



Human-Centred Design

Accelerating results for every child by design.

ISSUE

The 2016 State of the World's Children report calls for a fair world **for every child**. The evidence is clear: millions of children around the world are denied their rights and deprived of the essentials that they need to grow up healthy and strong – because of their place of birth or their family of origin; because of their race, ethnicity or gender; or because they live in poverty or with a disability. However staggering and complex, the cycles of deprivation that are transmitted from one generation to the next are not unbreakable. “Children born into poverty and

deprivation are not doomed to live lives of despair. Inequity is not inevitable, if governments invest in expanding opportunity for every child – shifting policies, programming and public spending priorities so the most disadvantaged have a chance to catch up with the most advantaged.”¹

As the SOWC recognizes, UNICEF's promotion of Innovation for achieving results has helped foster more effective ways to reach the hardest-to-reach children, families and communities. New technology, the digital revolution, innovative ways to finance critical interventions and citizen-led

¹ UNICEF (2016). State of the World's Children. Available here: https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_SOWC_2016.pdf

movements are all helping to drive change for the most disadvantaged. Investing in these interventions and initiatives, and fueling these emergent movements, will yield both short- and long-term benefits for millions of children and their societies.

More must be done, however, if UNICEF is to accelerate the reach and impact of these interventions and initiatives for every child. Ensuring that Government policies, programmes, and public spending priorities target the most deprived children—or, stated differently, ensuring that these policies, programmes, and public investments are child-centered is critical to their success. The question that arises from this vision is thus not *whether* change is possible but *how* to foster and sustain this change in an agile, scalable, and sustainable way.

The SOWC advances a set of principles to guide more equity-focused policy, planning and public spending. These broad principles include expanding information about who is being left behind and why; improving integration to tackle the multiple dimensions of deprivation; fostering and fueling innovation to reach the hardest-to-reach children; increasing investment in equity-focused programmes; and driving involvement by communities and citizens around the world. Activating these principles will require new and different ways of working. One such way of working that has demonstrated tremendous potential is **human-centred design (HCD)**, a creative approach to solving social issues and particularly wicked challenges with people at the center.

INNOVATIVE RESPONSE: HUMAN-CENTRED DESIGN

Human-centred design (HCD) is a problem-solving process that begins with understanding the human factors and

context surrounding a challenge. It requires working directly with users —the people who use the service or deliver the solution—to develop new ideas that are viable and appropriate in their context. Designing for people and their everyday actions helps uncover and solve the right problems using local capacities and minimal resources.

This process is important because it asks us to:

- **Use participatory methods.** No expert has more knowledge than a caregiver, nurse or a community health worker about how to solve their most pressing challenges. The methodologies that comprise HCD and related approaches acknowledge this by focusing on collaboration and designing *with* —not for —the people we seek to serve. Problems are defined locally and solutions are developed locally.
- **Be inclusive.** We cannot design sustainable solutions if we do not consider the full complex, dynamic and interconnected system. Observing and interviewing, not only with those who fall within the average set of circumstances, but also outliers who represent a more diverse set of circumstances, forces us to reexamine existing assumptions and to include the perspective of all genders, belief systems, social circumstances and family dynamics.
- **Think critically.** Putting people at the centre of the process means that we uncover needs that service providers and programme recipients may not know they have —even though these needs influence actions and decisions. After honing skills of listening and observing we see more than what is visible and hear more than what is said. This allows the unexpected to reveal itself and points us toward new solutions.

- **Design to hand-off.** From the beginning, solutions are tested in the real world with real stakeholders, not with consultants in an office. Solutions that make it past this “prototype” step lend themselves to local ownership because the community and health workers have been involved in their development from the beginning. The outcome is action-oriented, implementation-ready examples—not static reports.

The practice of HCD has long played a central role in UNICEF’s work. The first of UNICEF’s innovation principles –‘design with the user’–helps ensure that challenges are addressed and solutions are developed in a user/human-centered way. But there is tremendous opportunity for HCD broadly as an approach to strengthen results across UNICEF’s work—not just as a principle in the design of innovation initiatives but as an overarching approach for improving the effectiveness of our work around the world for every child.

Work is now underway in Malawi, Mexico, Myanmar, Tanzania, and a number of other countries to advance the use of HCD as a methodology to support *more inclusive and child-centered policies, programmes and services*, and to *build enhanced capacity of service providers and systems to deliver results for children*.

HCD ACROSS COUNTRY PROGRAMME CYCLE AND STRATEGIC PLAN

In order to advance the use of HCD within and around UNICEF *at scale*, the Global Innovation Centre has invested in initiatives to explore and validate different entry-points for HCD across the Country Programme

Cycle. These early efforts have shown the tremendous potential of the *application* and *promotion* of HCD as a strategic mindset and approach for how UNICEF and partners work for children.

While HCD can enhance the effectiveness, reach, and impact of UNICEF and partners’ works at virtually all stages of the Country Programme Cycle (CPC), a number of areas are particularly well suited to applications of HCD to accelerate results. The entry-points in the country programme cycle and potential applications of HCD articulated in the table below are drawn from actual experience of UNICEF and partners in a variety of contexts. For a better understanding of how these different applications of HCD manifest in practice, see the selected on the next page.

In many ways, the HCD approach brings together several of the “enablers” and “HOW’s” of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. If embraced across the CPD in the ways articulated above, HCD stands to help UNICEF country offices and their partners unlock virtually all of the *change strategies* outlined in the Strategic Plan: cross sectoral programming; systems strengthening and service delivery; humanitarian and development integration; gender-based programming; evidence and data; power of innovation and technology; leveraging private sector / corporate partnerships; children as change agents; child rights advocacy, public engagement, communication and movements; community dialogue and behavior change; leveraging resources for children, market shaping; south-south and horizontal cooperation; and UN working together. In turn, the application of HCD at scale would contribute to ensuring that UNICEF is fit for business and has enhanced human capacity to deliver results for every child.

Country Programme Cycle

Situation Analysis

Country Programme Document (CPD) Development

CPD Implementation and Monitoring (Annual Cycles)

Mid-Term and Final Review of Country Programme

Potential Applications of Human-centered Design

Human-centered research with children, caregivers, and service providers to better understand challenges and opportunities in country context (complement more traditional SitAn methods)

Facilitate an aspirational 'appreciative inquiry' process through-which UNICEF, key duty-bearers, caregiver and children co-create a vision for a better future

Drawing on insights generated through the SitAn, facilitate the design of a 'whole-person' / 'whole-child' approach to development within CPD

(Re)design of more inclusive, sustainable, and scalable service models across sectors

User / Beneficiary engagement and co-creation of Work Plans / participatory annual work planning

Ongoing iteration, 'finding and fitting' of interventions [policy / advocacy, service delivery, and capacity development]

Participatory review of progress against CPD vision and co-creation of improved strategies, policies, and service models to accelerate results and ensure equity

RESULTS FOR EVERY CHILD BY DESIGN

In 2017-2018 alone, the Office of Innovation Scale Team worked with UNICEF country offices and their partners to apply HCD as a methodology to support more inclusive and child-centred policies, programmes and services, and to build enhanced capacity of service providers and systems to deliver results for children.

UNICEF has leveraged HCD to:

- **Co-create more child-centred case management services in Myanmar:**

UNICEF, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), and social design firm Point B have been working to transition newly deployed Case Managers into the role of systems builders and facilitators. By supporting DSW teams to gain deeper understanding into the local contexts in which they operate and to support newly deployed Case Managers to define their role,

including how they will work and where they will focus, the team is using a design-thinking approach that allows Case Managers with diverse skills, experiences and expertise to come together to co-create local case management systems.

- **Develop more child-centred country programming in Malawi:**

Taking a rigorous, design-led approach significantly contributed to the support of an organic Country Programme Document (CPD) design process. This process involved and developed a sense of broad ownership of the upcoming new UNICEF Malawi CPD among UNICEF Malawi's diverse staff and partners.

- **Build local capacity and design more child-centred services in Malaysia:**

Through their 'Design Lab' methodology, UNICEF Malaysia worked to mainstream design for every child. They increased the capacity of key civil-society partners to develop and test new interventions directly with end-users; co-creating inclusive public spaces and services with private-sector leaders, children with disabilities and their caregivers, and disabilities advocacy groups; strengthening rural birth registration services; and adapting the Design for Change curriculum with 1,600 children and teachers to help skill children as creative and critical social problem solvers.

- **Support more effective approaches to generating demand for health services:**

The UNICEF NYHQ Immunization Team developed a Field Guide for immunization service providers. The global health community has underscored the importance of prioritizing the most susceptible populations rather than exclusively focusing on coverage. This pro-equity principle requires that immunization

programs systematically identify and reach the least visible and most marginal. This in turn implies a need for methods to better understand the challenges facing these groups and identify opportunities to adjust the way services are provided. It makes human-centered approaches all the more important — an emphasis on the lives and lived environments of the communities that immunization programmes intend to serve. Prioritizing susceptible groups, better understanding the constraints they face, and resolving the challenges preventing them from accessing vital health services has a fresh urgency. The Field Guide provides principles and a structured process to support more equitable immunization outcomes, drawing on the approach and methods of HCD.

A CLOSER LOOK: HCD IN ACTION

Designing for Children — Strengthening Government Systems and Services in Myanmar

In January 2016, UNICEF and the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) in Myanmar began a collaboration with local design firm Point B to transition newly deployed Case Managers into the role of systems builders and facilitators. This work focused on supporting DSW teams to gain



deeper understanding into the local contexts in which they operate in and to support newly deployed Case Managers to define their role, how they will work and where they will focus. A design-thinking approach allowed for Case Managers with diverse skills, experiences and expertise to come together to co-create local case management systems.

This developing case management system was not linear, but rather unfolded through a series of interconnected parts and activities. As systems builders themselves, Point B and UNICEF worked together to find opportunities where they could add value within the Case Management System. By prototyping new solutions, partners learned quickly what works and what does not. With collaboration from actors at different levels within the system including State/Regional Directors, Core Trainers, Case Supervisors, CSOs, NGOs, and government counterparts, Point B and UNICEF were able to quickly share learnings and information within the national case management system. These activities supported the co-creation of shared goals so that all actors had a clear understanding of how to develop the Case Management System forward, together.

This work demonstrated improvements in DSW's organizational performance and capacity to implement local case management systems based on the strengths, skills, contextual knowledge and partnerships that DSW teams already possess and utilize when serving local communities. In addition, UNICEF and Point B were able to activate adolescents and youth to collaborate with state level DSW Offices in applying HCD methods to help improve understanding of needs of children, co-create new social services and facilitate of youth to youth awareness-building within local communities.

PATHWAYS TO SCALE

The GIC has worked with country offices to establish models of reference and best practice, and to establish mechanisms for ensuring access to technical expertise and advisory support for HCD at scale. By continuing to provide light-touch, dedicated technical support to UNICEF and partners interested in leveraging HCD in their work for children, the GIC is helping ensure strategic focus and use of HCD methods. In addition, by establishing and helping to coordinate the use of global long-term agreements (LTAs) with a range of design firms from around the world, the GIC has helped UNICEF and its partners connect to expertise and experience to accelerate results for every child by design.

UNICEF as a Convener and a Leader of Design-Led Approaches in Development

There is tremendous potential for design in development, but this remains largely untapped for the reasons presented above. While many organizations are investing significant resources in partnerships and practice to promote the use of HCD for more impactful and human-centered development, there remains a persistent leadership gap in this area of practice.

Beyond the opportunities for targeted applications of HCD across the UNICEF country programme cycle to improve results, there is tremendous potential for UNICEF to become a convener of the design for development movement. "The opportunities offered by Agenda 2030...require a commitment to thought leadership and to innovation, to building partnership around inspiring ideas, and to demonstrating that UNICEF is able to play a catalytic role that inspires and energizes others." As UNICEF advances toward becoming a more design-

led organization and effectively applying HCD for children around the world, the organization must not lose sight of this critical role that it is in many ways uniquely positioned to play.

SCALING STRATEGY IN 2019 AND BEYOND

To realize the bold vision of accelerating results for every child through Human-centered Design, UNICEF must continue to prototype and document the different promising and potential applications of HCD proposed above and rapidly generate evidence around what works so that UNICEF CO's and partners can bring these effective approaches to scale. By activating a model for applied HCD at scale, the Global Innovation Centre (GIC) can empower UNICEF Country Offices, Government and civil society partners with a more robust, agile, and human-centered approach to framing, designing, developing, delivering, and determining the impact of development programmes.

This journey to scaling HCD for every child will consist of the following activities in 2019 -2021:

- Country-level testing and documentation of applications of HCD in UNICEF work
- Developing a service model for activating and supporting HCD at scale within UNICEF
- Exposing senior leadership to the HCD approach and methods to build more buy-in and 'space' for this work within UNICEF
- Activating a learning and capacity development agenda for UNICEF staff and partners to build capacity as practitioners and facilitators of the HCD approach

- Additional research and evidence generation on comparative effectiveness and impact
- Coordination, convening, and thought leadership

Across the core activity areas outlined above, there are immediate opportunities for action and investment by both UNICEF and partners. While the scale of investment varies significantly depending on the country context, scope of HCD application, and duration of a given initiative, the forms of potential partnership and investment remain constant and fall into the broad areas and related opportunities for investment as summarized on the next page.

Much of this work is already underway. Building on the evidence generated thus far through UNICEF investments in HCD as well as complementary evidence from leaders in the HCD area of practice, the Office of Innovation will continue to play a coordinating and connecting role within and beyond UNICEF. To complement the targeted technical and advisory support offered by the Office of Innovation in this area, a selection of strategic partnerships with key HCD practitioners will be brokered and/or expanded to buttress this engagement and prototype different models for partnership and collaboration around this agenda. In turn, through a global procurement process, the Office of Innovation has established a number of LTA's with design service providers to ensure sufficient supply to meet the rapidly increasing demand for HCD / design-related services across UNICEF to support results *by design* for every child.

Area

Country-level testing and documentation of applications of HCD in UNICEF work

Developing a service model for activating and supporting HCD at scale within UNICEF

Exposing senior leadership to the HCD approach and methods to build buy-in and 'space' for this work within UNICEF

Activating a learning and capacity development agenda for UNICEF staff and partners to build capacity as practitioners and facilitators of the HCD approach

Research and evidence generation

Coordination, convening, and thought leadership

Opportunities to Invest

- Financial support to applied HCD at the country-level
- Technical support in the form of pro-bono services for country-level prototyping and documentation
- Financial support for engagement of expertise to develop and package a service model for scaling HCD
- Technical support in the form of pro-bono services to advise on and co-create a service model
- For UNICEF, involvement of regional and global leadership in scheduled HCD exercises (workshops, field visits, etc.) to expose and engage in the process
- For partners, involvement of UNICEF leadership in high-level convenings on HCD/design in development
- Financial support to investments in staff training and capacity development (on-site or at a school/center)
- Pro-bono / low-bono service offering of training and capacity development for UNICEF staff and partners
- Pro-bono / low-bono support to co-creation of bespoke learning and capacity development resources
- Financial support to rigorous operational research (linked to country-level testing of applied HCD)
- Technical support (academic or practitioner partner) in designing and conducting rigorous operational research
- Financial support to the establishment of a global coordination role (within UNICEF GIC) for this work
- Financial support to a series of expert and practitioner/partner convenings to build more alignment and collaboration
- Technical support for co-creation / development of thought pieces on the impact and investment case for design in development



2014 - 2015	2016 - 2018	2019+
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Application of HCD for child health policy in Nicaragua with Reboot and the Government of Nicaragua - Initiation of flagship project in Myanmar, applying HCD to inform more child-centred services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HCD endorsed for scaling by the Global Innovation Centre Advisory Committee at its meeting in Amman, Jordan - UNICEF named to Board of Advisors for joint initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and USAID to develop a series of HCD public goods - Deep applications of HCD in a variety of contexts, including Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Myanmar, and Tanzania - Launch of the Demand for Health Services Field Guide (NYHQ Immunization Team) - Establishment of Global LTA's for Design-Related Services - Launch of the HCD Toolkit for Digital Interventions - Investments in building HCD capacity of UNICEF and partners, including at CO and RO level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain modalities to support country office application of HCD including technical assistance on scoping of initiatives and Global LTA - Continue to document and share good practices, case studies and other learning and knowledge activities that support the effective use of HCD - Maintain UNICEF engagement among development partners around application of HCD

HCD TEAM

The application and scaling of HCD and related methodologies is supported by the Accelerate to Scale team within the Office of Innovation led by Tanya Accone, Senior Adviser on Innovation at Scale.

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.unicef.org/innovation/hcd>
<http://hcd4i.org/>



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