPSHIFT (and the two other skills building programmes) aligned with the Kosovo Education Framework.

Figure 4: Mapping of UPSHIFT Skills vs UNICEF Framework for Transferable Skills

Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

Local contextualisation of UPSHIFT is important, but countries can save time and resources by building upon an extensive global knowledge base and network which accelerates the adaptation and adoption of UPSHIFT.

UNICEF Tajikistan was an early adopter of UPSHIFT, however the replicability of the model into other contexts was only partially proven at that stage. Their pilot phase was an early example of testing a replication in a different context. Despite being only the 6th country (of 46) to launch UPSHIFT, an independent external review identified cost and time savings for UNICEF Tajikistan through adapting existing curricula from Kosovo. Today, one of UPSHIFT’s two open-sourced curricula is based on Tajikistan’s adaptations.

In addition to adapting existing curricula, the process of local contextualisation is important and should be one of co-creation with youth and local partners to:

- Identify and engage the right Government partners, often going beyond the traditional UNICEF counterparts.
- Localise the branding, supporting local ownership and cultural acceptance.
- Localise the curriculum, working together with youth and local CSOs to translate into local language(s) and ensure the examples are contextually relevant.
- Test delivery in different institutional settings.
- Build capacity of UPSHIFT mentors / facilitators to deliver the UPSHIFT pedagogical approach.
- Engage local private sector and other partners to start building the enabling UPSHIFT ecosystem to support mentorship and incubation of youth-led projects.

Buy-in from the Ministry of Education is vital to scale and sustain UPSHIFT successfully. In countries such as India, Bhutan, the Maldives, Kosovo, Italy and Albania, UPSHIFT is being scaled into formal education systems by request of the Ministry of Education while also working in close partnership with Departments responsible for School Education, Curriculum and Pre- and In-Service Teacher Training. Even in countries where scaling is not occurring within schools, the Ministry of Education will usually still play an essential role. For example, in Tajikistan, UPSHIFT is an accredited curriculum for additional and non-formal education delivered through Government-owned education facilities. In Uganda, UPSHIFT (in partnership with ILO) focuses on social innovation and entrepreneurship skills building and employability development by creating income-generating social entrepreneurial projects through TVET and non-formal education. As of 2023, the curriculum is being certified as a job market-relevant non-formal skills training programme by the Ministry of Education’s Directorate of Industrial Training through a process that includes close engagement with employers and the private sector.

In countries with a separate Ministry of Youth, there is usually robust support for UPSHIFT. However, the existence of a measurable youth strategy and the Ministry’s access to sustainable resources varies significantly by country. The Jordan Case Study outlines the steps for institutionalization with a Ministry of Youth. UNICEF Türkiye is also successfully partnering with the Ministry of Youth and Sport to deliver UPSHIFT through the national network of Youth Centres, already reaching over 10,000 young people in 2022. By undertaking UPSHIFT mobilization together with the Government, the programme’s reach has been expanded, and greater credibility has been established when building relationships with decentralized Government institutions.

Unlocking resources (human resources, financial resources, physical space and technical support) from Ministries responsible for Science, Technology, Innovation and Enterprise can be vital in securing full resourcing for all phases of the UPSHIFT programme. In India, State level innovation partners, including the Department for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Tamil Nadu and the Telangana State Innovation Cell, have been vital in mobilizing political support and resources and also in encouraging their Department of Education counterparts to integrate UPSHIFT into schools.

Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

The most appropriate institutionalisation routes vary by country, but engaging traditional partners like the Ministry of Education, alongside new partners in Government, will always be important.
Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

Areas for UNICEF staff to consider in exploring potential Government partnerships include:

- Departments within the Ministry of Education, alongside the Ministry of Youth and Ministries with responsibility for Science, Technology, Innovation and Enterprise that share policy goals and objectives with UPSHIFT.
- Ministries that have access to stable sources of finance that can underpin UPSHIFT delivery in the longer term, noting that finance for skills building within UPSHIFT may come from a different source to finance for seed funding and incubation support. It is important to secure cost-sharing arrangements whereby the Government progressively increases their financial contribution.
- Ministries that have access to institutional facilities (e.g. schools, vocational colleges, youth clubs, centres for non-formal education) where UPSHIFT would complement the existing educational offerings.

In considering implementation into schools, it is also important to assess the maturity and readiness of the formal education system to sustainably scale UPSHIFT. In countries with weaker education systems, where there is a need to focus on basic literacy and numeracy outcomes, the priority for UNICEF will often be on institutionalizing some form of life skills education before considering integration of UPSHIFT into the main curriculum. In Burundi, for example, a new integrated curriculum has been developed with life skills competencies, UPSHIFT and ICT skills. This is being delivered through non-formal education (i.e. solidarity groups, alongside radio and digital offline delivery), with plans now underway to integrate into formal education. However, as recognised within UNICEF’s Transferable Skills Framework,[15] skills development needs to be pursued across multiple pathways, including formal and non-formal education routes.

The UPSHIFT methodology requires a different pedagogical approach than the one deployed in most traditional educational settings. In its original form, UPSHIFT was delivered in non-formal settings with mentors providing support and guidance to young people in a way that is not didactic or directive but relatively supportive of developing their own solutions, skills and competencies. Rather than imparting knowledge, UPSHIFT mentors are being asked to facilitate student-led, project-based and peer-to-peer learning. This requires a willingness of teachers and educators to be open, flexible and inclusive in their engagement with young UPSHIFTers.

Across all country case studies, teams have emphasized the importance of investing in teacher/educator capacity building and, if integrating into formal education systems, building long-term plans to integrate UPSHIFT into pre and in-service training and incentive structures. For example, in Italy, teachers can obtain recognition for the credits gained through UPSHIFT training on the Ministry of Education’s teacher training platform, contributing to their professional development. Each participating State invested in teacher training in India, with more than 21,000 teachers receiving UPSHIFT training throughout 2022-23. It should be noted that this investment is likely to have unintended benefits, with an external evaluation in Kosovo noting that teachers who were trained in delivering UPSHIFT also utilized these skills in day-to-day teaching.

In Jordan, the Ministry of Youth is in the process of institutionalizing UPSHIFT. Across the first 3 locations, there has been a multi-year process to build the capacity of educators with the UPSHIFT implementing partner Jordan River Foundation. Educators went from participating in training the trainer events to buddy with an UPSHIFT facilitator, ultimately enabling them to lead trainings themselves.

"The [UPSHIFT] project complements the ongoing reform in the education sector including the Bhutan Baccalaureate (BB), which has been adopted as the main platform for school education reforms emphasizing on technology and other 21st century skills."

Mr. Karma Galay, Director General with the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Bhutan
Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

Conversely, one UPSHIFT country changed their planned delivery model after the pilot showed that the UPSHIFT methodology was too radically different from the standard pedagogical approach. This demonstrated the importance of engaging future facilitators of UPSHIFT within early pilots to ascertain which methods are best suited to the local context. UNICEF’s experience with UPSHIFT tallies with Brookings’ research highlighting the importance of engaging teachers and school leaders as active partners in scaling education innovations.

Experience in Jordan (with the integration of the life skills curriculum) also highlights the potential need to build the capacity of other Government teams, as well as facilitators. For example this could include programme management and Monitoring and Evaluation systems. Capacity building is vital to building a self-sustaining mechanism that will not be dependent on UNICEF funding in the long term.

Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

5

It is important to align incentive structures for students and schools. The ‘challenge’ dimension of UPSHIFT provides a compelling incentive.

Culminating the UPSHIFT learning programme in a challenge where the best solutions are selected for incubation (seed funding, mentorship) builds a powerful narrative of young people as change makers. The challenge dimension has always been a differentiator for UPSHIFT and needs to be carefully planned and resourced as UPSHIFT is institutionalized into formal and non-formal education systems. This acknowledges the role of the ecosystem beyond education in supporting this dimension.

In India, the challenge provides a strong incentive for schools, teachers and students to participate and for Government officials to ‘own’ the results. For Governments, it gives a rapid and visible example of delivering change within the education system. The accompanying delivery timetable brings structure and standardization to the programme. However, UNICEF needs to recognize that the timetabling needs to be led by the school calendar rather than UNICEF priorities.

In Albania, where UPSHIFT is being introduced in 1,000 schools, the competition element has been publicized on TV, which has significantly increased the awareness of the UPSHIFT program among young people.

In Jordan, the national challenge is an opportunity to bring together UPSHIFT projects developed through various non-formal education routes and provide a mechanism to engage young people in formal education directly. The visibility of the national challenge is a powerful means to build partnerships. Many Government ministries, accelerators, NGOs and private sector partners now engage in different parts of the process, from outreach to idea selection and mentorship.
Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

6

It is vital to build an enabling ecosystem for UPSHIFT.

UPSHIFT requires business development and incubation support, which is not a core competency for UNICEF. It is important to build an ecosystem of incubation partners to support the latter stages of UPSHIFT and post-UPSHIFT opportunities. This includes Government ministries, universities, incubators and accelerators, the private sector, local Government, civil society organizations and other UN agencies.

Through the earlier stages of UPSHIFT, UNICEF often plays a key role in reaching the most vulnerable youth and building their skills (and ideas) to the point that they can access this type of ecosystem and opportunity. Often this will also provide an opportunity to bring a new equity dimension to the organisations that are part of the enabling ecosystem. For example, in Jordan UPSHIFT has a big focus on working with refugee youth who may otherwise not access the types of incubation partners engaged with UPSHIFT and the national challenge.

7

Digital investment is important, but should enable rather than replace in person delivery.

Outside of the constraints of COVID-19, the UPSHIFT community feels that there is a solid rationale to keep at least part of UPSHIFT’s delivery face-to-face delivery. This is essential for marginalized groups.

Though digitization (to students and or teachers) supports sustainable, cost-effective scale when delivering through education systems, it also requires a significant up-front investment, standardization of delivery and ongoing access to data and devices. Ultimately, it cannot replicate the face-to-face delivery experience.

The experience in India highlights that the design process needs to be co-design and led by those who understand both digital delivery and the UPSHIFT programme. The branding of “UPSHIFT powered by UNISOLVE” illustrates the focus on the student learning experience across content, user journey and platform.

UNISOLVE is not a standalone tech platform that hosts UPSHIFT content but a combined Learning and Challenge Management System designed to support teachers in delivering UPSHIFT in secondary schools.
Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

Digital development requires high levels of investment, which (in the case of UNISOLVE) has been leveraged across multiple States and countries. India’s world-leading ICT industry has made this investment cost-effective from a global perspective. There is potential for other countries to leverage the investment already made into UNISOLVE. Small-scale investments into digital platforms at a single country level do not typically represent good value for money for UNICEF in the long term. However, the process of multi-country co-design has enabled a large enough investment to re-design the curriculum, learning journey and technology platform and subsequently validate its deployment in 5 languages. It’s active in nearly 20,000 schools and delivered UPSHIFT to over 275,000 children. It is important to note that digital access remains a challenge in India; thus, printed worksheets and face-to-face delivery remain essential.

In Türkiye, the registration process for UPSHIFT is done through Government systems, building ownership and enabling reach. The UPSHIFT digital platform itself is embedded into Government systems, which allows local institutional ownership from the outset.

Replication led by other partners is a valid model for scaling impact.

The World Bank replication of UPSHIFT in Tajikistan (along with other UNICEF curricula) represents a major endorsement, along with a significant investment into scale. This has expanded its reach to additional audiences. To ensure continuity and quality assurance throughout the replication process, UNICEF partnered to provide technical assistance.

There are also examples of UPSHIFT trained partners then utilising the UPSHIFT methodology in their wider programming and receiving additional funding to scale into new regions or contexts within a country with support from the relevant Country Offices.
Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

9

Systems change takes time!

Full curriculum integration within schools is the end goal for UPSHIFT in many countries and we should not underestimate the time it takes to build the curriculum, gather resources, build capacity and foster an enabling ecosystem. Whilst pursuing this journey, countries should continue to develop extra or co-curricular models to ensure that young people and their communities are able to benefit from UPSHIFT today.

10

Delivering across different types of education systems will continue to be relevant.

Non-formal education systems (where UPSHIFT started) will continue to be an important mechanism to reach some of the most disadvantaged young people. Whilst delivery through school settings is excellent for reaching high numbers of young people and achieving scale, it is also important to highlight the continued value of out-of-school modalities. For young people facing multiple deprivations, the UPSHIFT experience with inspiring mentors and good teamwork can be a life-changing experience. Working towards the long-term goal of transforming education systems around the world is critical, however UPSHIFT must continue to provide opportunities for growth to the young people who cannot access formal education in the here and now.

"When I participated in UPSHIFT, it was the first time someone entrusted me with the management of a project. I realised that I can do even more because I have been trusted more. The project lasted three months but it changed my life forever."

Sejnur Veshall, UPSHIFT Alumni, now Deputy Minister of Youth, Culture and Sports, Kosovo
Recommendations for UNICEF

UNICEF Country Offices

To build long-term sustainability, all UNICEF Country Offices implementing UPSHIFT should be actively exploring integration into formal or non-formal education systems through either the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Youth. Newer countries can accelerate impact by exploring integration into the national education systems from the outset.

UPSHIFT is an opportunity to foster new skills and agency within young people, and to engage with them in new and innovative ways. This can have a profound effect on tackling some of the most pressing problems faced by young people today. For example, given the strong appetite UPSHIFTers to focus on environmental solutions, there is an opportunity to link UPSHIFT with climate education within formal and non-formal education systems.

UNICEF HQ (Programme Division - Office of Innovation, Education, ADAP) and Regional Offices

With 38 countries currently scaling or planning to scale UPSHIFT into education systems, there is a unique moment of opportunity to strengthen the support provided to Country Offices under the stewardship of the Office of Innovation in partnership with the Programme Division and Regional Offices. This will support more rapid and cost-effective scaling for Country Offices and is of particular benefit to smaller countries.

This support would include:

- Strengthening the UPSHIFT community of practice, including regional or context specific (e.g. emergencies) communities of practice where appropriate.
- Investment in shared resources, including investment in resources in Spanish (which would benefit multiple countries) and working together with other HQ Programme teams to build resources that support global areas of thematic interest (e.g. climate change and gender empowerment).
- Building the evidence base for UPSHIFT by developing stronger MandE approaches that look at the impact on students, teachers, schools and the wider community alongside investment in multi-country evaluations.
- Sharing procurement, including regional and global suppliers and consultancy rosters.
- Building and facilitating relevant global or regional partnerships.
- Documenting the different costing models for UPSHIFT across different contexts in more detail.
UNICEF HQ and RO teams plus ICT teams

Small scale digital investments (in platforms or content) should be avoided. If there is demand from Country Offices, a central digital success plan should be developed by the Office of Innovation and ICT, building on the success and learnings of UNISOLVE. This should consider:

1. Long term sustainability in relation to platform ownership
2. A stable technical platform able to host hundreds of thousands of students, delivering both content hosting and challenge management.
3. A pedagogical approach that is adapted for digital delivery in schools (e.g. teacher facilitated, blended learning)
4. Age-appropriate differentiation (e.g. different curricula for 10-14, 15-18 and over 18 if in TVET etc.)
5. High quality interactive content which is global (in characterization) but adaptable (in terms of language)
Acknowledgements

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Photo Credits

4: Rita (in the front) and her team members from "Gyumriver" team, finished installing the net over the Gyumri river which will collect garbage and prevent further garbage accumulation in the river. © UNICEF/UN0462644/Sanchez
9: Fathimath Maona binth Anis, 15, at her school in Dhiffushi, Maldives. © UNICEF/UN0543153/Faheem
12: Nurjan Tolibova, 17, photographed in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. © UNICEF/UN0433581/Fazylova
14: Arsene Gerard Bigirmana (17) in his school, Nyanza Lac 3, on September 13, 2022 in Nyanza, Burundi. © UNICEF/UN0770113/Prinsloo
16: Monia (left), 23 years old, is a Jordanian university graduate from Tafileh. © UNICEF/UN0425165/Thaulow
17: The 14th edition of UPSHIFT in Albania for cleaner air. © UNICEF/Albania
19: A group of young people studying in the opening of the Canbolat Youth Center in Kilis, Gaziantep. © UNICEF/UN0593315/Karacan
20: UPSHIFT Social Impact Workshop organized by the Innovations Lab and UN Women, UNICEF Innovations Lab Kosovo. © Rinë Fetahu
22: Sofia, who is training to be a psychologist, is currently in her second year of the university in Kropyvnytskyi. Together with other students, she has found a way to help – by taking part in the UPSHIFT programme supported by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). © UNICEF/UN0789499/Maiorov
Case Study: INDIA

Scaling UPSHIFT into Education Systems

May 2023
UPSHIFT in India
Rapidly scaling into formal education systems through education, innovation and Government partnerships.

UPSHIFT India Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Cohort</td>
<td>Mainly 10-14 years old (extending to 18 in one State)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants</td>
<td>273,724 students completed a full UPSHIFT learning journey as of March 2023.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Setting</td>
<td>Government run secondary schools as a teacher-delivered extra-curricular activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>A focus on Learning delivering: 1. 21st century skills [innovation and entrepreneurship]. 2. STEM and social purpose development, recognizing young people as innovators and the next generation of inventors. 3. Enhanced teacher and school capacity to support the ambitious new National Education Policy or the State level equivalent education policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical Reach</td>
<td>Q1 2023 - 4 States: Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu (Combined population &gt; 200 million people)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Government Partners | State level partners:  
- Department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Tamil Nadu  
- Entrepreneurship Development and Innovation Institute (EDII) Tamil Nadu  
- Department of Education, Tamil Nadu  
- Telangana State Innovation Cell  
- Department of IT, Telangana  
- Department of Education, Telangana  
- Department of Education, Karnataka  
- Samagra Shikshana Karnataka  
- Department of Education, Andhra Pradesh  
National partners:  
- National Innovation Foundation (NIF)  
- Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) |
| Implementing Partners |  
- Inquilab Foundation (Knowledge and tech partner in piloting and co-creating a localised UPSHIFT including UNISOLVE, the underlying tech platform and digital content).  
- Seventh Sense (implementation partner)  
- Rapidly scaling into formal education systems through education, innovation and Government partnerships.  
- Inquilab Foundation (Knowledge and tech partner in piloting and co-creating a localised UPSHIFT including UNISOLVE, the underlying tech platform and digital content).  
- Seventh Sense (implementation partner) |
Digital development requires high levels of investment, and small-scale investments into digital platforms do not typically represent good value for money for UNICEF in the long term. Such investments can be offset by working across multiple States and countries. In the case of UNISOLVE, development was facilitated with Set Aside funding and was supported by the Office of Innovation in Bhutan and the Maldives. India’s world-leading ICT industry has made this investment a cost-effective one from a global perspective, and there is potential for other countries to leverage the investment that has already been made multi-country co-design has enabled a large enough investment to re-design the curriculum, learning journey and technology platform cost-effectively.

It is also important to remember that digital access remains a challenge within India. To date, students have typically accessed the curriculum through shared viewing on a school device or through (typically borrowed) mobile phones. Thus, the printed worksheets are also a vital accompaniment.
A policy reform which is aiming to focus more on competency-based curricula provides fertile ground for UPSHIFT advocacy and adoption.

A new National Education Policy was released in 2020, the first major revision since the 1980s, and focuses strongly on education for the 21st century. Its aims to “make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable” are in alignment with UPSHIFT, thus representing an opportunity to develop a natural partnership with the Government.

UPSHIFT is a powerful vehicle for cross-sectoral ministerial engagement.

UPSHIFT delivers against cross-sectoral objectives for UNICEF (e.g. Education and Adolescent Development among other thematic areas). Similarly, UPSHIFT can deliver against cross-sectoral objectives for Government Departments. However, UNICEF needs to actively broker these relationships by demonstrating how UPSHIFT can address different policy objectives using deliberate advocacy strategies. In India, UPSHIFT is in alignment with the new National Education Policy, and simultaneously speaks to the Government’s objectives relating to ICT, STEM, micro-entrepreneurship and innovation. YuWaah (Generation Unlimited India) has played a crucial role in developing relationships with new ministries and demonstrating the value of UPSHIFT in meeting cross-sectoral objectives. In Tamil Nadu and Telangana, the Department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and the State Innovation Cell have been proactive and instrumental in securing buy-in and engagement from the Departments of Education.
Key Learnings

Capacity building and creating incentives for teachers and Local Government officers is vital and requires ongoing planning and investment.

UPSHIFT represents a very different pedagogical approach for teachers. Rather than imparting knowledge, as UPSHIFT mentors, they are being asked to facilitate student-led, project-based, and peer-to-peer learning. These are skills that can be used not just in UPSHIFT delivery, but in day to day teaching. However, ongoing investment will be required to further build and maintain this capacity, recognising the importance of providing incentives (e.g. certification) for teachers. It is critical to work with State and National Education Departments to integrate UPSHIFT training into in-service and pre-service teacher training. This needs to be linked with other ongoing education interventions, including curriculum reform, teacher training and student assessment.

The Challenge dimension of UPSHIFT is an important incentive and drives coherence of timetabling.

Culminating the UPSHIFT learning programme in a challenge has been crucial in building a coherent school-based UPSHIFT programme. An open challenge around finite problem areas is issued, empowering students to select an area of their choice, craft their own problem Statement, and research and build solutions through the UPSHIFT learning programme. The best solutions are then selected for incubation (seed funding and mentorship). The challenge is a strong incentive for schools, teachers and students to participate and for Government officials to own the results. It ensures higher completion rates because it is time-bound and promises finite rewards and recognition upfront. The challenge also builds a powerful narrative of young people as change-makers. The accompanying timetable brings structure to the programme. However, aligning with the school calendar causes challenges for UNICEF as there may not be a match with funding and contracting timetables.
Brief Overview of UPSHIFT Evolution in India

UPSHIFT has been piloted iteratively, with significant growth and evolution across each piloting phase. State-level Governments were engaged in the first pilot and have been vital partners in each subsequent pilot, both in vision and delivery. The first UPSHIFT pilot took place in February 2019 in Andhra Pradesh. It was a small, face-to-face boot camp for 60 students. This pilot was led by a WASH specialist who had experienced UPSHIFT in Tajikistan, with youth-led WASH solutions being highlighted as part of a global WASH conference.

By running a small-scale pilot, the UNICEF team could test the methodology for themselves and build stakeholder engagement. As the budget was minimal, they could quickly iterate and learn. They also leveraged an existing Education Department event. They facilitated the engagement of other State level ministries (Innovation and Rural Water and Sanitation) and corporate partners to act as judges for the pitching session.

The second pilot was launched in 2020 on an entirely different scale of magnitude, as it was responding to a Telangana State Government call for school-based learning solutions that would support them in operationalizing their ‘one innovator per family’ aim. The partnership with Inquilab was initiated at this stage, with investment provided for curriculum adaptation and developing a digital platform. Without the initial pilot, advocating for investment into a digital platform would have been challenging. This second pilot was followed by a third cycle in Telangana and during the COVID pandemic, enabling UNICEF to test a scalable model, reaching 49000 students across both cycles.

The fourth cycle (in progress during the 2022-23 academic year) has seen 10x growth, reaching over 224,677 students across 18,980 schools in 4 States (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, with a combined population of over 200 million). Simultaneously the programme is being replicated in the Maldives and Bhutan. By intentionally combining investment (across four States and two additional countries), it was possible to revise the technology platform, pedagogy and content completely. Within India, combining investment across four States made it possible to operationalize partnerships that have enabled a new approach to teacher training and school support.

Given the size and diversity of India, there was a solid mandate to design for scale, multiple languages and systems integration from the start. This investment now benefits scale-up in India and smaller countries that could not invest in a technology-enabled approach to UPSHIFT.
Policy Context

There are around 1.5 million schools across India and education delivery is primarily the responsibility of State Governments. There are national policies and programmes, but States can choose to develop their own education policies and conversely there are some national investment programmes (such as the Atal Innovation Mission tinkering labs) that work directly with individual schools, largely bypassing State Governments. At the State level, there are Government run and Government aided schools, as well as private schools.

The new National Education Policy, which was introduced in 2020, emphasizes the development of 21st century skills as illustrated by the quote below:

“[..] with the quickly changing employment landscape and global ecosystem, it is becoming increasingly critical that children not only learn, but more importantly learn how to learn. Education thus, must move towards less content, and more towards learning about how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative and multidisciplinary, and how to innovate, adapt, and absorb new material in novel and changing fields. Pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable.” ¹⁷

As India has a thriving technology and innovation ecosystem with both state-level and national actors, as well as many international and national private sector employers, UPSHIFT is quite relevant to the country.

Government Partnerships

To date, UPSHIFT in India has been delivered in partnership with state-level Government partners, through Government and Government-aided schools. The Education Ministries have been key partners, enabling access to schools, teachers and ultimately students through their state and district-level structures. However, in many states, the lead ministry that has driven the programme has not been the Education Department, but an Innovation or Enterprise focused ministry. There are differences in each state relating to objectives, Government funding, the targeted age range and the incubation process. However, the UPSHIFT powered by UNISOLVE is the common delivery model across all states and the overall journey for students and teachers is very similar.

¹⁷ The New Education Policy
There are 28 states and 8 union territories in India. Each state is sub-divided into districts, with 733 districts in total. Each state can be considered as equivalent to a country in terms of population size and certain characteristics, such as language and ethnicity. This is highly relevant for UNICEF when building new programmes and digital platforms for multi-country scale. The content on UNISOLVE is currently available in English, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Dhivehi (for the Maldives).

**Figure 1: Population comparison by State**

**UPSHIFT powered by UNISOLVE: Programme Overview**

Teachers currently deliver the UPSHIFT programme (known locally as the Schools Innovation Programme) as an extra-curricular activity within schools. Teachers are trained to play the role of mentors to groups of students. UPSHIFT is framed around problem-solving for the SDGs, delivering learning around innovation and entrepreneurship. Due to the heavy engagement of science teachers, there has been a strong focus on STEM solutions, although this has not been a conscious programme design choice.

The programme is facilitated through UNISOLVE, a digital platform developed to support teachers in delivering UPSHIFT through a blended learning approach. UNISOLVE has two components – a Learning Management System (LMS) and a Challenge Management System (CMS) - designed specifically to host UPSHIFT and challenge the CMS to facilitate integration into formal education systems. The platform and content have had two upgrades since the initial digital pilot in 2020 and will be upgraded in 2023 following the most recent cycle, which will include feedback from four states and one other country, the Maldives.

The LMS hosts UPSHIFT content enabling students to work in teams while gaining practical problem-solving and design-thinking experience. The CMS helps student teams to submit their innovative ideas, with the top teams being selected to attend prototyping boot camps at the district and then state level. The most promising solutions receive investment and incubation support.
## Detailed UPSHIFT delivery model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>KEY ACTIVITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| State-level Planning                | - Government partnership development and planning  
- Engage all necessary Government departments and implementation partner(s)  
- Secure political buy-in and support                                                                                                               |
| Capacity building (Local Government)| - Capacity building and development of incentives for Local Government partners (District Nodal Officers who typically oversee 100-400 schools)  
- 2-day immersive, in-person training session with 75% (1.5 days) focused on delivering a Human Centered Design (HCD) / UPSHIFT experience and 25% focused on explaining how the UPSHIFT programme runs |
| School Recruitment                  | - Schools notified of UPSHIFT through Department of Education communication channels  
- Headteacher signs up schools and nominates one teacher as the UPSHIFT mentor                                                                       |
| Teacher capacity building           | - Teacher capacity building (either face to face or virtual) with teachers receiving certificate of appreciation from UNICEF and partners  
- Teachers sign up to UNISOLVE to access UPSHIFT content                                                                                             |
| Programme delivery (skills development) | - Each teacher selects students to participate in UPSHIFT. The recommendation is for each school to have a group of 25-30 students participating in UPSHIFT, in teams of 2-5. Teachers are encouraged to ensure diversity (gender, ability) upon selection.  
- Students will typically complete the main learning journey for UPSHIFT within a 10 week window                                                                                                         |
| Idea submission and selection       | - Each student team is invited to submit a solution via UNISOLVE  
- Ideas are evaluated in 3 stages by trained volunteers and domain experts, with the top 10 most promising ideas being invited to the district bootcamp                                                                 |
| District level Bootcamps            | - A 2-day bootcamp to focus on developing and prototyping ideas, using the design thinking process.  
- At the end of the bootcamp, one team is selected from each district to participate in the state-level bootcamp                                                                                               |
| State level Bootcamps               | - State-level bootcamp for typically 30-40 teams for 2 days to further develop and refine ideas and select the top ideas for incubation, investment and mentorship.                                                                 |
| Incubation and Investment           | - Investment, incubation and mentorship varies by state, but is typically led by universities and incubators, and will involve investment into some, or all, of the teams that attain this level.  
- At the national level, YuWaah also facilitates access to national incubation opportunities, including through the National Innovation Foundation and Atal Innovation Mission |
Current UPSHIFT Model

UPSHIFT powered by UNISOLVE: Learning Management System

The UNISOLVE platform guides teachers through the UPSHIFT programme, with teachers signing student teams up via the platform. There is a course to support teachers (with video content), along with FAQs and pre and post-surveys.

Students will typically complete the main learning journey for UPSHIFT within a 10-week window following registration. Although the UNISOLVE platform allows for individual student registration and access to materials, the lack of digital access means that students typically access the digital content as a group, often through a computer in a school or on a teacher’s mobile device. The worksheets are printed out for student teams to complete.

The overall learning journey takes approximately 28 hours. Ideally, students spend around 3-4 weeks working through the online content and worksheets. However, the exact format and timing depend on the individual mentor (teacher) and the groups.

There are 6 different modules. Each one has 4 or 5 videos lasting 5-10 minutes. The videos are animated and designed to mimic the classroom experience of UPSHIFT, with one teacher mentor and a small group of students working together and discussing different issues and challenges. After watching the videos, there is an interactive quiz.

Additional learning materials (e.g. infographics and PDF sheets) are shared in response to the answers. At the end of each module, there is a worksheet with activities to consolidate learning and enable teams to start working together on their own UPSHIFT projects. Teachers and students can download the worksheets and then upload them when completed. To be able to participate in the State Level Challenge component of UPSHIFT, it is now mandatory to upload the worksheets onto the platform to demonstrate that students are applying their learning.

Figure 3: Screenshot of UNISOLVE platform for teachers
Current UPSHIFT Model

The CMS has numerous levels to reduce the number of ideas from tens of thousands to around 50, engaging hundreds of reviewers through the different stages.

**Level 1** focuses on screening and filtering any poor ideas and ‘junk’ that has been uploaded to the system. This doesn’t need high levels of skill and is done through a simple upvote/downvote process on the application. The numbers vary, but, for example, level 1 could involve starting with 10,000 ideas and reducing it to 5,000.

**Level 2** engages reviewers with some subject matter expertise, and each idea is allocated to at least 3 reviewers. Each reviewer gives a percentage rating for the idea, and each idea has a final average rating, enabling an overall ranking. Level 2 could involve reducing from 5,000 to 1,000 ideas.

**UPSHIFT powered by UNISOLVE: Challenge Management System**

A key differentiator for UNISOLVE is that it is an integrated Learning and Challenge Management System. A Challenge Management System (CMS) is vital to manage any large-scale review of ideas and subsequent scaling of UPSHIFT into the broader education system. Using two different methods would create significant overhead regarding the technology itself and the cost and time to train teachers in using it. In India, state Governments typically have their own Learning Management Systems (LMS) for schools. There would be no appetite from state Governments to utilize UNISOLVE if it were only an LMS. The interest in UNISOLVE is because of the combination of Learning and Challenge Management and the content and wraparound programme.
Current UPSHIFT Model

Level 3 uses the same process as Level 2, with 3 expert reviewers per idea, seeking to reduce to approximately 100 ideas.

Level 4 is usually a manual process for selecting the final teams for the regional boot camps. Subject matter experts and key partners will do this.

After that, teams are selected by the evaluator panels at the District and State-level boot camps.

The evaluation parameters used throughout the process are:

- **Novelty**: is it a new idea?
- **Usefulness**: is the idea useful and will users want it?
- **Relevance**: does the idea address the problem?
- **Feasibility**: can it be implemented in a cost effective way?
- **Problem Impact**: does this address a major problem?
- **Research and documentation**: how detailed has the research and documentation been?

UPSHIFT Reach

Through investment in a common platform and programme, UPSHIFT’s reach has increased tenfold in the last year, with over 224,677 young people completing the UPSHIFT learning journey. Alongside this, more than 21,000 teachers have been trained throughout 2022-23.

In Tamil Nadu, UPSHIFT launched for the first time in 2022-23, with uptake in 100% of Government run schools. The State Government’s aim for academic year 2023-24 is to double the number of schools participating by also engaging private schools and the nationally controlled Central Board of Secondary Schools (CBSE) schools.
Future Plans

As this fourth cycle of UPSHIFT powered by UNISOLVE concludes, there is strong momentum and an opportunity to build upon the successes to date. The scaling strategy has multiple layers, working with both state and national Government partners, particularly the Ministry of Education, Atal Innovation Mission and National Innovation Foundation, and continuing to convene across sectors. In summary:

1. Build on existing successes within the 4 states, developing UPSHIFT as an add-on activity that delivers entrepreneurial skills in line with the National Education Policy and state-level education policies:
   a. Strengthen programme reach from the existing pilot states and Government partner engagement, expanding the number of schools and participation rates within the schools.
   b. In Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, work with Education in using Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) as a platform in partnership with the Atal Innovation Mission to scale learning in other states.
   c. Collect all lessons learnt to update and strengthen the programme, aiming to start programme delivery in July 2023.

2. Replicate UPSHIFT in up to 4 new states:
   b. Implement with schools from July 2024.

3. Work towards full curriculum integration, leveraging multiple entry points:
   a. On request of the Secretary of State for School Education, UNICEF will be working with the National Council of Education, Research and Training (NCERT) to integrate UPSHIFT into 14,500 PM Shri schools to demonstrate implementation of the new National Education Policy.
   b. Working with Telangana’s State Council of Education, Research and Training, pilot full UPSHIFT integration into the curriculum in 1000 schools.

4. Establish convergence with the National Innovation Foundation’s (NIF) Inspire MANAK challenge for student ideas. This programme already engages millions of school students across every state and district of India in a challenge that offers small cash investments to upwards of 100,000 successful ideas. NIF is already partnering to deliver teacher training and incubation support for UPSHIFT. Working together, the UPSHIFT curriculum will strengthen the outcomes of the Inspire MANAK challenge.
## UPSHIFT in Jordan

Institutionalising UPSHIFT through the Ministry of Youth

### UPSHIFT Jordan Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Cohort</td>
<td>Vulnerable young people aged 13-24 from both refugee and host communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants</td>
<td>55,012 young people completed the UPSHIFT learning journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Setting</td>
<td>Non-formal education: Multi-modal delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ministry of Youth social innovation incubators: Currently 3 with plans to expand to 12 in total (1 per Governate) by 2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• UNICEF run Makani centres (10): The centres provide opportunities for both refugees and youth from host communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 3 incubators in Syrian refugee camps under direct implementation by Syrian refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Six Mobile innovation labs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A new digital portal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>With a focus on vulnerable groups:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal empowerment of young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Building transferable skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Entrepreneurship as a skillset and mindset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Youth social enterprises providing employment for founders as well as increased resilience for the communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical Reach</td>
<td>Nationwide coverage across Jordan, including within refugee camps and informal tented settlements. The mobile innovation labs focus on identifying and reaching the most vulnerable youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Partners</td>
<td>• Ministry of Youth (key partner for institutionalising UPSHIFT within non-formal education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ministry of Social Development (UPSHIFT is additionally run within some of their spaces)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship (participate in seed funding jury process, provide technical expertise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Partners</td>
<td>There are many different partners, including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Jordan River Foundation, a key UPSHIFT implementing and knowledge partner from UPSHIFT inception in Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Jordan Start, a leading business accelerator within Luminus Technical University College, who provide further incubation and acceleration support to the most successful ventures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Learnings

1

Ministry of Youth is a viable partner for institutionalisation when they have established spaces, budget and staff, and there is an enabling policy environment.

In Jordan, the Ministry of Youth is a viable partner for institutionalization. The current Youth Strategy has been adopted by the Cabinet and includes activities and measures that relate to the implementation of training activities around UPSHIFT-style, youth-led initiatives and ventures. The Ministry of Youth is committing space, core budget and staff to facilitate the institutionalization of UPSHIFT by the end 2024.

2

Capacity building for Government staff is vital, needs to be carefully planned and requires attention and investment.

Delivering UPSHIFT is very different from many other non-formal education programmes, as trainers use the UPSHIFT curriculum to facilitate a process of project based learning by doing. Given the significant component of peer based and self-learning, it is necessary to invest in a longer-term ‘buddying’ programme that follows phases of observation, co-facilitation and lead facilitation.

3

Hosting a National Challenge (Urdon Mubtaker) creates opportunities for youth and is a powerful partnership vehicle.

The national challenge is a powerful vehicle for building partnerships. A large number of Government ministries, accelerators, NGOs and private sector partners now engage at different parts of the process from outreach through to idea selection and mentorship. The network building has been central to reaching a wider cohort of young people.

4

Build the ecosystem, with a clear understanding of UNICEF’s role.

UNICEF has successfully built a range of ecosystem partners, enabling more targeted mentorship and business development support for the most promising ventures through organizations with relevant expertise. UNICEF plays a bridging role as the UPSHIFT programme reaches vulnerable young people who might have brilliant ideas but would not otherwise have access to accelerators and incubation opportunities. The journey for young people with the most promising ideas continues beyond the UPSHIFT programme with these ecosystem partners.
Jordan was one of the earliest adopters of UPSHIFT. Adapting the curriculum from Kosovo in 2016, it is known locally as the Social Innovation Programme. This adaptation was made in partnership with the Jordan River Foundation, their trainers, young people themselves, the Amani Institute and the Office of Innovation. The primary purpose was to have a more extended programme, focusing more on skills development, that would enable time and space for young people to form teams and explore potential issues within their communities before selecting a problem to solve. This is a key difference from the original Kosovo model, which has an outreach process that supports young people to apply to UPSHIFT as part of a team and with an identified problem they want to solve. The adapted curriculum was subsequently open-sourced by the Office of Innovation as UPSHIFT: Social Innovation Skills. Phase 1 focuses on building social innovation skills, and Phase 2 focuses on turning an idea into a social venture. Further information on the curriculum is provided in Section 4.4.

UNICEF Jordan also uses the UPSHIFT boot camp model, called Hackathons, as part of its annual nationwide social innovation challenge programme. Further information is included in Section 4.5.

Since 2016, the UPSHIFT programme has been delivered in various settings, including Makani centres, mobile innovation labs, which then became incubators, within refugee camps and now within Ministry of Youth-hosted non-formal education centres.

The UPSHIFT programme was initially seen as an extension of the Life Skills programme. However, it was not integrated within it but viewed as a post-programme opportunity for graduates. In 2018, scaling and institutionalization were initially focused on combining and condensing UPSHIFT Phase 1 and the life skills programme and rolling out through the whole network of Makani centres and other national life skills programmes (e.g. 200+ MOY youth centres). However, throughout 2019-20, the focus changed to developing a smaller number of social incubator programmes to host the UPSHIFT programme and wrap-around design and entrepreneurship opportunities. This was because the quality of training and social enterprise development couldn’t be replicated at this level of scale through existing networks.

Current UPSHIFT Model
(In the non-formal education system)

Policy Context

Jordan has a young population with 63% under the age of 30. However, there are high levels of youth unemployment, with 30% of young men and 47% of young women not in employment, education or training. Additionally, Jordan hosts 2.7 million refugees, including 1.3 million fleeing the conflict in Syria. Whilst the majority of refugees are living in host communities, 130,000 still live in refugee camps.

A key challenge that Jordan faces is that over one third (37%) of young people who are about to join the labour market prefer to work in the public sector, while 11.5% wish to establish their own entrepreneurial business. To address this, the Government of Jordan included entrepreneurship skills development as a core component of the Jordan Economic Growth Plan 2018-2022 and the National Youth Strategy 2019-2022. The objective is to foster an entrepreneurial mindset in young people and to promote cultural acceptance of entrepreneurship for one’s livelihood. Ministries have begun promoting policies to support young people’s resilience, leadership, social consciousness, and creativity skills to enable them to take control of their own lives and play an active role in the development of their communities. UPSHIFT seeks to address interest and skills in entrepreneurship, given both the low levels of interest, the skills mismatch and the high levels of unemployment.

In 2004, Jordan became the first country in the MENA region to have a National Youth Strategy. However, the most recent Youth Strategy (2019-2025) is the first to have been adopted by the Cabinet. The objectives of the youth strategy align with UPSHIFT, especially insofar as prioritizing building a new generation that is empowered, capable of creativity and innovative. Many of the Youth Strategy’s themes resonate with UPSHIFT, including emphasis on education and technology, citizenship, engagement and leadership, and entrepreneurship and economic engagement. Objective 4 specifically relates to building the capacity of young people and their partners to identify and manage effective initiatives, with UNICEF identified as one of the delivery partners. This provides a clear and measurable mandate to support the institutionalization of UPSHIFT.

The Ministry of Youth already hosts 3 of its own social innovation incubators which are the physical spaces in which UPSHIFT takes place. As part of the institutionalisation process, UNICEF is supporting the Ministry to open 9 new spaces to ensure there is one per Governate. UPSHIFT will continue to run in additional UNICEF-led spaces as long as there is funding available, however, the incorporation of UPSHIFT into MoY facilities, plans and budgets is key to ensure the long-term sustainability of the programme.

Today, there is dual reporting to both the Ministry and UNICEF.

The process of institutionalizing UPSHIFT with the Ministry of Youth

The Ministry of Youth is the accountable body for delivering the objectives relating to UPSHIFT in the National Youth Strategy. Having already worked with the Ministry of Youth to institutionalize a separate life skills programme, UNICEF Jordan has a strong relationship with this partner. Key learnings from this process are also relevant to UPSHIFT:

- Building buy-in and ownership through the utilization of a foundational global UNICEF curriculum that was contextualised through a co-design process in collaboration with Government, local partners and local youth.
- Stimulating Government ownership through progressive cost sharing which involved gradually increasing financial contributions from the Government while finding cost efficient approaches for implementation.
- Building the capacity of Ministry staff including 445 staff members and over 2000 volunteers receiving training.
- Supporting the Ministry of Youth to establish a Programme Management Unit whose staff were trained on effective monitoring and evaluation (MandE), reporting and evidence generation, project and financial management, as well as communication. Today, there is dual reporting to both the Ministry and UNICEF.

The commitment is already secured for institutionalization and the practical steps include:

- Establishing physical spaces within Ministry youth centres (Social Innovation Incubators).
- Ensuring funds are allocated within the Ministry’s budget, including for the training and seed funding activities.
- Developing standard operating procedures.
- Capacity building of staff and volunteers in terms of training, programme management, evidence generation and other necessary roles.
- Technical assistance to integrate into existing Ministry structures and/or build additional capacity as required.
- Ongoing technical support (which is reducing over time).
Current UPSHIFT Model

The technical support and capacity building is undertaken by the Jordan River Foundation on behalf of UNICEF. There has been significant investment in capacity building to enable transfer of the programme. Though challenging at times, the most promising model of capacity building involves training the trainer programmes alongside buddying Jordan River Foundation facilitators with staff from the Ministry of Youth. Today, the 3 established Ministry of Youth social incubators are run entirely by Government staff and only receive observations and assistance from the Jordan River Foundation as needed.

Other Government and Strategic Partners

The Jordan River Foundation has been a key partner in the development and implementation of UPSHIFT since its inception in Jordan.

Along with the Ministry of Youth, partners include the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) and the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship (MoDEE). The MoSD hosts several Makani centres where UPSHIFT activities take place. The MoDEE has been engaging with the programme more recently as jury members and by providing technical expertise. Discussions about running UPSHIFT within their Knowledge Spaces equipped with digital equipment, tools and machines are underway.

Jordan Start is a powerful accelerator programme within Luminus Technical University College. It focuses on more established ventures, and UPSHIFT provides a pipeline of new ventures for the accelerator. Winners of the challenge often receive additional seed funding and support from Jordan Start. The accelerator will also sometimes refer entrepreneurs whose ideas are too early for Jump Start to UPSHIFT. Additionally, UNDP, WFP and other local incubators and accelerators provide technical support and business development support for implementation.
Current UPSHIFT Model

Other Government and Strategic Partners

The main UPSHIFT programme is being institutionalized through the Ministry of Youth and is known as the Social Innovation Programme. It is run in incubators across the country, including in mobile innovation labs and and at refugee camps. In addition to the full UPSHIFT offer, the incubators offer technical training along with physical space and the opportunity to network.

Each incubator runs an average of four UPSHIFT cycles per year, with around 25 participants aged 13-24 in each one. Each cycle has one facilitator and can have other volunteers present, such as a young committee member from the youth centre or a young graduate.

Two phases cover separate curricula, with a pitching (jury) phase after each. The most promising teams and ideas are selected at each phase to continue to the next phase. Phase 1 is a minimum of 30 hours, and Phase 2 is a minimum of 18 hours. The structure varies depending on the needs of the young people. For example, the timeline is sometimes condensed and delivered as an intensive multi-day workshop. However, it can also run over a 3-month period, with students coming into the incubator for a set number of hours per week.

Other technical trainings (e.g., coding, 3D printing, textiles) are available, depending on their needs and the needs of the idea they are developing. The incubators also have digital fabrication labs, including 3D printers, laser cutting and other tools to support prototyping. The development of digital and design skills is a key Government priority alongside the development of entrepreneurship skills.

![Figure 1: Overview of the full service offering within a social innovation incubator](image-url)

[22] The additional capacity (e.g. digital fabrication labs) is only within Ministry of Youth-owned centres – the existing 3 and 9 forthcoming centres. UNICEF-run Makani centres do not have this level of equipment thus, the MoY centres are considered the main hubs for the incubators.
The modules in Phases 1 and 2 are shown in Figure 2. Phase 1 focuses on developing teams, identifying community challenges and developing ideas. At the end of Phase 1, the jury selects promising ideas and teams to progress to Phase 2. Phase 2 focuses on developing the concept into a viable social venture. The Phase 2 jury will allocate seed funding (with the availability also somewhat determined by the UNICEF budget). If teams are unsuccessful in pitching for seed funding, they can repeat Phase 2 with another idea. The incubation phase includes seed funding and mentorship. The mentorship programme varies, depending on the needs of the individuals, teams and their projects. There is some group mentorship, subject-specific sessions, and then some one-to-one mentorship, depending on the needs of individuals and teams.

Those who successfully complete UPSHIFT receive a certificate from the Ministry of Youth, Jordan River Foundation and UNICEF.

The cost per young person of running the UPSHIFT programme (excluding seed funding) is USD 49.

The National Challenge
With various partners, UNICEF Jordan runs an annual national challenge (or hackathon), Urdon Mubtaker (translates to Jordan Innovate in English). An extensive outreach programme encourages young people to apply in teams to the challenge. Outreach occurs in schools through the Jordan River Foundation’s programmes and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education. Outreach is also conducted through the Ministry of Youth’s social innovation incubators, Makani centres, social media and other youth programmes and partners. The most promising teams are selected to participate in hackathons within the 12 Governates. Following the jury process in the national challenge, seed funding of up to USD1000 for prototyping and further funding of up to USD 5000 is allocated along with mentorship support.
The most important and immediate future focus is to complete the institutionalization process for UPSHIFT with the Ministry of Youth. This should finish in the first half of 2024, 7-8 years after the initial UPSHIFT pilots took place.

There are a number of other areas of development underway, including:

**Digitization of UPSHIFT**

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, a digital UPSHIFT platform was developed which is now live and hosted by the Jordan River Foundation. The development was intensive and Shift Phase 1 is now available on the platform through a mixture of videos, quizzes and worksheets. Presently, there are approximately 500 active users on the platform. Further work is required to develop Phase 2 and to explore how to bring mentorship models alongside the platform. It is also unclear whether JRF or the Ministry of Youth will host the platform in the long term. This will be determined as part of the institutionalization process.

**Development of thematic UPSHIFT**

There have been two successful thematic UPSHIFT events, one focusing on food and food security in partnership with the WFP, and one focusing on youth climate action. Gathering expertise from other agencies brought structured thematic components (particularly around mentorship) into the UPSHIFT programme. The food security challenge was also an effective way of driving inter-agency collaboration, with a focus on developing scalable, youth-led solutions to the issue.

**Scaling UPSHIFT into the formal education system**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were plans in place to develop UPSHIFT within the formal education system. This would build on experience in non-formal education and also the outreach work that already takes place for the National Challenge within schools. As the pandemic has subsided, integration will be revisited in 2023.
Case Study: KOSOVO

Scaling UPSHIFT into Education Systems

May 2023
UPSHIFT in Kosovo

UPSHIFT Kosovo Summary

Start 2014 for UPSHIFT (with UNICEF Kosovo being the originator of UPSHIFT)
Accreditation process into formal education started 2019, with piloting during 2021-22.

Target Cohort
Grades 10-12 (typically 14-18 year olds)

Number of Participants
30,000 young people completed the UPSHIFT programme through non-formal education.
2,763 students completed UPSHIFT in 6 secondary schools (approximately 5% of secondary schools across Kosovo) and 174 teachers trained.

Education Setting
Government-run secondary schools as an accredited curriculum, with modules delivered through different subjects

Objectives
A focus on institutionalising skills-based approaches to Learning through:
- Strengthening the school curriculum (which is competency based)
- Building teacher capacity and resources to deliver skills-based modules
- Building transferable professional skills for young people

Geographical Reach
To date: 6 schools in 3 municipalities

Government Partners
- Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI)
- Municipalities

Implementing Partners
- IPKO Foundation

Please note that this case study focuses on the work UNICEF Kosovo is undertaking to integrate UPSHIFT into the formal education system. In addition, there is significant delivery of UPSHIFT through a range of non-formal education channels and partners, which is not documented in this case study.
Key Learnings

These learnings are based on interviews with the UNICEF team in Kosovo and also findings and recommendations from an external evaluation of the adolescent skills building and employability programme.

1

Teacher capacity building and incentivization is key throughout in-service and pre-service training

UPSHIFT represents a very different pedagogical approach for teachers. Rather than imparting knowledge, as UPSHIFT mentors, they are being asked to facilitate student-led, project-based and peer-to-peer learning. Teachers that received training were positive about their enhanced ability to build students’ competencies and deliver more participatory, project-based learning. Ongoing investment and the right partnerships (with teacher training bodies) are required to develop and maintain this capacity, recognizing the importance of providing incentives for teachers, for example, through additional credits.

Detailed content and toolkits on adaptation of UPSHIFT into the core curriculum is required, with the expectation (from evaluators) that subsequent use of digital platforms will accelerate and strengthen roll-out through effectively providing a curriculum repository.

As this was a pilot, the purpose was to pursue co-design between existing UPSHIFT partners and educators. The trainers (of teachers) were experienced UPSHIFT mentors but weren’t teachers themselves. This was raised in the feedback by some of the teachers as being tricky because the mentors didn’t have all the answers to questions about how to deliver UPSHIFT in formal education and connect skills-based modules with the formal curriculum.
The Learning Passport, including UPSHIFT content, was rolled out in Kosovo to support education during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the areas of exploration will be how the platform can be used to support educators in building confidence with the UPSHIFT methodology and its delivery.

A formal ‘project week’, running as a Challenge programme, would help to provide structure and incentivization for students, teachers and schools as well as an opportunity to engage municipal Governments as key partners.

The Director of the Municipal Education Department in one municipality has suggested formalizing a ‘project week’ whereby schools would implement UPSHIFT (or Podium) and students would prepare project proposals that could receive implementation funding from the municipality. Another of the pilot municipalities expressed readiness to support youth-led projects with mini grants.

To integrate UPSHIFT effectively into the upper secondary curriculum, there needs to be consideration of assessment tools.

Students reported that they enjoyed participating in UPSHIFT and didn’t receive or request certification. However, for nationwide rollout the grading process for students needs to be developed in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

Key Learnings
Brief Overview of UPSHIFT Evolution in Kosovo

UPSHIFT was developed in Kosovo as one of several innovative skills-building and employability programmes created by Kosovo’s Innovation Lab. First delivered in October 2014, it has evolved significantly. It is now a well-recognized and effective programme focusing mainly on building skills for disadvantaged communities through various non-formal education routes. Today, the country’s Deputy Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports is an UPSHIFT alumnus from the Roma community, which has experienced systemic oppression over the years.

Since 2014, the non-formal education programme has reached more than 30,000 young people and has been replicated in many countries. This case study focuses on institutionalizing UPSHIFT into formal education, recognizing this is a newer area for UNICEF globally. It follows two tracks, namely formal and non-formal education. The formal education portion of the case study explores building institutional capacity and increasing access for young people to transferable skills-building opportunities. The non-formal education portion addresses equity within specific communities of young people living rurally, with disabilities, in the juvenile justice system or identifying as ethnic minorities.

UPSHIFT joins Ponder and Podium as a trio of UNICEF-developed skills-building programmes in Kosovo. Podium is an advocacy for change programme that equips young people to advocate and campaign for change rather than build products or services. Ponder focuses on critical media literacy, with a skills-building programme and internship and mentorship opportunities within journalism and media outlets. Alongside UPSHIFT, these two programmes are highly regarded and relevant within Kosovo.
The Kosovo Curriculum Framework was introduced in 2011 and set out the vision for developing and implementing a learner-centred and competency-based curriculum in Kosovo. It integrates and reflects the fundamental values and principles of human rights, living together, social justice and inclusiveness. The competencies include communication and expression, thinking, quality of learning outcomes, life work and environment, and civic engagement. While the framework was developed in 2011, it has not yet been fully implemented across all schools owing to challenges around insufficient support, the ability to assess students’ competencies and capacity building.

Policy Context
Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe and remains one of the poorest economies in Europe with 18% of the population living below the poverty line. Young people aged 10-24 constitute nearly one third of Kosovo’s overall population, but youth unemployment is high. The percentage of young people who are not employed or in education is at nearly 30%.23

The Kosovo Curriculum Framework was introduced in 2011 and set out the vision for developing and implementing a learner-centred and competency-based curriculum in Kosovo. It integrates and reflects the fundamental values and principles of human rights, living together, social justice and inclusiveness. The competencies include communication and expression, thinking, quality of learning outcomes, life work and environment, and civic engagement. While the framework was developed in 2011, it has not yet been fully implemented across all schools owing to challenges around insufficient support, the ability to assess students’ competencies and capacity building.

Government partnerships for UPSHIFT curriculum integration
The Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture has been a long-standing partner of the non-formal education skills-building programmes. The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) is the critical ministry counterpart for integration into the formal education system. This Ministry has been engaged in UNICEF’s work to institutionalize the three skills-building programmes (UPSHIFT, Ponder and Podium) since 2019. MESTI was initially engaged through workshops, building their interest in the programmes and exploring how they could support the Ministry’s aims around curriculum development. The request to pilot in the formal education system came from the Minister of Education in 2019. After that, initial workshops were held to explore curriculum accreditation with the Division for Curriculum Development and the Division for Teacher Training. MESTI accredited UPSHIFT, Podium and Ponder in early 2020, with the pilots planned to start shortly after that. However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused numerous delays and changes in priorities.

Overview of how UPSHIFT is implemented in formal education

The UPSHIFT pilots for formal education maintain key differences in scope and approach to the existing and non-formal education programmes.

In the formal system, 6 pilot schools were engaged across 3 municipalities, with one gymnasium and one vocational high school selected in each municipality.

Within the pilot schools, teachers from various disciplines were invited to participate in training and could pick which of the three skills-building curricula to focus on. As the school year ended (June / July 2021) 174 teachers self-selected to undertake a 2-day UPSHIFT introduction workshop.

In August 2021, there was a 2-day training with officials from the Ministry responsible for curriculum development to enable them to support teachers and to clarify the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders across UNICEF, implementing partners, the school, the municipality and the Ministry. As UPSHIFT institutionalizes, the part of UNICEF and implementing partners will decrease.

Teachers were able to decide how they integrated UPSHIFT into their lesson plans. Some teachers implemented a full UPSHIFT programme over 1-2 weeks; others would pick certain modules. A few teachers collaborated across subjects, which is a great practice. The open approach to implementation provided rich learning but led to a lack of consistency in the learning opportunity for young people. There was also no clear progression to seed funding and mentorship opportunities, although some young people subsequently joined UPSHIFT cycles in non-formal education to further develop their ideas.

Unintended Outcomes

One unintended positive outcome was that the implementation of the skills-based programmes made schools ‘fun’ for adolescents, who stayed after school hours and engaged teachers in assisting them with their projects. This has been observed in non-formal education settings where, for example, it is not uncommon for UPSHIFT participants to stay well beyond the official boot camp hours. Seeing this replicated in schools with teachers engaging students after hours was encouraging.

The aim is to build in the Challenge dimension specifically for UPSHIFT, linking with the local private sector, municipalities, and innovation hubs to provide seed funding and mentorship. The skills-building component would happen in schools, potentially through the concept of a ‘project week’ whereby UPSHIFT runs over a weeklong period. The seed funding and mentorship component would happen outside of schools.

In addition, the teachers who have been trained in UPSHIFT and have implemented the first cycle can be accredited by UPSHIFT trainers to teach new teachers. This will support adoption, as teacher mentors are better placed to address curriculum and school integration questions.

Future Plans

Looking to the future, the plan is to build on the pilot and scale UPSHIFT into further municipalities, alongside working with the Ministry of Education to integrate the 3 modules into the syllabus for pre-service teacher training. To scale into new municipalities, UNICEF will continue to work alongside the Ministry of Education to develop tools, guidance and capacity building for teachers. There will be a focus on working with the existing and new municipalities, some of whom have been approaching UNICEF for support in adopting the model.
# UPSHIFT in the Republic of Tajikistan

Institutionalising innovation labs within the additional education system

## UPSHIFT Tajikistan Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start</th>
<th>End of 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Cohort</td>
<td>Vulnerable young people aged 14-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants</td>
<td>~3420 UPSHIFT graduates of the 31,310 Innovation Lab graduates. There has been total investment of USD 119,000 in terms of seed funding and 2 private enterprises have been established as a result of UPSHIFT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Setting</td>
<td>Formal education but outside of the school system: Youth Innovation labs are hosted mainly within Centres for Additional Education. Additional education in Tajikistan is part of formal education, functioning to complement education schools with skills and competencies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Objectives | An employability and entrepreneurship focus aiming to:  
- Reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)  
- Build 21st century skills for life and livelihood  
- Create opportunity through building successful youth social enterprises |
| Geographical Reach | 35 innovation labs across 32 districts (representing 50% of districts across the country) on the pathway to national scale of 1 lab per district by 2024 |
| Government Partners |  
- Ministry of Education (primary partner)  
- Committee of Youth  
- Ministry of Labour, Employment and Migration of Population  
- Ministry of Industry and New Technologies |
| Multilateral Partners |  
- The European Union, supporting UNICEF scale up  
- The World Bank, replicating the model with technical support from UNICEF |
Key Learnings

1 Pilot rapidly and iteratively, building towards a vision for scale from day one.

UNICEF Tajikistan was a relatively early adopter of UPSHIFT when the replicability of the model in other contexts was only partially proven. The pilot phase was, therefore, also a test of replication in different contexts. However, an external review identified the cost and time savings for UNICEF Tajikistan in adapting existing curricula rather than writing new curricula. One globally open-sourced curriculum is based on Tajikistan’s adaptations owing to its applicability to local youth. This created a strong vision for scale from 2018 onwards.

Identify viable scale models and partners, and engage them early (whilst remembering young people are the best UPSHIFT advocates).

Government and the well-established network of additional education centres were recognised as key partners for scale at a relatively early stage. UNICEF recognised the importance of advocating with these partners about the potential for UPSHIFT. This was achieved through ongoing engagement and particularly by focusing UPSHIFT on a key Government priority - i.e. hosting a national WASH conference in 2018.

2 A solid underpinning of transferable skills are important to enable young people to unlock the higher-level transferable skills within the UPSHIFT curriculum.

In contexts with very limited transferable skills development within the formal education system, young people may struggle to access elements of the UPSHIFT curriculum around critical thinking, creativity and collaboration and potentially also digital skills. In these contexts, it may be necessary to either build UPSHIFT as an extension to existing life skills programming or to introduce a life skills programme and / or digital skills programme as a preparatory activity.

3 Replication led by other partners (rather than UNICEF) is a valid model for scaling impact

The World Bank replication of UPSHIFT (along with other UNICEF curricula) represents a major endorsement and investment into scale, reaching additional audiences. However, close collaboration and technical assistance have been essential to ensure that quality is maintained.
Brief Overview of UPSHIFT Evolution in the Republic of Tajikistan

UNICEF Tajikistan was one of the earlier adopters of UPSHIFT within UNICEF – the 6th country to launch globally. The initial pilot involved two locations – one urban location with high levels of youth interacting with the juvenile justice system and one just outside the capital city with high numbers of refugees. The initial boot camps yielded insights into the modality and the applicability of the UPSHIFT programme.

Having established the relevance of the UPSHIFT curriculum for young people in Tajikistan, the focus was engaging the Government and other key stakeholders. This was done through hosting a national youth Water and Sanitation Challenge ahead of a global WASH summit hosted in Dushanbe in June 2018. Showcasing 14 innovative youth-led solutions ahead of the summit captured the attention and interest of key stakeholders, including Government partners, setting the stage to embark on a national scale-up strategy.

After that, the curriculum was simplified and contextualized for Tajikistan with support from the design thinking and innovation consultancy, Quicksand. The changes included the addition of an “OBSERVE” module in the UPSHIFT curriculum, transforming outreach meetings to outreach workshops, field research one week before the UPSHIFT boot camp and parent information sessions.

UNICEF Tajikistan translated their contextualized UPSHIFT learning package and the Facilitator’s Manual into English, Russian and Tajik, with the English curriculum subsequently being open-sourced in partnership with the Office of Innovation. Today, it remains the globally published UPSHIFT Bootcamp Curriculum.

As UPSHIFT started to scale, there was an ongoing process of learning and adaptation to reach the innovation lab model which is now being replicated. The most important of these learnings include:

- **Addressing the transferable skills gap.** There is limited delivery of life skills education within the formal education system, so many adolescents experience a gap in transferable skills in order to access the higher level skills such as creativity, problem solving, negotiation, and communication which are developed within UPSHIFT. Introduction of the Adolescent Kit for Innovation and Expression effectively addressed this gap.
- **Introduction of digital skills courses as part** of the core model to address gaps in digital skills that prevented access to UPSHIFT and to broader employability opportunities.
- **Refocusing solely on scale through the** Ministry of Education as part of the broader sustainability strategy.

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Current UPSHIFT Model
(In the additional education system)

Policy Context
The Republic of Tajikistan is a low-income country in Central Asia with an economy heavily reliant on remittances from migrant labourers. Livelihood options are limited for young people, particularly women, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities. Half of the country’s population is under 25, and 41% of youth are not in education, employment or training. Almost half of all adolescents and young people with secondary education cannot find jobs one year after school. As a result, many boys see labour migration as their only option, while many girls focus on marriage and motherhood.

Research shows that the employment problem in Tajikistan is experienced as a “supply” problem rather than a “demand” problem because candidates lack critical skills for the available jobs. The Government is making efforts to move from a knowledge-based education system to a competence-based one to increase the relevance of education for the labour market. The Government of Tajikistan published a National Strategy for Education Development in 2020, which aims to renew national education to improve society’s and people’s well-being.

Government Partnerships for UPSHIFT delivery
From the outset, UNICEF partnered closely with the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan to develop the Adolescent Competency Framework and pilot and scale UPSHIFT and other skills-building programmes.

The critical ministry counterpart for UPSHIFT in Tajikistan is the Ministry of Education, which have a network of 84 Centres for Additional Education (CAE) across the country in 68 districts and towns. These are existing spaces attended by young people in and out of school. As a result, many boys see labour migration as their only option, while many girls focus on marriage and motherhood. They were somewhat under-utilized and typically offered traditional courses.

All but 5 of the current 35 are in CAEs. This means the labs are on Government properties, with the Government partner committing to the classroom for at least 3-5 years of usage. They also provide one staff member and commit to including the Innovation Lab courses in their general programme for the CAE. UNICEF pays for establishing the innovation labs (i.e. renovation, IT equipment, and furniture). UNICEF also finances the lab for the first few years of implementation and provides capacity building for the mentors and staff. The CSO implementing partner provides the other members of staff. It is essential to continue providing technical assistance even after UNICEF’s financial exit to ensure support and capacity for the programme.

[27] Ilmhona.org (2023), Digital Skills Development for Employment Opportunities for Youth in Tajikistan
UNICEF also partnered with the Ministry of Youth and initially opened innovation labs within their properties. However, unstable and donor-dependent funding has made it challenging to institutionalize this programme. Today, there are four innovation labs in youth centres focusing on CAEs. The aim is to have one innovation lab in each district. All three curricula have been co-created with the Ministry of Education and are approved and endorsed by the Ministry as non-formal education curricula. A process is underway to formally recognize UPSHIFT as a curriculum created by UNICEF that can be used more widely than the Innovation Labs.

An independent report from 2019 highlights the following actions by UNICEF Tajikistan that led to a successful partnership with the Ministry of Education and the CAEs:

- Identifying the right ‘entry door’, in this case the Republican Centre of Additional Education Institutions (RCAEI), as it manages educational spaces that need ‘modernization’ to support skills-learning for adolescents;
- Advocating with the RCAEI and its supervising body, the Ministry of Education and Skills, that competency-based education (CBE) would be important to the development of adolescents and the country;
- Providing technical assistance regarding CBE, such as designing and implementing relevant educational programmes;
- Leveraging the partnership to reach a large number of adolescents using existing networks;
- Providing financial resources as needed; and
- Including the RCAEI in all stages of programme implementation to ensure that the staff could develop the capacity for operating CBE programmes in the future.

UPSHIFT implementation in Additional Education

Background

UPSHIFT Tajikistan, known locally as Peshaf, is a non-formal education skills programme that aims to empower adolescents and youth to engage positively with their communities and successfully transition to adulthood and work life. It is delivered through a network of innovation labs that offer three programmes to young people – the Adolescent Kit for Innovation and Expression, digital skills and UPSHIFT.

UPSHIFT focuses on equity and employability/entrepreneurship and is delivered as part of UNICEF’s Innovation Lab model within the Government’s non-formal education system. There are 35 innovation labs across Tajikistan, with 26 more in the pipeline. The first lab was established in 2017, demonstrating rapid, demand-driven growth.

UPSHIFT purposefully maintains a smaller reach in Tajikistan, focusing on the quality of the ideas developed as viable social enterprises and employability opportunities. The UPSHIFT programme dovetails with the Adolescent Kit, which has greater reach and develops transferable skills. In addition, the Innovation Labs are building more purposeful linkages to employability programmes, including impact sourcing.

Figure 1: Pathways from school to work addressed by Tajikistan Adolescent Competency Framework
Recruitment and capacity building of mentors

One mentor works with 2-3 teams. As part of the work to institutionalise UPSHIFT, the Government provides one member of staff to be a mentor and the other mentors are recruited and employed by the CSO partner. Mentors are typically young people themselves, making them relatable to the UPSHIFT participants. Recruiting mentors is one of the most challenging elements, as mentors require a different mindset to the usual trainers and teachers and it takes time to build their capacities. There is an onboarding training for new mentors and an annual refresher for all mentors. There is also a network of 10-12 master trainers who deliver the capacity building alongside UNICEF national staff who have themselves built significant capacity in the UPSHIFT approach. This ensures that there isn’t an over-reliance on one implementing partner. Mentors are responsible for outreach, bootcamp delivery and providing mentorship to teams receiving seed funding.

Recruitment of UPSHIFT participants

Each Lab runs 2-3 UPSHIFT cycles per year and engages around 40-50 young people per cycle. All young people will complete the bootcamp and around half will receive seed funding and mentorship to implement their idea. The Innovation Lab courses are advertised within each CAE’s programme. The CSO partner also undertakes outreach sessions to introduce young people locally to the innovation labs and the opportunity to participate in specific UPSHIFT cycles.

UPSHIFT Learning Journey

The UPSHIFT learning journey is based on the curriculum originally developed by UNICEF Kosovo, with some adaptations for the local context. The curriculum can be viewed online. The more recent focus has been on developing the post bootcamp mentorship and creating stronger links to employability opportunities.

Some UPSHIFT cycles focus on general SDG-related solutions, and some have a thematic focus, such as climate change or healthy lifestyles. The boot camp is typically 4 days long. If boot camps are held during term time, they are usually on consecutive weekends. If they are held during the school holidays, it is typically a 4 day workshop.

At the end of the boot camp, there is a pitching session where 5 of the 10 teams are awarded seed funding of USD300. These teams receive mentorship support through a structured curriculum similar to an incubation programme, focusing on product or service refinement and business development. The implementing partners will often mobilize resources to enhance the mentorship programme.

After completing the boot camp, UNICEF provides a certificate to UPSHIFT participants, but they are not officially recognized by the Ministry of Education or Ministry of Labour. However, past participants have indicated they are well regarded as part of University or scholarship applications.

[31] UPSHIFT Curriculum
Current UPSHIFT Model

Multilateral partnerships

UPSHIFT was one of the first 19 solutions highlighted in 2017 as part of the World Bank’s Solutions for Youth Employability impact portfolio. In 2019, the World Bank in Tajikistan decided to explore the innovation lab model concerning their entrepreneurship development aims.

This is part of a $37 million investment in the Socio-Economic Resilience Strengthening Project (SERSP) as a part of the Risk Mitigation Regime programming in regions bordering Afghanistan. The development objectives of the SERSP are to:

- Strengthen participatory local governance.
- Improve the quality of local infrastructure.
- Increase extracurricular or livelihood opportunities for youth.

The project works with youth at risk of exclusion, inactivity and disaffection to strengthen their social resilience against violence through access to economic opportunities. They are establishing an additional 17 innovation labs within vocational education training and youth development centres. UNICEF provided the initial model and curricula and provided technical expertise and support, including conducting the first training of trainers, recommending implementing partners and supporting mentor recruitment.

Though UNICEF’s partnership with the World Bank has enabled the expansion of UPSHIFT across Tajikistan, both organizations’ respective bureaucratic structures for contracting and financing created challenges that impeded the delivery of technical assistance and should be considered for future projects.

Separately, UNICEF is partnering with the EU to continue the scale-up of the innovation labs within the Centres for Additional Education. This is a €3.2 million programme focused on establishing 50 innovation labs and 5 Impact Sourcing Hubs nationwide.
Future Plans

A number of areas of future focus have already been referenced, including:

- Reaching national scale (one innovation lab per district) in partnership with the EU;
- Continuing to support the World Bank replication of the innovation lab model as a route to scale with a somewhat different audience and Government partnerships; and
- Strengthening the mentorship programme by establishing the first Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in partnership with Khujand State University of Law, Business and Politics.

Alongside this work, UNICEF has been working since the programme inception to develop the sustainability strategy for the Innovation Labs. This work informed the decision to focus on locating Innovation Labs in Centres for Additional Education rather than in Youth Centres, as the Ministry of Education is a viable partner for long-term sustainability.

As of December 2022, the overall sustainability strategy has been drafted and revised in partnership with the Ministry of Education and science.

The strategy involves gradually handing over ownership of the innovation labs to the Government. The available financing means this needs to be a slow and managed process of around 2-4 labs per year. In the meantime, UNICEF will continue to oversee the delivery, support with mentorship and external expertise, and leverage partnerships to strengthen the skills building through Innovation Labs.

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![Figure 2: Four GenU strategic priorities for Tajikistan](image-url)

- **Improved secondary education and skill-building**
  - Improve quality education and competency building in formal education
  - Provide young people outside formal schooling with opportunities for building 21st century skills, training and additional education.

- **Expanded access of youth to employment**
  - Increase the number of quality work opportunities available for young people
  - Improve connection between young people and existing work opportunities

- **Advanced entrepreneurship opportunities for livelihood**
  - Foster entrepreneurship as mindset and livelihood
  - Develop social entrepreneurship as a livelihood and contribution to socioeconomic development

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**Increased equity and youth engagement through digital solutions**

- Provide digital solutions to equip young people as problem-solvers and engaged members of society, helping to create a better world.
- Promote equitable access to quality education, training, employment, entrepreneurship and civic engagement.
Case Study: 
UGANDA

Scaling UPSHIFT into Education Systems

May 2023
# UPSHIFT Uganda Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Cohort</td>
<td>Out-of-school adolescents aged 15-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants</td>
<td>To date: 4,150 young people have participated workshops and bootcamps, having developed 160 innovative solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Setting</td>
<td>Non-formal education spaces: These spaces include the existing Youth Centres of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, non-formal education centres of the Ministry of Education and Sports, community centres of district sub-counties and refugee settlements, and skills-building centres run by different NGOs in the country. Formal education spaces: Innovation Labs and Entrepreneurship Centres of the Makerere University and Makerere University Business School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Objectives | • Build social innovation and entrepreneurship skills in young people  
• Prepare young people for future employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, including income-generating social entrepreneurship. |
| Geographical Reach | Currently, 19 out of 29 Districts of focus as identified within the UNICEF Country Programme (2021-2025) Additional geographic areas at the sub-county level are covered by ILO which is leveraged to implement UPSHIFT |
| Government Partners | • Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) within the Ministry of Education and Sports  
• Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development  
• Ministry of Education and Sports  
• District Local Governments  
• Office of the Prime Minister’s team on refugees (OPM manages refugee work in the country) |
| Strategic Partners | • ILO  
• MTN Foundation  
• Makerere University Business School |
Key Learnings

UNICEF should not implement UPSHIFT by itself but should focus equally on leveraging partnerships for scaling the institutionalization of UPSHIFT as social innovation and entrepreneurship skills training programmes within the formal and non-formal education systems. The partnership with ILO is one example, as ILO is now implementing UPSHIFT in Uganda along with UNICEF under PROSPECTS. Another example is the funding that War Child Canada (one of the pilot implementing partners) has recently received from the Master Card Foundation for a youth skilling programme with i-UPSHIFT methodology as a core part of this programme to increase the reach beyond UNICEF’s own capacity.
UPSHIFT was launched in Uganda under the multi-agency PROSPECTS partnership funded by the Government of the Netherlands. It aims to support adolescents and young people on the move as well as to support the broader UNICEF agenda on Learning to Earning (L2E). It was contextualized for Uganda through a co-creation process jointly with the ILO, one of the five implementing partners within the PROSPECTS partnerships (UNICEF, UNHCR, ILO, WB and IFC).

ILO is the strategic delivery partner for Integrated UPSHIFT (i-UPSHIFT). The two main Government partners are the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) within the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) which oversees youth development work in the country. DIT provides quality assurance services, including accreditation and certification of skills training programmes for the Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) programmes. MoGLSD is the crucial partner as i-UPSHIFT primarily aims to upskill young people, not in education, employment or training.

UPSHIFT is one of the skills-building programmes that UNICEF aims to institutionalize within formal (including TVET) and non-formal education and training systems by 2025. This is to ensure its sustainability and scalability as an alternative skilling opportunity for out-of-school adolescents. To achieve full institutionalization, the i-UPSHIFT module package is being certified as a job market-relevant, non-formal skills training programme by the DIT of MoES through a process that includes close engagement with employers and the private sector. This certification means that core social innovation and entrepreneurship skills provided by UPSHIFT will be recognized as qualifications relevant to the job market by employers. After completing i-UPSHIFT training delivered in different DIT-accredited TVET and other skills training centres, both public and private, young people will be assessed by DIT and receive a certificate that employers will acknowledge.

Makerere University Business Schools is another strategic delivery partner in the process of including UPSHIFT as part of the training it delivers to students and potentially young people who are not in education, employment or training.
UPSHIFT has been co-created together with ILO as ‘Integrated UPSHIFT,’ a youth social innovation and entrepreneurship skills building and mentorship programme that supports learning to earning (L2E) opportunities, bringing UNICEF’s UPSHIFT curriculum with ILO’s curricula on business development into one joint package.

UNICEF and ILO put significant effort into contextualizing and piloting UPSHIFT to marry UNICEF’s content and experience in delivering UPSHIFT with ILO’s Start and Improve Your Business programme. The module used for adaptation was the global UPSHIFT Bootcamp curriculum.\(^2\)

The adaptation process was supported by an NGO, (Bibliothegues Sans Frontieres), which has experience delivering UPSHIFT in neighbouring countries.

BSF (with support from UNICEF and ILO) conducted a Training of Trainers to 40 mentors from different UNICEF and ILO partner organizations, followed by a pilot with seven partner organizations to run UPSHIFT in several districts in Uganda. A follow-up workshop was also conducted to discuss the challenges, mitigation solutions, lessons learnt and best practices. This functioned as a co-creation and localization process for the curriculum/module to be used in Uganda. One of the primary adaptations of the approach is to provide a 2-week mentorship period after the boot camp for all teams before they pitch for seed funding. This was introduced to address typically lower education levels in out-of-school participants which is one specific characteristic of the target group in Uganda. Most adolescents and young people targeted by this programme only have foundational literacy and numeracy.

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\(^2\) Developed by UNICEF Tajikistan, building on UNICEF Kosovo’s original curriculum and open sourced in partnership with the Office of Innovation.
Current UPSHIFT Model

Figure 1: One Cycle of UPSHIFT

Starter Inspiration
- 200-300 adolescents and youth outreach
- 2-hour community outreach
- 2-hour introductory workshop on the value of skills and social impact
- Call for Applications and Team Selection

STEP 1 Social Innovation
- 40-50 adolescents and youth (10 teams of 4-5) empowered with skills to develop innovative solutions
- All teams pitch and 6 teams selected for seed funding (US$1000)

STEP 2 Social Entrepreneurship
- 26-30 adolescents and youth (6 teams) applied the acquired skills to make their solutions real
- 6 prototypes finalized and implemented with seed funding and mentorship

STEP 3 Post-UPSHIFT Opportunities
- Successful teams from several cycles join annual Social Youth Innovators’ Summit to showcase the implemented solutions
- All teams in the Summit obtain a chance for extensive networking with private sector and other donors

Four Phases of the Social Innovation Bootcamp
- PHASE 1 Observe & Understand
- PHASE 2 Design
- PHASE 3 Build & Test Start your own business
- PHASE 4 Make It Real

Large numbers of adolescents and youth
i-UPSHIFT is currently being delivered in non-formal education centres in 19 districts across Uganda. These districts were selected to benefit specifically out-of-school adolescents and other vulnerable young people such as refugees and child mothers. In 15 districts, UNICEF is leading, and ILO is co-leading in 4. 4 CSO partners have been identified to deliver alongside UNICEF.

UNICEF is also building the capacity of the CSO delivery partners. They, in turn, are working with and building the capacity of youth-led organizations while closely working with the district’s local Governments and non-formal education spaces. In each district, the CSO partner works with at least two youth-led organizations to provide 2 mentors per cycle to deliver i-UPSHIFT.

i-UPSHIFT is delivered in three months (cycle). Participants are recruited through community outreach through a 3-hour inspiration and skills-building workshop. Meeting an initial 200-300 adolescents and youth per cycle, 40-50 young people (10 teams) are ultimately selected and can join the Social Innovation boot camp and initial 2 weeks of mentorship. The pitch event takes place at the end of the initial mentorship, where 6 teams (26-30 young people) are selected to receive extended mentorship and seed funds to implement their innovative solutions in their communities. The programme ends with the Final Meet-Up, where youth teams showcase their social innovation projects to public and private stakeholders. The (written) application process creates an expectation that at least one team member has basic literacy skills.
Future Plans

Building on the findings during the pilot in 2022, UPSHIFT aims to:

1. Institutionalize the i-UPSHIFT social innovation and entrepreneurship skills training programme within the non-formal and formal education and training systems, and

2. Ensure that 50,000+ adolescents and young people are upskilled with innovation and entrepreneurship skills to produce 1500+ innovation solutions by 2025.

To achieve full institutionalization, the following four elements need to be strengthened along the way: (1) policy/normative framework, (2) content, (3) capacity and (4) assessment. The development of a normative framework involves not only a Government-costed action plan on Innovation skilling but also the framework on holistic transferable skills training for adolescents in formal and non-formal education systems. i-UPSHIFT’s assessment will be carried out based on the pilot tool that Cyprus University developed. The tool will be presented as the primary tool for the process of certification with DIT as well.
Case Study: BHUTAN

Scaling **UPSHIFT** into Education Systems

September 2023
UPSHIFT in Bhutan

Rapidly scaling into formal education systems through strategic partnerships with Government and NGOs

UPSHIFT Bhutan Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start</th>
<th>2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Cohort</td>
<td>9-24 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants</td>
<td>Presently 12,369 young people through 129 schools, 10 youth centres and 9 colleges. Aiming to scale to 16,000 by end of the 2023-24 academic year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Education Setting | ● Primary schools and lower to upper secondary schools, as a teacher-delivered extracurricular activity with support from implementing partners. This includes integration into the schools based Scouting programme.  
● Youth Centres and colleges |
| Objectives | ● Equip young people with transferable 21st century skills.  
● Increase economic opportunity and social development in Bhutan.  
● Improve adolescent mental health. |
| Geographical Reach | ● All districts are represented in the programme.  
● 22% of the total schools in Bhutan. |
| Government Partners | ● Ministry of Education and Skills Development [Department of School Education]  
● Department of Education Programme [Scouts and Sports Division and Programme and Youth Coordination Division]  
● Royal University of Bhutan |
| Implementing Partners | Different partners are leading implementation in different cohorts of schools and youth centres as follows:  
● Department of School Education (22 schools, alongside providing overall programme oversight and technical support to all schools)  
● The Scouts and Sports Division, Department of Education Programmes (69 schools)  
● Youth Development Fund (28 schools)  
● Loden Foundation (10 schools)  
● Programme and Youth Coordination Division (Department of Education Programmes) (10 Youth Centres)  
● Royal University of Bhutan |
**Key Learnings**

1

**Countries starting UPSHIFT now can rapidly move towards implementation at scale, with the focus of piloting being localisation, capacity building and stakeholder engagement.**

The existing footprint, evidence base and documentation around UPSHIFT has enabled UNICEF in Bhutan to move rapidly from planning and piloting towards scale up in less than two years. Greater success has been achieved as UNICEF engaged government counterparts from the early stages of planning for UPSHIFT’s implementation which built institutional excitement and ownership alongside creating pathways for scale.

2

**Scale can be more rapidly achieved through leveraging partners operating at scale within the formal education system.**

UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Skills Development have a multi-pronged approach to integrating UPSHIFT into formal education systems, working to build the capacity of teachers with the support of long-established NGO partners.

One of the key partners to facilitate scale up is the Scouts. Scouting is a national programme in Bhutan, delivered primarily through the formal education system. Presently, 82% of students are enrolled as Scouts and there is a Scouting presence in all 578 schools across the Kingdom. However, earlier this year there was a directive from the Ministry of Education to roll out Scouting as a whole school programme, rather than as a club. UPSHIFT (with a focus on mental health) is now an integral part of the whole school scouting programme, which is currently implemented in 69 schools. In these schools, all students are enrolled as Scouts, District Education Officers and School Principals are Scout Commissioners and teachers are trained Adult Scout Leaders.

UPSHIFT has also been integrated into the Scout proficiency badge system to enable improved skills development for Scouts, whilst supporting the long-term sustainability for UPSHIFT in Bhutan.

The UPSHIFT programme is in other schools that don’t have a whole school scouting approach. In high schools, it is included in all 43 schools piloting the Business and Entrepreneurship curriculum. Additionally, other NGOs are leading in the rollout within some schools that have neither whole school scouting nor Business and Entrepreneurship.

UPSHIFT is also being delivered through 10 youth centres, reaching more disadvantaged young people.
A similar approach is also replicable in other countries with any national, scaled partner who is already operating in formal or non-formal education. The focus for UNICEF in this case would be to build partner capacity to deliver a different type of learning experience and to network other partners, particularly to support the challenge and incubation phases of UPSHIFT.

In Bhutan, UPSHIFT is being successfully delivered across a wide age range – from 9 to 24 years old. In upper primary, (typically 9-11 years old) lead teachers act as UPSHIFT mentors and play a more significant role in the student’s learning journey. For this cohort, the objective is to spark creativity and develop entrepreneurial and growth mindsets, using UPSHIFT project development as a catalyst for skills building and engagement. At the other end of the age spectrum, there is a stronger focus on developing high quality UPSHIFT projects that create employability and entrepreneurship opportunities.

The particularly high buy-in from teachers is demonstrated by UPSHIFT being used as professional development for teachers themselves within the whole school scouting programme. After the lead teacher returns from their UPSHIFT training, they replicate the training for all teachers in the school, effectively running a 3 day mini UPSHIFT for all teachers in their school, enabling all teachers to lead UPSHIFT classes. The introduction of new pedagogical approaches is an unintended positive benefit, which teachers are using beyond UPSHIFT.

Buy-in from teachers and school leaders is key.

The forthcoming independent review and documentation of the UPSHIFT programme in Bhutan identified the importance of District Education Officers and school principals taking a lead role in supporting UPSHIFT’s introduction and implementation in their schools. This investment in training school leaders widens UPSHIFT’s scope and sustainability.

UPSHIFT can be adapted for different age groups from upper primary onwards.

In Bhutan, UPSHIFT is being successfully delivered across a wide age range – from 9 to 24 years old. In upper primary, (typically 9-11 years old) lead teachers act as UPSHIFT mentors and play a more significant role in the student’s learning journey. For this cohort, the objective is to spark creativity and develop entrepreneurial and growth mindsets, using UPSHIFT project development as a catalyst for skills building and engagement. At the other end of the age spectrum, there is a stronger focus on developing high quality UPSHIFT projects that create employability and entrepreneurship opportunities.
Key Learnings

5

UPSHIFT can be used to address thematic issues, including mental health.

Adolescent mental health is a priority for Bhutan. The Scouts and UNICEF will be working jointly to deliver thematic UPSHIFTs with the aim of developing youth-led solutions to adolescent mental health and wellbeing challenges.

6

The Unisolve platform supports blended learning delivery of UPSHIFT, along with delivery of approach across a whole school.

Bhutan has been one of the three countries supporting the development of “UPSHIFT powered by Unisolve”[^34]. The program content has been translated and localised for Bhutan, and is hosted on the Unisolve platform.

Digital development requires high levels of investment, and small-scale investments typically do not represent good value for money for UNICEF. With support from the Office of Innovation facilitated ‘Set Aside Funding’, current investments in UPSHIFT powered by Unisolve have been leveraged across multiple states and countries (i.e. India, Bhutan and the Maldives).

India’s ICT industry has made this investment a cost effective one from a global perspective and there is potential for other countries to capitalize upon the existing investments made into Unisolve. This process of multi-country co-design has enabled a large enough investment to re-design the curriculum, learning journey and technology platform.

[^34]: “UPSHIFT powered by Unisolve” is explored in-depth within the UPSHIFT India case study.
Programme Overview

UPSHIFT evolution in Bhutan

History of UPSHIFT in Bhutan

In Bhutan, UNICEF has a long history of youth development and empowerment programmes. UPSHIFT represents a relatively new and highly impactful addition to the established ADAP (Adolescent Development and Participation) programme. Through a multi-country innovation programme, Bhutan was able to join forces with three other countries in South Asia – India, the Maldives and Bangladesh – to pilot UPSHIFT whilst supporting the development of UPSHIFT powered by Unisolve.

Planning for UPSHIFT began in January 2022, with the first multi-country capacity building workshop taking place in the Maldives in March of that year. In May, the UPSHIFT Programme in Bhutan was launched nationwide by Her Royal Highness Ashi Chimi Yangzom Wangchuck, the Vice President of Bhutan Youth Development Fund, a key NGO partner for UNICEF.

UPSHIFT started in Bhutan with an in-depth 5-day ‘train the trainers’ session with national stakeholders. Building on the experiences of the Maldives, UNICEF Bhutan joined with key partners including the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Loden Foundation and Youth Development Fund to co-design the sessions. The goals were to:

- Create local buy-in;
- Contextualize and localize UPSHIFT, for both face-to-face and online delivery and;
- Train the first cohort of UPSHIFT facilitators.

The training was attended by the UPSHIFT governance team (UNICEF Bhutan, Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Department of Education Programme, Bhutan Youth Development Fund, and Loden Foundation) as well as representatives from other UN agencies, relevant government entities, academia, and civil society organizations. A pre-pilot bootcamp was also organized with 25 adolescents in Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. The pre-pilot bootcamp allowed the newly trained trainers to gain immediate experience in implementing and running UPSHIFT with their target audience.

Through the 2022 pilot, UPSHIFT was implemented in 65 schools and 10 youth centres with the main objective being to engage young people and equip them with 21st century skills, also known as the "four Cs": critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.

Policy context and Government partnerships

UPSHIFT was introduced and is now being scaled as a partnership between UNICEF, the Government and long-standing NGOs. The programme aims to deliver on the Government’s vision to prioritise 21st century skills and innovations among Bhutanese youth, thus ensuring their ability to be productive and globally competent.
In recent years, the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) has initiated major educational reforms. The recent (2021) adoption of the Bhutan Baccalaureate (BB) strives to create the right environment for the development of future leaders, who can confidently face the multidimensional challenges and opportunities of our era. UPSHIFT’s focus on identifying social issues and finding innovative solutions complements and supports the Baccalaureate.

UPSHIFT is part of two key policy initiatives – the whole school approach to Scouting and the new Business and Entrepreneurship curriculum. Additionally, UPSHIFT aligns to recent developments in the Ministry to improve access to quality science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education for all students. Currently, the Ministry is developing a teacher Handbook on integration of 21st Century Skills in STEM Subjects.

Scouting is a national programme in Bhutan, delivered primarily through school-based programmes. Currently, 82% of all students are Scouts and teachers are trained as Adult Scout Leaders. This will increase as the whole-school Scouting approach is rolled out across all schools. This approach creates a somewhat unique opportunity to scale UPSHIFT into formal education systems in partnership with the Scouts and under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development. UPSHIFT is a key part of the whole school scouting approach.

To implement it, Adult Scouts Leaders from a total of 69 schools have been trained as UPSHIFT facilitators, enabling them to run UPSHIFT whilst also strengthening the Scouting programme. An UPSHIFT Scout badge has also been introduced for UPSHIFT members after completing the bootcamp and Unisolve courses.

“The [UPSHIFT] project complements the ongoing reform in the education sector including the Bhutan Baccalaureate (BB), which has been adopted as the main platform for school education reforms emphasizing on technology and other 21st Century skills.”

Mr. Karma Galay, Director General, Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Bhutan
UPSHIFT programme overview

UPSHIFT is being delivered throughout the education system, from primary into lower and upper secondary schools. UPSHIFT is also being delivered in Youth Centres to engage young people who are out of school and from August 2023, it is being delivered in colleges. The expansion into colleges has been in response to demand from young people who experienced UPSHIFT in Grade 12 and would like to continue their journey as they transition to college. In total, UPSHIFT will be implemented in 129 schools, 10 youth centres and 9 colleges throughout the 2023-24 academic year.

The programme is adapted for different age groups with a focus on the learning experience in younger age groups, rather than the quality and impact of the UPSHIFT projects themselves. A key difference between the delivery model in Bhutan and other countries is that the school/class will select one project to implement, which then becomes a joint endeavour. This also means there isn’t a set amount of seed funding per project. Instead schools are given an implementation budget, for both running UPSHIFT and investing into projects.

Table 1 outlines some of the main ways in which UPSHIFT is adapted for different age groups across Bhutan.

### Table 1: UPSHIFT content adaptation by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Upper Primary &amp; lower secondary (9-14 yrs)</th>
<th>Upper secondary (14-18 yrs) &amp; Youth centres (15-24 yrs)</th>
<th>Colleges (18-24 yrs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aims</td>
<td>Focus on inspiring creativity, innovation &amp; entrepreneurial mindset, leveraging the TED Talk of 13-year-old Kenyan innovator Richard Turere as a starting point and inspiration.</td>
<td>Greater focus on the concepts and theory behind UPSHIFT and Human Centred Design, as well as greater focus on developing impactful projects. In upper secondary schools (Years 11 and 12), UPSHIFT links to the business and entrepreneurship curriculum.</td>
<td>Focus on building UPSHIFT projects that could be scaled as a career option for students. Adapted content that focuses on innovation, pitching and entrepreneurship, linking to the many existing digital skills programmes in colleges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery model</td>
<td>3 day face to face bootcamp followed by 1 hour per week building additional skills via Unisolve.</td>
<td>3 day face to face workshop followed by 1 week of research before groups reconvene for 2 days to pitch their ideas. Project implementation is 1 hour per week using UPSHIFT powered by Unisolve.</td>
<td>3 day UPSHIFT workshop and rollout of projects integrated within action plan of College Innovation Lab.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Significant guidance and support from teachers throughout the process.</td>
<td>Higher levels of self organisation by students, with teachers playing a prompting rather than guiding role.</td>
<td>Highly motivated students with access to college innovation lab to design, develop and test their prototype.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Budget</td>
<td>USD 1,000</td>
<td>USD 1,500</td>
<td>USD 1,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In each school, a lead teacher is nominated by the principal and then trained as an UPSHIFT mentor, through either 3 day or 5 day face to face capacity building workshops. A further 2 day virtual capacity building on the Unisolve platform. Within the whole school scouting approach, the lead teacher then trains all of the other staff, who effectively participate in a 3 day mini UPSHIFT. This has the unintended positive consequence of training staff in different pedagogical approaches which they can use across all of their lessons, not just UPSHIFT.

Alongside training focal points in each school, district education officials and principals are also being trained. It is important for district education officials to understand UPSHIFT so they can support and supervise its implementation as the programme is rolled out. The experience in Bhutan highlights how important in depth and face to face training is to ensure all UPSHIFT lead teachers fully understand the concepts of UPSHIFT and are themselves experienced in it before they take the role of mentoring young people.

Within each school, the lead teacher selects a minimum of 50 students to participate in UPSHIFT. There is a focus on equity, with guidance for teachers being not to just select the best students, and to ensure they maintain an equal gender ratio with opportunities for young people with disabilities. However, in the schools running the whole school scouting programme, all students participate in UPSHIFT.

The Unisolve platform has been developed to support teachers to deliver UPSHIFT through a blended learning approach. Unisolve has two components – a Learning Management System (LMS) and a Challenge Management System (CMS), which were designed specifically to host both the UPSHIFT content and challenge in a way that facilitates delivery of UPSHIFT into formal education systems.

In schools running the whole school scouting programme, every Thursday is a Scout day in schools and this is when UPSHIFT runs, along with other scouting activities. Teachers will typically take students to the IT lab in groups to engage with Unisolve, before facilitating a discussion and activities to ensure assimilation of the content before the newly acquired knowledge is put into practice in groups. In other schools UPSHIFT is implemented as an extra-curricular activity, with an initial 3-day face to face workshop. At the end of the workshop, each school picks one solution to implement with the whole cohort of UPSHIFT students then supporting the project’s development and implementation.

Project implementation similarly takes place either in the extra-curricular club or in the school Scouting programme for around one hour per week throughout the term / academic session. Students may also choose to work on their projects after school and on the weekend.
The independent review and documentation of the UPSHIFT pilot identified the importance, moving forward, of fully aligning UPSHIFT to the academic calendar and ensuring time is planned within the school day for the delivery of UPSHIFT activities.

As a culmination of the pilot year of UPSHIFT, there was a National Innovation Challenge held in March 2023. This acted as an incentive for adolescents and young people to apply their skills and knowledge, as well as enabling national stakeholders to identify and support the most promising UPSHIFT projects towards scale. UNICEF and partners shortlisted 12 potential projects out of 75 projects that were submitted from participating schools and youth centres. The Unisolve platform was used to facilitate idea submission and judging for the National Challenge. The top six ideas were then provided with an additional seed investment (USD 1,200 per project) to support scale up of the projects and were connected with an online mentorship programme. The Ministry of Education is keen to repeat the Challenge each year, with increased levels of seed funding.
Future Plans

The initial UPSHIFT pilot in 2022 was run at relatively large scale, with 2023 seeing expansion into numerous other educational institutions. The aim is to reach 16,000 adolescents and young people through 129 schools, 10 youth centres and 9 colleges during 2023-24.

The Ministry of Education and Skills Development is requesting support from UNICEF to scale UPSHIFT to every school in Bhutan to improve employability skills and opportunities for young people across the Kingdom. The aim is to do this within the next programme cycle. To achieve this, UNICEF will work to integrate UPSHIFT into the school curriculum, through both Business & Entrepreneurship and STEM & innovation, as well as the whole school scouting programme. Alongside this UNICEF established a new partnership with Royal University of Bhutan to introduce UPSHIFT in 9 colleges including 2 teacher training colleges and will continue to strive to train future teachers on delivering lessons in schools through UPSHIFT perspectives.

UNICEF Bhutan and the Ministry of Education and Skills Development are exploring the establishment of new partnerships with financial institutes, UN agencies and the private sector to strengthen the annual innovation challenge, starting from early 2024.

In addition to this, UNICEF is aiming to pilot UPSHIFT in Monastic Institutes. Within UNICEF, UPSHIFT also is seen as an entry point to promote cross sectoral working, including child protection, education, health, climate, social policy and WASH, along with the work that is already underway around mental health.

The independent review and documentation of the UPSHIFT pilot identified that there is a strong path to sustainability for UPSHIFT in Bhutan. UNICEF will need to continue to be financially involved for a few more years until the programme is established and there is sufficient capacity and confidence built across implementing partners, teachers and policy makers.

UNICEF in Bhutan’s objective is to bring the opportunity of UPSHIFT to everyone!