



UPSHIFT

Empowering youth to build skills and opportunities through social innovation and social entrepreneurship

ISSUE

There are 1.8 billion young people in the world today, nearly 90 per cent of whom live in low- and middle-income countries — the largest cohort ever. Yet globally more than 200 million adolescents are out of school and youth unemployment is 13% globally; 3 times higher than the rate for adults¹. There are many different reasons for this, ranging from escaping conflict to disability to education systems that don't provide the skills young people need for employment today. But the common challenges are a lack of opportunity and systems that fail to provide skills for work and for life.

INNOVATIVE RESPONSE

UPSHIFT is an innovative programme response that blends leading approaches to youth and adolescent development, social innovation, and entrepreneurship to **empower marginalised youth and adolescents to become social innovators and social entrepreneurs**. The programme combines social innovation workshops, mentorship, incubation and seed funding, to equip young people with the skills and resources they need to identify problems in their own communities and design solutions for them. While young people build social and entrepreneurship skills; UPSHIFT

¹ UN Youth Envoy, <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/employment/>

positively impacts the wider community through the indirect benefits of the products and services that young people design, as well as changing perceptions of young people as positive change agents, rather than a problem to be solved.

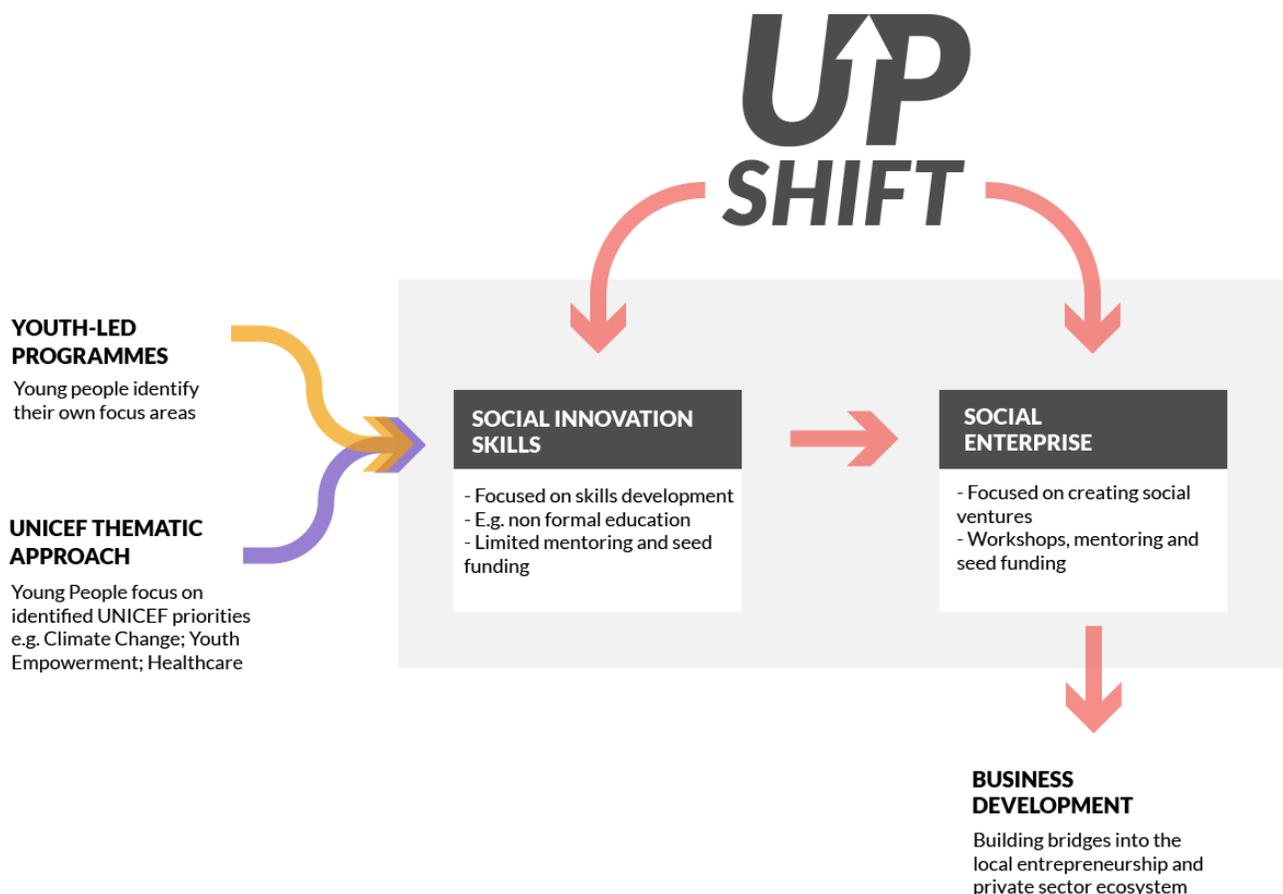
UPSHIFT is built on human-centred design methodologies, which have been tailored for use with marginalised youth. The core UPSHIFT content is very modular, allowing UPSHIFT to be adapted to different contexts and to be delivered in different settings - ranging from youth innovation labs to non-formal education centres. As UPSHIFT scales, work is underway in a number of countries to embed the approach within formal education systems. The same tools and techniques can also be applied within any UNICEF programmatic area to design responses that are youth-led.

As the diagram shows, there are two main approaches to UPSHIFT, both of which can run in tandem. One is focused on skills development; the other on social entrepreneurship.

Both are built on human-centred design methodologies and are tailored to engage marginalised young people as co-creators of solutions, rather than just as beneficiaries.

Both can be focused on specific issues (e.g. climate change adaptations, WASH solutions) or can be entirely youth-led, with young people selecting the issues that most affect them and their communities.

UPSHIFT delivers skills that support future opportunities and employment for the most marginalized and vulnerable youth. Young people develop transferable skills through



both the training elements and the opportunity to work collaboratively, in a supportive environment, to identify and solve social problems.

The opportunity to develop these skills in an entrepreneurial environment leads to increased confidence and resilience and increased feelings of agency amongst young people - they view themselves as more skilled, more employable and with more positive future opportunities. By developing these skills through problem solving in their local communities, young people have a greater sense of community and feel more engaged in, and respected by, their community, which can contribute to peace-building and social cohesion.

RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

UPSHIFT contributes to multiple Strategic Plan results areas.

UPSHIFT directly supports results 2c (skills for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and employability) and 5c (adolescent civic engagement) of the UNICEF Strategic Plan. There are examples of UPSHIFT supporting other results areas, depending on the chosen focus of Country Offices. For example:

- In In 2018 Tajikistan CO used UPSHIFT to run a nationwide thematic WASH challenge ahead of a global high level WASH meeting
- UPSHIFT is being used in a number of humanitarian settings, including Sudan and Jordan

UPSHIFT directly supports delivery against SDG 4.3 (youth participation in formal & non-formal education), 4.4 (increase relevant skills for employment & entrepreneurship), 8.6 (reduce NEET youth), 17.9 (south-south

collaboration), 17.16 (multi-sector partnerships). It can support delivery against SDG 5 (Gender) along with other thematic SDGs (e.g. clean water and sanitation).

During 2018 UPSHIFT reached more than 300,000 people directly and indirectly.

UPSHIFT is featured as part of the World Bank's [Solutions for Youth Employment](#) portfolio and is one of the frontrunner solutions being recommended for scale by [Generation Unlimited](#). UPSHIFT develops skills for employment and skills for life, including problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, communication, leadership, collaboration and teamwork.

A CLOSER LOOK: UPSHIFT IN ACTION

Kosovar Teens Are Turning Waste Into Organic Fertilizer



A group of young people from Kosovo have started introducing a new eco-friendly waste management concept for organic waste. Diella, Visar and Natalia are recycling small amounts of organic waste, transforming it into organic fertilizer for plants.

This innovative decomposition process is done using a special kind of worm that uses organic waste as food. Besides facilitating waste management and diversion, this process also creates a product that enables natural plant growth without using artificial fertilizers—it improves soil fertility and significantly reduces the need for pesticides!

After attending UNICEF Innovations Lab Kosovo's UPSHIFT: Social Impact Workshop, Diella and her friends turned their passion of recycling waste into a full-fledged social venture which they call 'Terra Crawlers'. Terra Crawlers is one of 230 youth-led projects supported through UPSHIFT in Kosovo and Diella is one of more than 40,400 UPSHIFT beneficiaries.

PATHWAY TO SCALE

UPSHIFT originated in Kosovo in 2014; with initial programme design and piloting led by the Kosovo Youth Innovations Lab. The programme created interest in a number of other countries, with Montenegro and Vietnam starting to pilot in 2015. UPSHIFT was selected for the Global Innovation Centre / Ool Scale Portfolio² in June 2017.³ The Scale Team applied its expertise to evolve the initial concept from UNICEF Kosovo into a globally deployable, packaged solution, building on the learnings from a range of country contexts. Since then, UPSHIFT has been adopted and adapted in 13 countries, and a further 20 countries are exploring how to pilot it.

We know that UPSHIFT is a programme that needs to be adapted to the local context, cognizant of the education system, cultural values and the local entrepreneurship ecosystem. The process of scaling is therefore about adaptation,

rather than replication. The model is for UPSHIFT pilots to act as demonstration catalysts, showing what can be achieved by taking a human-centred, empowering and innovative approach to developing skills and/or social entrepreneurship, and for the localized deployment package with the local evidence, to provide the foundation for ongoing scale by others, especially public and private sector.

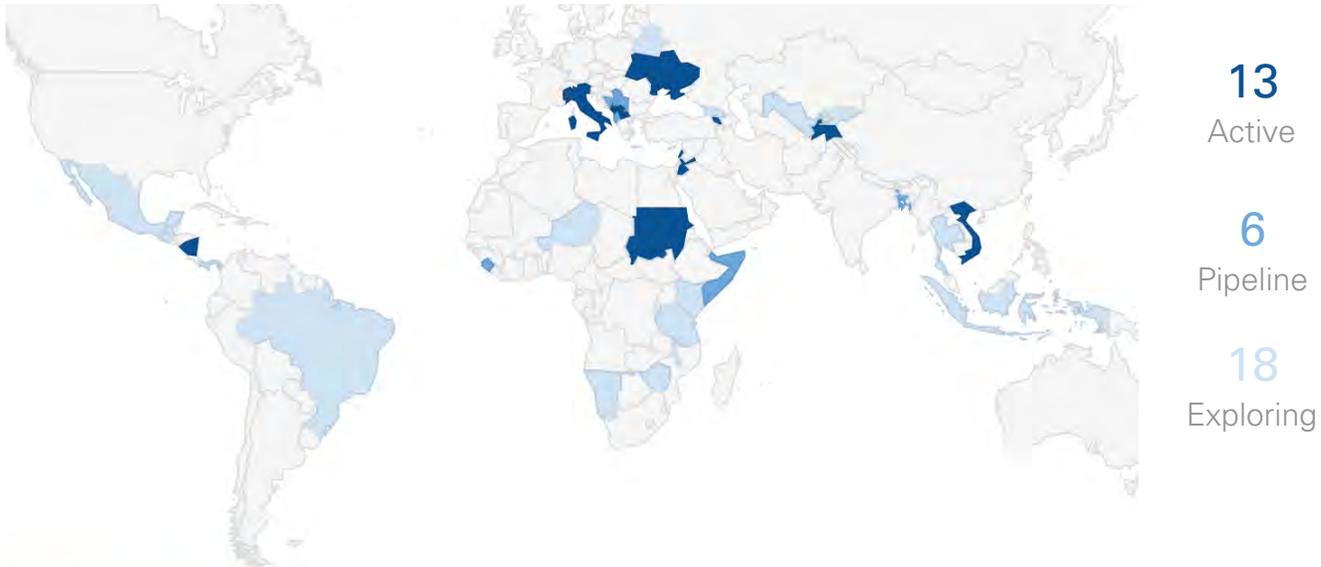
The pathway to scale and impact for UPSHIFT therefore lies not only in these implementations, but in the systems-level influence they are having as demonstration projects for government and others in the ecosystem. UPSHIFT and its insights are informing government systems uptake in both the education sector and in engaging adolescents and youth.

This scaling approach enabled the team to develop modular, customizable and repeatable components allowed the UPSHIFT components to be effectively repurposed in a very short time to launch the Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge in 16 countries. This supports Generation Unlimited's goals around skills for learning, employability and decent work, and empowerment with a focus on girls and does so applying the GenU approaches of co-creating solutions and the participation of young people. The Scale Team designed and runs the Youth Challenge and continues to evolve the scaling model with the objective of significantly increasing the reach and spread in 2019 and beyond through a strategy of scaling by others on an affiliate and franchise basis. A number of the 16 GenU Youth Challenge countries are those in which UPSHIFT is also implemented, resulting in 20 countries now engaged in youth-led social innovation / entrepreneurship activities.

² Hereafter referred to as 'Scale team'

³ UNICEF Global Innovation Centre, Advisory Committee 5, Ho Chi Minh City meeting, <https://blogs.unicef.org/innovation/exploring-future-21st-century-skills/>

Deployments of UPSHIFT



SCALING STRATEGY IN 2019 AND BEYOND

The Scale Team will continue to support scaling UPSHIFT, in partnership with COs, ROs and HQ (including with ADAP, Education, Gender, PFP, DRP Policy Lab, South-South Collaboration) focusing on three areas to support scale and sustainability:

1. In existing Countries, achieve sustainability (through government systems), through building the partners and evidence base to support in-country and multi-country scale up
2. Grow reach and impact through piloting in new countries
3. Significantly increase reach (directly to young people and via other organisations) through digitising and open sourcing both UPSHIFT and the Train the Trainer model

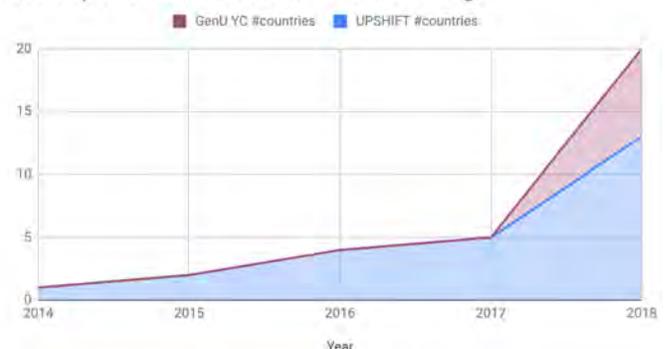
- Develop scalable and digitally supported Train the Trainer programme, which would underpin expansion within UNICEF and could also be open to other organisations
- Developing (and partnering with) digital self-directed learning opportunities for

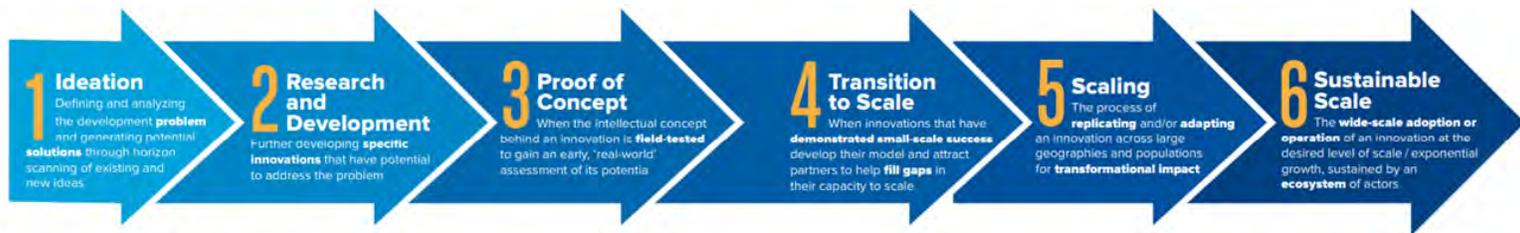
young people, which will directly build skills and complement face to face activities (increasing reach, particularly to geographically dispersed communities)

At a country level, success is UPSHIFT being institutionalized, with a range of different modalities possible including the formal education system (most likely Middle-Income Countries), Non-formal education system, Vocational education system, city level municipalities (e.g. as part of Child Friendly Cities Initiative) or in public-private partnerships.

From an internal perspective, success is about building sufficient capacity around UPSHIFT approaches, that the peer network is in a position to self-sustain and the Innovation Scale team can 'exit'.

Scale up of UPSHIFT and GenU Youth Challenge





2014	2017	2020+
<p>Kosovo</p> <p>Ad hoc adoption and analogous initiatives</p> <p>2015</p> <p>Viet Nam</p> <p>2016</p> <p>Montenegro Jordan Lebanon</p> <p>The GIL programme, which includes a locally developed social entrepreneurship programme</p>	<p>Selected for global Scale Portfolio</p> <p>2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Validate concept - Review landscape - Consult external skills and social Innovation ecosystem. - Lessons learned from other countries - Co-creation workshop with 20 countries, regional office and headquarters sector input. - Implemented in 7 new countries, total 13 countries. - Build Human-Centred Design capacity of UNICEF and partners. 	<p>-- Validated model for sustainable scale in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UPSHIFT mainstreamed into core programming approaches and transitioned out of Innovation Scale Team. - UPSHIFT application as systems catalyst in education sector documented and contribution within the Skills Framework understood.

UPSHIFT / GEN U YOUTH CHALLENGE TEAM

UPSHIFT and the Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge are solutions in the Scale portfolio of Office of Innovation led by Tanya Accone, Senior Adviser on Innovation at Scale.

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.unicef.org/innovation/UPSHIFT>



Katherine (Kat) Crisp
Global Lead
Youth Social
Innovation Specialist



Robyn Lui
UPSHIFT Scaling
Strategist (part-time)



Brian Cotter
Youth Innovation
Specialist (part-time)



Bekhzod Makhamov
Designer (part-time)