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UPSHIFT: Innovating non-formal education for youth at scale

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Introduction

Recognising the importance of education for inclusive economic and social development, and the need to prepare young people for an uncertain future of work and to deal with unprecedented societal, environmental and economic challenges, UNICEF is investing in innovative programmes to improve access to learning opportunities and equip young people with the knowledge, skills and values needed to thrive in the 21st century. In this paper, we look closely at one UNICEF programme that targets vulnerable young people – UPSHIFT.

UPSHIFT is a social innovation and social entrepreneurship programme designed to empower youth with the skills to engage positively with their communities and to successfully transition to adulthood and work life. The programme is featured as part of the World Bank's [Solutions for Youth Employment](#) Impact Portfolio and is one of solutions being recommended for scale by [Generation Unlimited](#). Education can equip young people with agency, purpose, and the competencies they need, to shape their own lives and contribute to the lives of others. But given the urgency and scale of challenges facing young people, our educational responses need to deliver results at scale. Indeed, we suggest that efforts to scale UPSHIFT are essential for ensuring that the most vulnerable young people enjoy equality of opportunity and **no one is left behind**, which is at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This paper is organized into four sections. Section One outlines key global developments that have implications for youth. It also provides a brief overview of UNICEF and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), its strategic programming for adolescents and young people, and the Global Innovation Centre which is responsible for scaling UPSHIFT, in partnership with UNICEF Country Offices. Section Two unpacks the UPSHIFT programme and looks at the UPSHIFT journey, approaches to delivery, monitoring and evaluation, and the importance of the UPSHIFT ecosystem. Section Three explores the stages and good practices of scaling UPSHIFT and the need to strengthen national systems in partnership with governments for achieving sustainable impact. Section Four contains two case studies of piloting and scaling UPSHIFT and reflects on lessons of the past 4 years.

Section 1: From challenge to opportunity

1.1 Change provides opportunities for innovation

Peter Drucker, a leading thinker in management science, innovation and entrepreneurship, wrote about change as an opening for opportunities for the new and different. In *Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Practice and Principles*, Drucker asserts (1986) "systematic innovation consists in the purposeful and organized search for changes, and in the systematic analysis of the opportunities such changes might offer for economic or social innovation." In the spirit of Peter Drucker, this section looks at four changes driving youth-centred innovations like UPSHIFT.

Demographic shift. Today's 1.8 billion young people is the largest generation of 10 to 24 years old in human history.¹ 90 per cent of these young people live in developing countries, where they make up a large proportion of the population. All young people are facing unprecedented social, economic, and environmental changes from the climate crisis to the 4th Industrial Revolution.² Yet as the Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing shows, young people have the power to positively transform the future and investing in adolescents is vital for the progress towards achieving the SDGs.³ Likewise, in his seminal paper "The Discipline of Innovation", Drucker identifies demographic change as one of the seven sources of innovation opportunities.⁴

1 While there are no universally accepted definitions of adolescence and youth, the UN understands adolescents to include persons aged 10-19 years and youth as those between 15- 24 years for statistical purposes without prejudice to other definitions by Member States.

2 The fourth industrial revolution, a term coined by Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum, is characterized by a range of new technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds, impacting all disciplines, economies and industries, and even challenging ideas about what it means to be human. According to Schwab, along with the potential benefits, there are risks that organizations will be unable to adapt, governments will fail to regulate new technologies to capture their benefits, new security issues will emerge, and inequality will grow. World Economic Forum (2016) The Future of Jobs Report. Employment, Skills, and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Geneva: World Economic Forum.

3 George C Patton, Susan M Sawyer, John S Santelli et al., (2016) Our Future: A Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(16\)00579-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)00579-1) The Report brings together perspectives from public health, economics, political and social science, behavioural science and neuroscience to offer recommendations for the protection and promotion of health, wellbeing and potential of adolescents.

4 Drucker, P. F. (1998). The discipline of innovation. Harvard Business Review, 76,149-155.

The science of adolescent brain development. There is a growing body of evidence on adolescence as the critical second decade for cognitive, social and emotional developmental.⁵ The brain is still developing during adolescence. It has incredible plasticity. Adolescence is characterized by dynamic brain development in which the interaction with the social environment shapes the capabilities an individual takes forward into adult life.⁶ In other words, the adolescent develops new pathways in response to experiences all the time. This period of brain growth also marks the beginning of a person's ability to move from concrete to abstract thinking, solve problems, think critically, plan, and control impulses. We can take advantage of the opportunity to ensure an individual acquires the physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and economic resources that are the foundation for later life health and wellbeing. Adopting a positive development approach, UNICEF recognizes youth as sources of opportunity rather than of problems; "at promise" rather than "at risk" and has developed a framework for programming for the second decade.⁷

Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. In 2015, UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 global targets, 232 global SDG indicators. This universal agenda is intended to be implemented by all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. While all the Sustainable Development Goals are critical to youth development, the areas of poverty, education, gender equality are considered fundamental to overall youth development. Critical to the success of the 2030 Agenda is the role of young people in engaging with local and national government in delivering on policies and programmes on the ground; the role of public-private partnerships in driving the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including financing and harnessing technology for data collection and utilization; and the role of youth participation in informing equitable and diverse policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.⁸

The Fourth Industrial Revolution: The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), a term coined by Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum, describes the advent of "cyber-physical systems" involving new capabilities for people and machines, blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres.⁹ Examples of this include gene editing, machine intelligence, AI, and breakthrough approaches to governance that rely on cryptographic methods such as the blockchain. Schwab argues these technological changes are altering how individuals, companies and governments operate, ultimately leading to a societal transformation similar to previous industrial revolutions. In other words, this revolution, like previous revolutions, will bring shifts in power, wealth, and knowledge.

Inequality represents one of the greatest concerns associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution. As economists Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee have pointed out, the revolution could yield greater inequality because of its potential to transform the future of work and labor markets.¹⁰ As automation substitutes for labor across the entire economy, the mass displacement of workers by machines will create a devaluation of labour and as historian Yuval Noah Harari predicts, the rise of a 'useless class' of humans.¹¹

It is estimated that about half a billion young people will enter the global workforce by 2030.¹² But the World Bank recently estimated that the share of jobs at risk of automation is alarmingly high in developing countries - 69 percent of all jobs in India, up to 85 percent in Ethiopia, against an average 57 percent of jobs in member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

5 There are 1.2 billion adolescents in the world today, making up 16 per cent of the global population. See Alliance for Excellent Education, (2018). *Science of Adolescent Learning: How Body and Brain Development Affect Student Learning*. Washington DC: Alliance for Excellent Education; Blakemore, S. J. (2012). Development of the social brain in adolescence. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 105(3), 111–116; Dahl, R. E. A., Wilbrecht, N. B., Suleiman, Ballonoff, L., et al. (Feb 2018) Importance of investing in adolescence from a developmental science perspective, *Nature*, 554, 441–450; Lamy, P., Bachelet, M., Barber, L., et al. (2013). Now for the long term: the report of the Oxford Martin commission for future generations. Oxford: Oxford Martin School; The Lancet. (2016). Our future: a Lancet commission on adolescent health and wellbeing. *Lancet*, 387; Sheehan, P., Sweeny, K., Rassmussen, B. et al (2017). Building the Foundations for Sustainable Development: A Case for Global Investment in the Capabilities of Adolescents. *Lancet*; 390 (10104): 1792-1806; Steinberg, L. (2017). *Age of Opportunity: Lessons from the New Science of Adolescence*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; Stenberg, K., Axelson, H., Sheehan, P., et al. (2014). Advancing social and economic development by investing in women's and children's health: a new Global Investment Framework. *Lancet*, 383, 1333-1354; UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti (2017). *The Adolescent Brain: A second window of opportunity*, Florence: UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti.

6 The Lancet. (2016). Our future: a Lancet commission on adolescent health and wellbeing. *Lancet*, 387.

7 See UNICEF programme guidance for the second decade: Programming with and for adolescents 2018. Programme Division

8 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2018) *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. NY: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat, p.3.

9 Schwab, K. (2016) *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, Geneva: World Economic Forum.

10 Brynjolfsson, E. and McAfee, A. (2014), *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies*. New York and London: Norton.

11 Harari, Y. N. (2017) *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*. London: Vintage

12 Chandu, L. ed., (2016) *Brookings Blum Roundtable 2016 Post-Conference Report*. Global Economy and Development, Washington DC: Brookings

(OECD).¹³ The challenges of securing and retaining decent work could become more serious and complex for vulnerable and marginalized youth including young women, those living in humanitarian settings, youth with disabilities, migrant youth, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth. Surviving and thriving in the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution will require 21st Century 'transferable' skills such as like creativity, problem solving, empathy, critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership, and innovations in education (formal and non-formal).

These four trends provide the macro context for UNICEF's strategic response to programming with and for youth, and therefore, the development and scaling of UPSHIFT.

1.2 UNICEF - innovating with and for young people

UNICEF has a 70-year history of innovating with and for children and young people. New approaches, partnerships and technologies that support the realization of children's rights are critical to improving their lives. It has a track record of innovative non-formal education from functional literacy courses in Bhutan to nomadic learning programme in Sudan. For the purpose of this paper, non-formal education is framed as an integral part of a lifelong learning process that supports young people to acquire and maintain the skills and abilities to adapt to a dynamic and unpredictable environment. Non-formal education may be short in duration and/or low intensity, in the form of short courses, bootcamps, or workshops, and can place in schools, innovation labs, incubators and accelerators, youth centres, community learning centres, community halls, or buildings lent by government agencies or private companies and organizations, or any other open space where learners can gather together.

UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021

The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018 – 2021 is anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and charts a course towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and realizing a future where every child has a fair chance in life, especially the most disadvantaged. The plan identifies five Goal Areas for the organisation:

- Every child survives and thrives;
- Every child learns;
- Every child is protected from violence and exploitation;
- Every child lives in a safe and clean environment; and
- Every child has an equitable chance in life.

The Table below links the five Goal Areas to be achieved by UNICEF with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Developments.

Table 1: 5 Goal Areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 and the SDGs¹⁴

5 Goal Areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021	SDGs
Every child survives and thrives	SDG 2 and 3
Every child learns	SDG 4
Every child is protected from violence, exploitation and harmful practices	SDG 5, 8, 16
Every child lives in a safe and clean environment	SDG 1, 3, 6, 7, 13
Every child has an equitable chance in life	SDG 1

Goal Areas 2 and 5 are highly relevant for UPSHIFT. For Goal 2 'Every Child Learns', UNICEF is committed to enabling 12.5 million children and adolescents to develop skills for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and employability and contributing to at least 10% of countries institutionalizing skills within education and training systems (system strengthening). For Goal 5 'Every Child has an Equitable chance in Life,' UNICEF is supporting the participation of adolescents by advocating for legislative and policy frameworks; supporting behavioural change interventions; supporting skills-learning for adolescents in school and out of school; strengthening platforms and mechanisms such as youth clubs, and community-based organisations, and promoting adolescent engagement.

¹³ Ibid., p. 15-16. These numbers only reflect the technological capabilities and do not take into account differential labor costs in these countries.

¹⁴ For further general information refer to the UNICEF Data's Children and the SDGs page, Progress for Every Child in the SDG Era report, and Sustainable Development Goal Indicators official website

UNICEF Global Innovation Centre - scaling innovation for every child

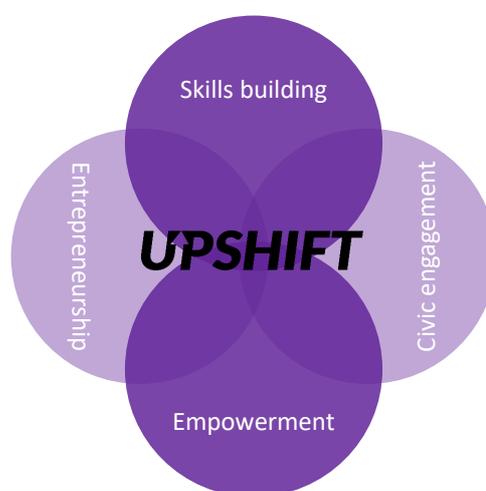
Launched in 2015, the vision of [UNICEF's Global Innovation Centre](#), a part of the Office of Innovation, is to inspire and support the scale-up of new technologies and approaches to UNICEF's work and that of our partners in the private, public and social sector to achieve transformative impact for all children.¹⁵ The GIC provides the leadership and technical support to scale proven game-changing innovations for deployment at national scale across multiple countries and contexts.

Applying a demand-driven, centre-of-excellence model, the GIC has supported about 90 countries to improve programme results by adapting innovations to their specific contexts, in collaboration with private sector partners, governments, universities and communities, and thereby accelerating progress towards the SDGs. To date, these new technologies and approaches have affected the lives of 115 million people across these 85 countries: directly used by 18 million young people, frontline workers and women, and bringing indirect benefits to a further 97 million children and their communities.¹⁶ After demonstrating promising results across 3 countries, UPSHIFT was included in GIC's portfolio in 2017.

Section 2: UPSHIFT: Unleashing the promise of youth

The aspirations and achievements of today's 1.8 billion young people can contribute greatly towards social, economic and ecological well-being of their communities and beyond. Yet many young people lack the opportunities and skills to realize their potential. As one response to the challenge and opportunity, UNICEF has developed UPSHIFT, a social innovation and social entrepreneurship programme that supports youth, particularly the most marginalised, to gain and use transferable skills¹⁷ for life, for engagement and civic participation, and for employability and entrepreneurship, including problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, communication, leadership, collaboration and teamwork. Figure 1 illustrates the four overlapping elements of UPSHIFT: transferable skills-building, empowerment, civic engagement and entrepreneurship.

Figure 1: Four core elements and outcome areas of UPSHIFT



UPSHIFT was initially developed by UNICEF's Youth Innovation Lab in Kosovo and first piloted in 2014 as a social entrepreneurship programme to support disadvantaged young people. As of October 2019, UPSHIFT has a presence in 20 different countries. Up to the end of 2018 UPSHIFT had reached over 200,000 young people, who have created more than 5,000 youth-led projects, bringing benefits to local communities. From introducing an eco-friendly waste management system for organic waste in Kosovo to creating a Time Bank to exchange skills in Azraq refugee camp in Jordan, young people are creating solutions for their communities.¹⁸ The programme directly supports delivery against a number of SDG indicators, including SDG 4.3 (youth participation in formal & non-formal education), 4.4 (increase

¹⁵ For an overview of UNICEF's approach to scaling innovation see, Accone, T. (2019) Scaling Innovation for Every Child. UNICEF Global Innovation Centre.

¹⁶ See UNICEF Global Innovation Centre 2018, Pathways to scale, pathways to results for every child. New York: UNICEF.

¹⁷ Also known as life skills, soft skills, and 21st Century skills.

¹⁸ Time Bank is a volunteer-based exchange system where the unit of currency is time. For example: when someone volunteer for an hour for another person, they will be credited with one hour which can redeem for an hour of service from another volunteer in the scheme. Everyone's contribution is considered of equal value.

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), with 59% of participants in 2018 being girls. UPSHIFT can also be used to create youth-led solutions to specific SDGs (e.g. water and sanitation solutions).

2.1 Designing UPSHIFT

The design and delivery of UPSHIFT is guided by the following principles:

- **By Youth For Youth.** Youth are co-designers and partners of the UPSHIFT programme. They are involved in every stage of programme design and delivery.
- **Design for Equity.** UPSHIFT welcomes young people regardless of their background, ethnicity, ability, and gender identification. The programme actively tackles barriers to inclusion and participation. We are all equal.¹⁹
- **Gender-responsive.** UPSHIFT programme design and delivery needs to be aware of gender norms, roles and relations, and promote measures and approaches to actively reduce their harmful effects, including gender inequality.
- **Human-centred, iterative approach.** UPSHIFT starts with the desire to shed light on what motivates and inspires young people and work relentlessly with them to co-create learning experiences that support the achievement of their potential for the benefit of a better world. When being adapted to a new country, the local team need to use human-centred design approaches to adapt and test UPSHIFT in a new environment.
- **We can do it.** When faced with challenges, we persist, persevere and find ways to coach, connect, or collaborate around it or through it. We model and encourage the capacity for grit.²⁰

UPSHIFT is built on human-centred design methodologies, which have been tailored for use with marginalized young people. Human-centred design is a method for creative problem solving and innovation that involves the human perspective in all steps of the design process, thereby ensuring the solutions are genuinely relevant and beneficial for the people they are intended to serve.²¹ Put simply, human-centred design focuses on the lived experience and needs of individuals.

UPSHIFT is designed for adaptability that allows for significant localisation and customisation to the implementing context. The core UPSHIFT content is modular, allowing UPSHIFT to be adapted to different contexts and to be delivered in different settings, from social innovation labs, youth centres, to other non-formal education settings and also formal education settings. The same tools and techniques can also be used within UNICEF's programmatic areas to design responses that are youth-led (for example within Water and Sanitation or HIV and Aids programming). During 2018, Tajikistan Country Office used the programme to run a nationwide thematic Water, Sanitation and Health (WASH) challenge ahead of a global high-level meeting, bringing the perspectives and ideas of youth to the fore. UNICEF's Gender Innovation team have identified that UPSHIFT (with a specific focus on girls) can support delivery of the Gender Action Plan. UPSHIFT has been used in a number of humanitarian settings, including Sudan and Jordan. The first cross-border UPSHIFT for peacebuilding took place recently where adolescents from border districts of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan came together to develop innovative solutions for intercommunal tolerance and social cohesion in contested areas. The challenge was formulated as "How can we build intercommunal tolerance and conviviality in cross-border areas?". In Vietnam, the focus has been on creating opportunities and a more inclusive environment for young people with disabilities.

Within UNICEF, each Country Office will choose, which focus area or areas that are most relevant to the needs of the adolescents and young people in the country, taking into consideration local capacity and government priorities and policies.

- **Jordan:** focus on skills building & civic engagement, via non-formal and now formal education (direct reach in 2018 = >19,000 adolescents)
- **Tajikistan:** accredited non-formal education curricula, scaling across the country via Adolescent Innovation Labs in Centres for Alternative Education and Youth Centres
- **Sudan:** alternative learning programme for out of school 15-17 years of age; building on life skills and combining with cash transfers (under social protection) to provide seed funding
- **Kosovo:** focus on building youth led social enterprises (entrepreneurship & employability)

¹⁹ UNICEF's mandate is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states, all children irrespective of socio-economic status, geographical location, gender and other markers of difference such as ethnicity and physical/mental condition are entitled to the same rights and should be provided with the same level of opportunity to enjoy these rights.

²⁰ According to Angela Duckworth, grit is a driver of achievement and success, independent of and beyond what talent and intelligence contribute. Without grit, talent may be nothing more than unmet potential. It is only with the ability to persevere that talent becomes a skill that leads to success. A. Duckworth (2016) *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* New York: Scribner.

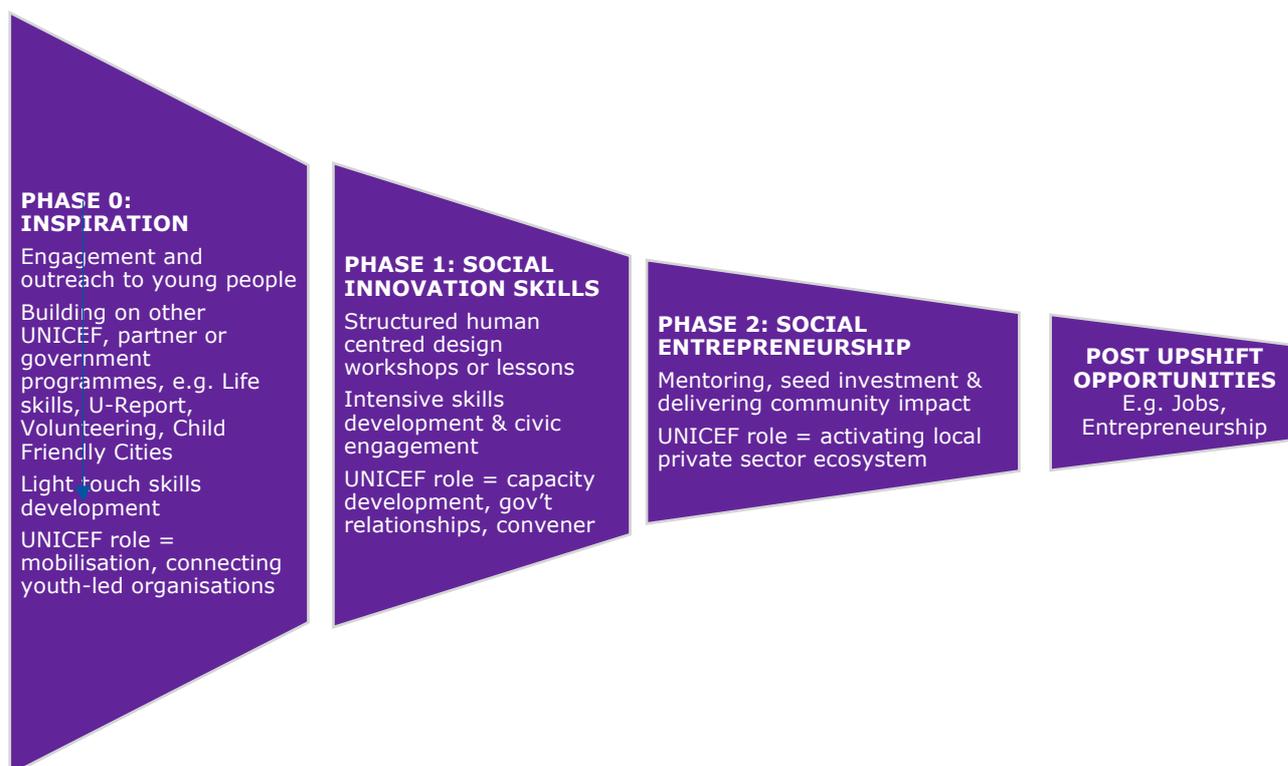
²¹ For more information and tools on human-centred design see <http://www.designkit.org/>

2.2 The UPSHIFT Programme

The UPSHIFT programme has four main phases:

- Phase 0: Inspiration
- Phase 1: Social Innovation Skills
- Phase 2: Social Entrepreneurship
- Phase 4: Post UPSHIFT opportunities

Figure 2: Phases of UPSHIFT



Phase 0: Inspiration

Phase 0 is about reaching the right youth; either through outreach and engagement activities or by building UPSHIFT on existing programmes (such as life skills programming or around a platform, such as Child Friendly Cities or U-Report). This phase is critical for building awareness, trust, and excitement about the programme. A key role for UNICEF is to mobilise youth-led organisations and if appropriate, initiate access to national education systems.

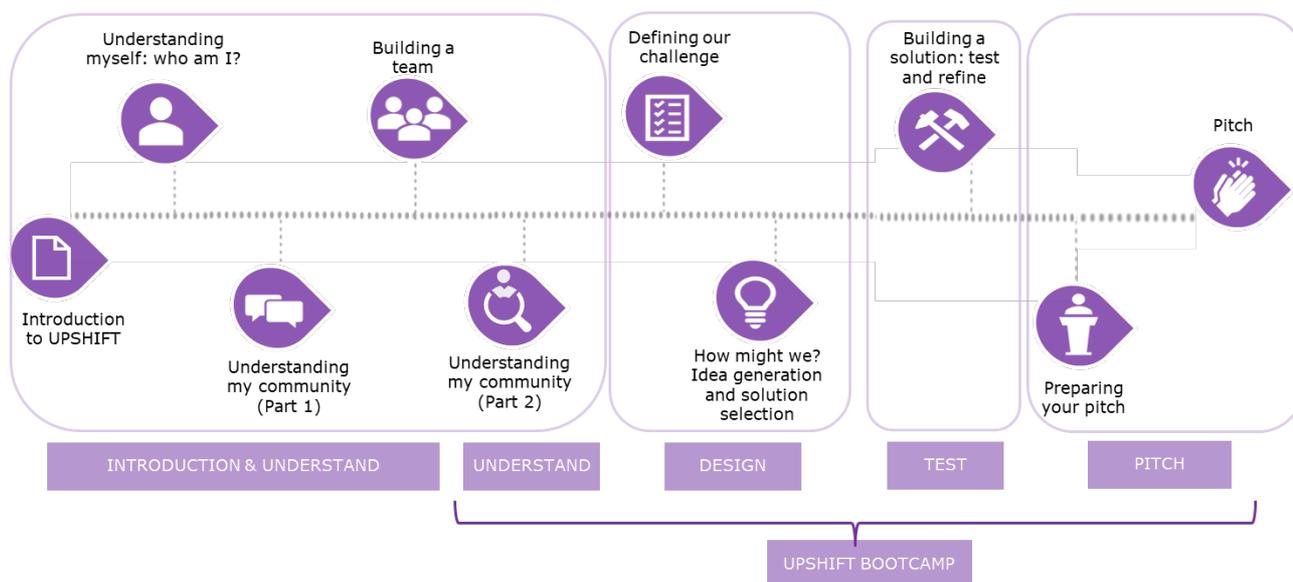
Phase 1: Social Innovation Skills (Figure 3)

Phase 1 of UPSHIFT is an adapted human-centred design process, delivering skills to youth through a social innovation development process.

The modular nature of the programme allows for great adaptability and flexibility and, depending on the context²², UPSHIFT will either be delivered through intensive bootcamp(s) or over several weeks or months as a social innovation skills 'curriculum' in the non-formal and formal learning and training systems. To engage directly with an UPSHIFT bootcamp youth typically need a higher educational level and to already have self-organised into teams, ready to address specific challenges they have identified.

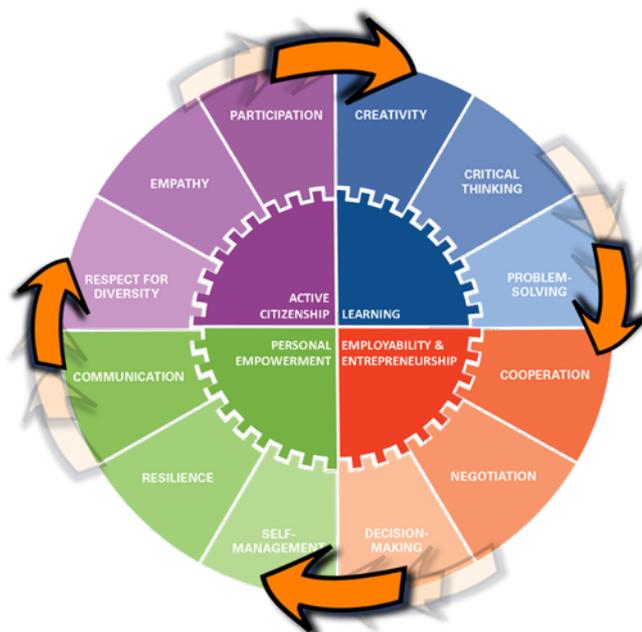
²² Relevant contextual factors in choosing the content include e.g. the setting in which UPSHIFT is being delivered, time available for delivery, the educational level of participating youth, the psychological safety of participating youth

Figure 3: UPSHIFT Phase 1 modules



The full UPSHIFT Phase 1 curriculum is designed to provide an introduction to social innovation, as well as exploration of oneself, the local community and team building, before starting the human-centred design process, which forms the bootcamp component. UPSHIFT Phase 1 can either run as a standalone course or build on life skills courses. In UNICEF Jordan, for example, an abridged course has been developed that combines life skills and UPSHIFT, for delivery within the government run non-formal education sector. UPSHIFT Phase 1 consists of 10 modules, with each module mapping to UNICEF’s global skills framework as shown in Figure 5.²³ For example, the activities within Module 3: Understanding my community develop a young person’s empathy, respect for diversity and communication skills.

Figure 4: UNICEF skills framework



23 UNICEF Global skills framework, publication forthcoming

Phase 2: Social entrepreneurship (Figure 5)

The most innovative ideas presented on Pitch Day at the end of Phase 1 will proceed to Phase 2 of UPSHIFT. This Phase focuses on turning the initial idea into a small scale social business or NGO. Often limited and modest funding will be available for these teams to further develop their prototypes and business models. Mentorship and access to professional entrepreneurship support services are critical during this period.

Figure 5: Phase 2 modules



Post UPSHIFT Opportunities

It is important to consider and design appropriate post-UPSHIFT pathways. Young people exit Phase 2 of UPSHIFT with greater skills and confidence, but projects developed through UPSHIFT will still be in their infancy. Future pathways can include:

- Further technical training and education
- Support to further develop the social business, through e.g. connections with local incubators and accelerators
- Employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

The role of UNICEF is to create long-term partnerships with private, public and social actors and broker opportunities to support young people. In the section on Scaling UPSHIFT, we will look more closely at the importance of the UPSHIFT ecosystem and partnerships.

2.3 Monitoring and evaluating UPSHIFT

The growth in soft and life skills programmes and initiatives for youth has resulted in an urgent need to develop methodologies and instruments to monitor and evaluate programme implementation and effectiveness. Some of UPSHIFT's learning outcomes are not simple to measure. In addition, UPSHIFT is delivered alongside different youth programmes in each country and also tailored to the local needs based on the education system, entrepreneurship ecosystem and culture. This means monitoring and evaluation instruments are different across different contexts. USAID (2017) has identified a number of methodological challenges to measure the skills that UPSHIFT seek to cultivate and nurture, including:

- Balancing technical considerations such as reliability, validity, and measurement invariance;
- Using tools to reliably track and measure change in skills over time, when it is challenging to measure a skill at a single point in time;
- The prevalence of self-report methods that are known to suffer from biases; can distort information on skills due to biases, and
- Developing or adapting tools for use across cultures and contexts with limited resources.²⁴

These issues are difficult to resolve and often, the respective UPSHIFT Country Teams have to decide what trade-offs are acceptable. However, the recommended approach to track progress against outcomes and to evaluate outcomes is a mix of quantitative and qualitative (surveys, interviews and focus groups) methods, sometimes referred to as triangulation. Data is collected using several methods, and this data used to strengthen analysis and confirm confidence in the self-report data. Notwithstanding these

²⁴ Galloway, T, Lippman, L., Burke, H., Diener, O., and Gates, S. (2017). Measuring Soft Skills & Life Skills in International Youth Development Programs: A Review and Inventory of Tools. Washington, DC: USAID's YouthPower Implementation IDIQ- Task Order 1, YouthPower Action.

challenges, emerging evidence from surveys and evaluations from country offices in Kosovo, Jordan and Montenegro shows that UPSHIFT is delivering results across four outcome areas of transferrable skills-building, civic engagement, entrepreneurship and empowerment. This emerging evidence is recognized by the World Bank, with UPSHIFT being part of the Solutions for Youth Employment Impact Portfolio and Generation Unlimited, with UPSHIFT being a recommended solution for scale up.

Kosovo

- 15% of youth-led projects turned into businesses or CSO
- 40% continued their projects after a year
- 80% of participants feel more confident to influence decision-making
- 79% are certain that they have increased confidence and self-esteem

Jordan

- 38% increase in sense of belonging
- 40% increase in reported volunteerism
- 38.7% increase in contribution to the community

Montenegro

- 93% of participants improved their problem analysis skills
- 95% improved their teamwork and communication skills
- 81% felt they had improved their financial literacy skills

Section 3: Scaling UPSHIFT

In June 2017, the UNICEF Global Innovation Centre Advisory Committee met in Vietnam to address the issue of skills for the twenty-first century. The human-centred design approach coupled with UNICEF Country Office demand and emerging results led to UPSHIFT being proposed for inclusion within the GIC portfolio of products to scale up across UNICEF.

The objectives of scaling UPSHIFT are to:

- Increase access to the programme, particular for vulnerable adolescents and youth.
- Accelerate skills-building (for work and for life) through the process of social innovation and social entrepreneurship.
- Expand empowerment and civic engagement opportunities for adolescents and youth to voice their ideas, apply their creativity in their communities, and participate in decision-making processes.

While there are a number of definitions of scale, for the purpose of this paper, 'scale' is understood as: deliberate efforts to replicate and adapt an innovation that has demonstrated success to ensure the solution reaches its maximum potential, has the greatest possible reach and impact that can lead to widespread change on a lasting basis.²⁵ For UNICEF, scaling UPSHIFT is about bringing positive impact for young people at national scale and across many countries.²⁶ Scale depends upon sustainability. Sustainability is more than continual funding. It is the maintenance and improvement of the components and activities that are responsible for generating positive results. Sustainable scale means that UPSHIFT is integrated into the national systems, with a cost effective and resourced model and systems are in place so that the UPSHIFT's impact at scale will continue in the long term, with minimal support from UNICEF.

The overarching strategy for scaling UPSHIFT is one of adapting the programme to fit the cultural and political context, the strengths of the education system and the maturity of the local innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems, rather than a strategy of directly replicating UPSHIFT. For achieving impact at scale, UNICEF has identified five stages of scaling UPSHIFT along with five good practices. The five stages of scaling provide a systematic approach to scaling and sustaining UPSHIFT (and any programmatic innovation) within a country.²⁷ The five good practices build and strengthen the success factors to scaling and sustaining UPSHIFT. The practices are iterative and applicable to every stage of the scaling process, but with varying degree of emphasis depending on the context.

25 This definition combines the ideas in Elrha. (2018), *Too Tough to Scale? Challenges to Scaling Innovation in the Humanitarian Sector*. London: Elrha and Seelos, Christian & Johanna Mair (2017), *Innovation and Scaling for Impact*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

26 For insights into the strategies, models and critical success factors for UNICEF's approach to scaling innovation for children see, Tanya Accone (2019) *Scaling innovation for every child*. UNICEF Global Centre of Innovation.

27 UNICEF Office of Innovation has adopted the stages of scaling developed by the International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA). See *Insights on Scaling Innovation* (June 2017), *Good Practices for Scaling Innovation* (June 2017) and *Insights on Measuring the Impact of Innovation* (June 2017)

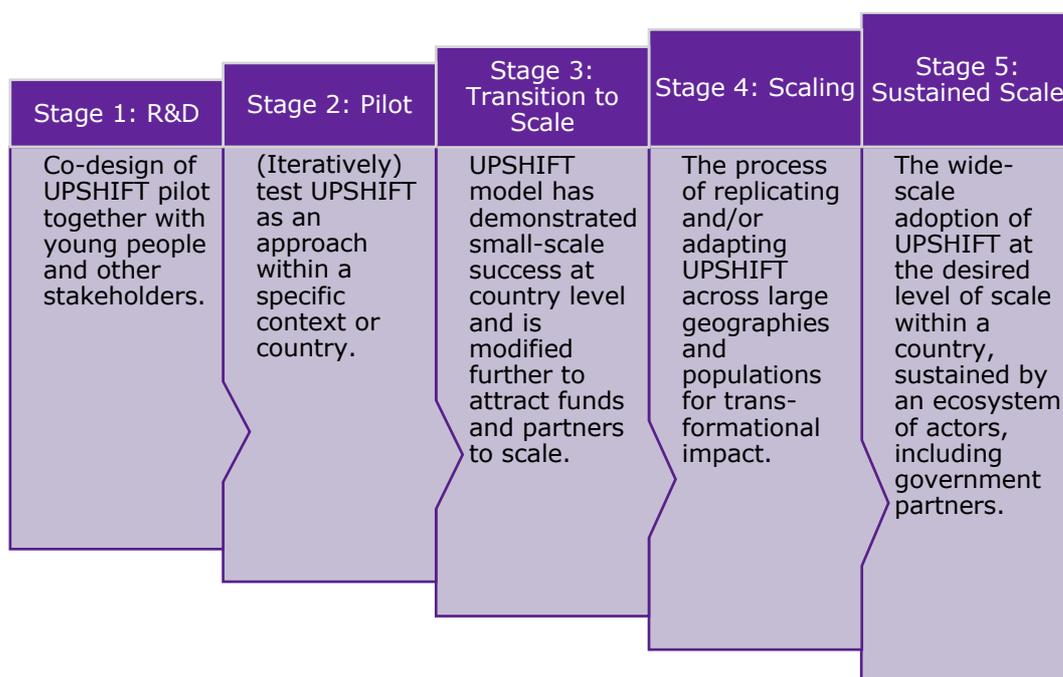
It should be noted that a suite of assets and guidance have also been developed to support the deployment, scaling and sustainment of UPSHIFT.

- UPSHIFT facilitation guides (which are open sourced)
- UPSHIFT implementation guide - internal compilation of lessons learnt and useful documents
- Guidance and tools on scaling and sustaining UPSHIFT (at national level)
- Community of practice around youth led social innovation
- Workshops and capacity building

3.1 The five stages of scaling UPSHIFT at the country level

The scaling UPSHIFT process unfolds across five stages, though it is not strictly a linear process. Figure 6 represents the five stages of scaling UPSHIFT.

Figure 6: Five stages of Scaling UPSHIFT



The following describes the key milestones, characteristics and activities of each stage.

Stage 1: Research and development

- At this stage, UPSHIFT (and possibly other programmes) has been identified as a potentially relevant programmatic responses that could deliver results for adolescents in line with UNICEF plans and priorities within a specific country.
- The aim of this stage is to gather insight on UPSHIFT and, based on this insight, co-design the initial UPSHIFT pilot together with young people (future participants) and other stakeholders.
- Different sources can be used to gather insight including a mapping of similar initiatives in the country / region, review of documentation, evidence from UPSHIFT in other countries and consultations with young people and other stakeholders, including through U-Report.²⁸ Young people must participate in the co-design process and in developing the UPSHIFT pilot.
- It will also be necessary during this phase to start to engage implementing partners and localize (and possibly translate) the UPSHIFT Facilitation Manual and other materials.

²⁸ U-Report is a social messaging tool and data collection system developed by UNICEF to empower and connect young people around the world to engage with and speak out on issues that matter to them and to foster positive change. U-Report is currently active in 60 countries, benefiting 8 million users. Country U-Reports are run by UNICEF and partners on the ground, including local government, non-governmental organizations and young people themselves. U-Report is available via numerous messaging, social media and SMS channels, and even works on a basic mobile phone. It is free, anonymous and easy to use.

At the end of this stage the local UNICEF team will have designed a pilot of UPSHIFT, which includes a view to how it could also be scaled in future. One of the most important factors is to design for scale from the very start, even when thinking about the first pilot. It is relatively easy to deliver a successful UPSHIFT pilot, yet much more difficult to build partnerships, delivery model and a funding model that is sustainable in the long-term. Partners for scale need to be involved in the pilot.

As the UPSHIFT Sudan Team said: "Scale-up should start from the beginning, rather than after you have been going for 3-4 years. It has to be useful for the country, be part of their vision. But make sure the evidence is clear, make sure it works, and then scale."

Stage 2: Proof of concept / pilot

- At this stage there is an initial programme design. The pilot phase is one of test and iteration to gain 'real-world' information and to assess technical & organisational feasibility and financial viability, with a view to long term scalability and sustainability.
- The pilot is likely to be multi-phase, rather than a single event. The first pilot should be quite small, low cost and accessible for UNICEF staff. It is important that facilitators are comfortable with the UPSHIFT approach. After the initial pilot, multi-site pilots in more challenging locations should be considered. This will enhance the resilience of future iterations of the programme.
- During this phase it is vital to engage the right stakeholders and gather the right evidence to support scaling up activities.

Stage 3: Transition to scale

- By this stage UPSHIFT has demonstrated small-scale success. The UNICEF team, young people and key stakeholders assess the potential to scale UPSHIFT, and if appropriate, prepare for transition to scale.
- In this stage, it is recommended to use the learnings from the Pilot(s) to review and update the information gathered during Stage 1 (Research and Development). Stakeholders can then review and use the results of the pilot to modify the UPSHIFT programme for scaling.
- The transition to scale requires substantial resource mobilization and capacity building and will require standardisation of the programme.

Stage 4: Scaling

Stage 4 is about starting to deliver UPSHIFT at scale and understanding what further changes will be needed for long-term sustainability.

- This is a very operational stage where UPSHIFT is replicated across large geographies and populations for transformational reach and impact.
- Standardisation of the programme's core components is completed. There are internal systems to ensure fidelity across programme sites. There is compelling evidence that results are being maintained or improved across numerous locations and evidence of cost-effectiveness.
- During this stage it is also important to build the model and partnerships for sustainment.

Stage 5: Sustainable scale

By Stage 5 the delivery model, partnerships and funding need to be in place for long term sustainability at country level.

- By this point UPSHIFT is operating at the desired level of scale, sustained by an ecosystem of actors.
- For UNICEF, the preferred model is ownership by national government, aligning with UNICEF's strategic goal of systems strengthening. Other models include social franchising and open source, both of which could be delivered via civil society organisations and/or private sector, although sustained impact through only this vector will be challenging.
- National government partners may include Ministries of Education (at state and federal level, both formal and non-formal education), Ministries of Youth and Ministries of Science, Technology and Innovation.

Although scaling UPSHIFT is a process that unfolds in stages, in practice these are not always linear. For example, modifications made during the 'Transition to Scale' stage may require further 'Pilot' testing before UPSHIFT progresses to the 'Scaling' stage.

3.2 Good Practices

The five good practices support scaling UPSHIFT across the five stages. These good practices are not rigidly mapped to a particular scaling stage. The complexity and the lengthiness of the scaling process often require the local UPSHIFT team to apply some of the practices in parallel or repeatedly across multiple stages as UPSHIFT progresses towards sustainable scaling.

Figure 7: Five Good Practices for Designing and Scaling UPSHIFT



Each of the good practices is examined in more detail below.

Good practice 1: Understand the context

This Good Practice is focused on Stage 1 (Research and Development). However, it needs to be revisited in Stage 3 (Transition to Scale) and Stage 5 (Sustainable Scale) and at any time that major changes take place in the external environment, which could impact the rationale for, or design of, the UPSHIFT programme.

UNICEF Country Offices operate in dynamic and complex environments with varied political, social and economic conditions and an array of actors with different interests and levels of influence. Therefore, it is critical to understand how these different factors and actors are connected in the broader environment so we can take advantage of the best opportunities and entry points to deliver better outcomes for young people through UPSHIFT. Insights gathered from this stage will help to identify and support what already exists, maximizing the opportunities to build on existing structures and networks, identifying multiple entry points for an UPSHIFT pilot. It will help to ensure the design of UPSHIFT and the scaling process are sensitive to the reality faced by young people locally. It will shed light on how best to work with a wide range of stakeholders, including supporting government priorities to achieve long-term sustainable impact.

Good practice 2: Cultivate partnerships and networks

This Good Practice is relevant for every stage of the UPSHIFT Scaling Process.

Designing, piloting and scaling UPSHIFT is a collaborative effort and young people are the most important partners through the scaling process, from research and development to sustainable scale. But for UPSHIFT to achieve impact at scale, it is vital to involve actors from multiple sectors and at the international, national, regional and local level. UNICEF Country Offices play an important convening role to foster collaborative partnerships and build networks. UNICEF's longstanding presence in a country means it has a degree of influence to bring young people, educators, the private sector, civil society, the Government agencies, and other partners together. Multi-stakeholder platforms like working groups serve as an important and cost-effective way to exchange knowledge and information, facilitate partnerships, coordinate actors within and across sectors, and forge common positions and plans of action for scaling and sustaining UPSHIFT.

Good practice 3: UPSHIFT model and strategy development

During the scaling process in a country, UPSHIFT is likely to undergo a series of three strategic adaptations.

- UPSHIFT model 1.0. Developing a pilot model of UPSHIFT, with a vision of scale (designed during Stage 1 and tested during Stage 2). As discussed, this pilot model must be designed with a view to scale from the start.
- UPSHIFT model 2.0. Developing a scalable and sustainable model of UPSHIFT (during Stage 3) It is important to note there are two steps to this; firstly to assess scalability and sustainability and then to develop a scale strategy. The baseline requirements of scalability are:

- Acceptable - the degree to which UPSHIFT is accepted by young people and key stakeholders
- Credible - the programme results are valid and reliable
- Feasible - available technical capability and organisational capacity to take on the work
- Adaptable - the model of UPSHIFT can be modified and maintain effectiveness
- Affordable - the cost is relative to the ability to pay
- UPSHIFT 3.0 Developing a sustainment model and strategy (during Stage 5).

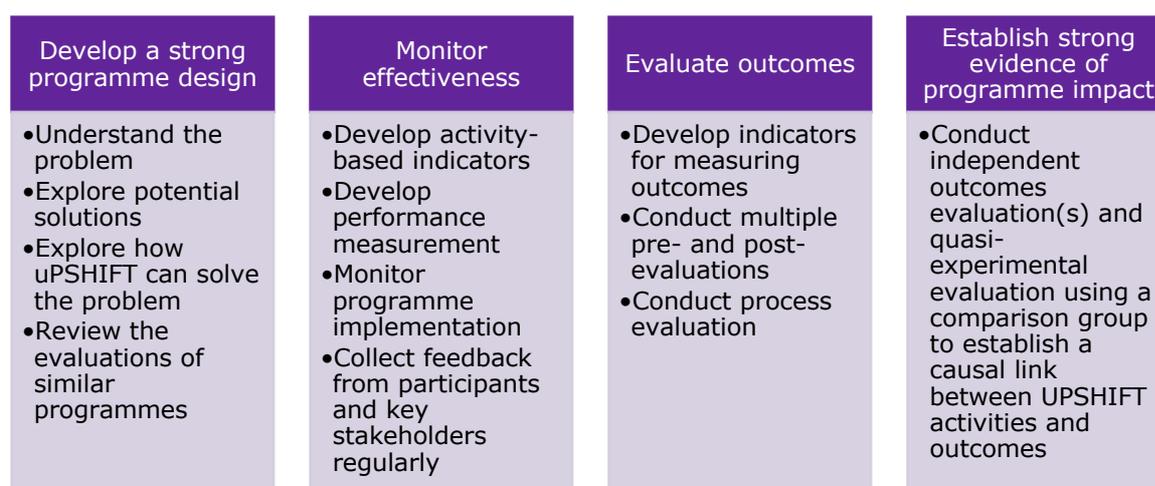
UNICEF has developed an UPSHIFT model canvas (based on the business model canvas) to guide the development of UPSHIFT models and the scale strategy. The nine questions are asked through the iterative process:

1. **Beneficiaries.** Who will benefit from participating in UPSHIFT? How will this change as UPSHIFT scales?
2. **Problem.** What is the problem being addressed? What is the scale of the problem?
3. **Key resources.** What resources are needed to pilot, scale, and sustain UPSHIFT? E.g. human resource, funding, infrastructure?
4. **Key activities.** What activities will be carried out to solve the problem? E.g. workshops, mentorship, provision of seed funding
5. **Key partners and networks.** Who delivers UPSHIFT? What partnerships and networks are needed to support the pilot, scale and sustainment of the programme?
6. **Key metrics / impact measures.** How will UPSHIFT demonstrate it is creating impact at scale?
7. **Cost structure.** What are the main areas of expenses? How will this change as UPSHIFT scales and moves towards sustainment?
8. **Funding model.** Who will fund the programme? How will this change as UPSHIFT scales and sustains?
9. **Communication, advocacy and knowledge sharing.** How can evidence and stories be used to drive awareness, understanding, acceptance and commitment for UPSHIFT?

Good practice 4: Build evidence (Figure 8)

Evidence refers to credible and verifiable information that is systematically obtained in a manner that can be used for making decisions. This Good Practice is relevant for every Stage of the Innovation Process, but particularly for Stage 2 (Pilot) and Stage 4 (Scaling), as these are the main areas of implementation where it will be important to gather evidence and test hypotheses outlined in the Theory of Change. Sources of evidence include programme evaluation, research, policy analysis, surveys, and stories. Positive findings help to build UPSHIFT’s evidence base. Negative findings can be used to improve the programme or to choose to invest resources elsewhere.

Figure 8: Building evidence for UPSHIFT



Good practice 5: Building a sustainable funding model

This Good Practice is relevant for every stage, as UPSHIFT will require resources (from different sources) from Stage 1 (Research and Development) through to Sustained Scale (Stage 5). There are two components to this:

1. Building a cost structure that can be sustainably scaled
2. Identifying sustainable funding sources that can support delivery at scale

The parameters of a sustainable cost structure vary significantly by country, depending on costs and availability of government (or other) resources and infrastructure. The key cost areas for consideration include, human capital, infrastructure (location)²⁹ and sources and sustainability of seed funding and incubation.³⁰

Scaling UPSHIFT will require either new funding, or entirely new funding models from the original pilots. It is important to identify funding options early and when possible, to leverage new resources through collaboration and private sector partnerships. The possible funding streams for scaling and sustaining UPSHIFT include:

- **Domestic public financing.** Domestic public finance is essential to provide public goods and services. Domestic financing will be relevant if, for example, UPSHIFT is being integrated into existing education systems (at national or local level, formal or non-formal).
- **Donor financing.** Aid has an important gap-filling role in providing public goods and services in many countries. Private and government donors are likely to be important for UPSHIFT in its early stages.
- **Nonstate financing.** New financing mechanisms are opening up opportunities for collaboration across both nonstate and state actors. Impact investment and the pay for success funding models offer promising solutions to the financial gap in scaling innovation.
- **Blended finance.** Blended finance is the strategic use of development finance for the mobilisation of additional finance towards sustainable development in developing countries. The current model is usually combining different sources of public development finance but the drive is to use development finance to attract commercial finance to help bridge the investment gap for the SDGs.

3.3 The UPSHIFT ecosystem

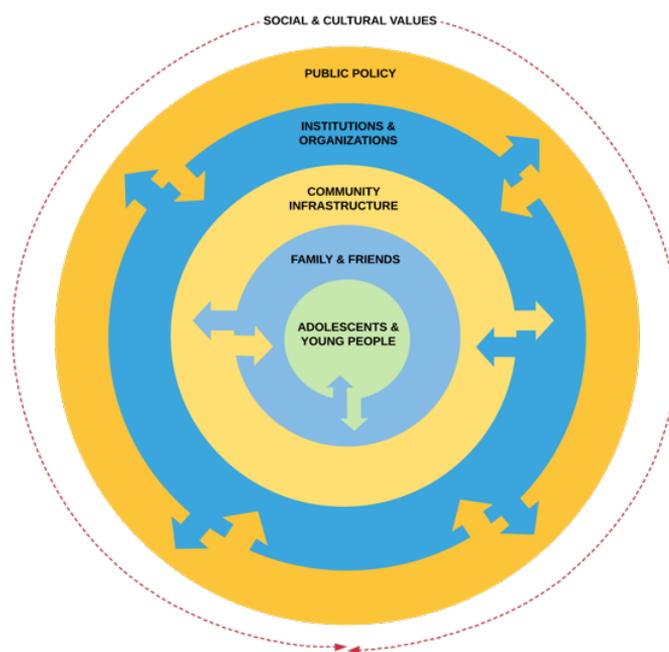
UPSHIFT is a collaborative effort within UNICEF and with external stakeholders. UNICEF is often quite uniquely positioned, as a convener of these different ecosystems, from youth-led organisations to government departments and the local private sector. Multi-stakeholder partnerships with global, regional and national actors working across sectors, fields and industries have been essential throughout every stage of UPSHIFT to date. The UPSHIFT ecosystem is a dynamic network of complex relationships between actors, entities and factors that have positive and negative influence over the scaling of UPSHIFT. The UPSHIFT ecosystem has five interacting domains:

- Adolescents and young people
- Family and friends
- Community infrastructure
- Institutions and organisations
- Public policy

²⁹ When envisioning scale, it is important to consider how existing government (or potentially private sector) physical infrastructure can be leveraged (e.g. youth centres, schools, other education premises, local government owned premises).

³⁰ The long-term model for seed funding and incubation support need to link with either government or private sector sources.

Figure 9: UPSHIFT Ecosystem



Different partners within the ecosystem will play different roles in designing, piloting and scaling UPSHIFT. Table 2 outlines some of the different partners and their role within UPSHIFT.

Table 2: Potential UPSHIFT partners and their roles

Partner	Potential Role
Young people (as both participants and volunteers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-design, co-delivery and co-evaluation
Other UN agencies (e.g. UNDP, UNFPA, ILO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convening, technical support and advisory
Government Ministry. The most important ministries are likely to be: Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Human Development, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of ICT, Ministry of Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key to UPSHIFT achieving and sustaining impact at scale Ensure access and development of scale and sustainability plans Enhance the acceptability of UPSHIFT Provide access to infrastructure and facilities for rolling out UPSHIFT Strategic implementation partner – e.g for integration with national school system
Ministry department and state/district/county/provincial governing bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination and support in accessing communities Provide access to infrastructure and facilities for rolling out UPSHIFT
Formal and non-formal education sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide access to schools, alternative education centres Support to integrate skill building activities into formal and non-formal activities within the school system.
Village councils and similar local institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure access to local facilities Enhance the acceptability of UPSHIFT at the community level
INGOs (e.g. JA Worldwide / NJAZ, Aflatoun) and NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide technical expertise across related and applicable programme areas (e.g. life skills, entrepreneurship) Act as implementing partners for UPSHIFT through PCA with UNICEF or at the later stages of scaling process, through a commissioned service arrangement with the national government.
Businesses and Corporations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide financial support (as donors) Provide non-financial support (for example, mentors,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> access to space and resources) • Provide employment or business development opportunities for youth who are engaged with UPSHIFT
Private sector umbrella bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to members
Entrepreneurship development organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide non-financial support (for example, mentors, access to space and resources)
Philanthropic organisations - international and national	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support
Research institutions and think tanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expertise and research capacity
Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide research capacity, links to business development / commercialisation functions, student volunteering opportunities as UPSHIFT mentors
Community organisations with a focus on youth, girls, disability, and child protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide key network point for vulnerable youth

The quality of interactions among actors will impact on the strength, resilience and agility of the ecosystem. Young people are actors who can influence systems and at the same time, they are shaped by their social and physical environment. An important role of the UPSHIFT country team is to cultivate and nurture the UPSHIFT ecosystem.

3.4 Strengthening Systems: Working with Governments

For children and adolescents to become successful life-long learners, to find productive work, to take decisions that affect their lives, and to actively engage in their communities they need to access education opportunities and learn both foundational and transferable skills. This requires supporting countries, their people and institutions, to improve education and engagement outcomes over the long term. Extensive engagement with government is critical in scaling and sustaining the UPSHIFT programme. This means working closely with governments to strengthen education and training systems to enable learning that promotes holistic and life-long skills development through both formal and non-formal pathways. UNICEF does this by providing technical assistance to help countries identify and take ownership for investments in their education systems, and to support the development of national policies and service delivery systems that are responsive to the needs of adolescents and youth.

In 2016, Montenegro Country Office, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Youth and Sports jointly launched the Youth Innovation Lab to empower young people and engage them in problem solving. The first UPSHIFT social impact workshop was conducted in the same month. UPSHIFT is a part of a comprehensive approach to life skills, youth empowerment and employability. Prior to the launch of UPSHIFT, Montenegro Country Office had been supporting the MoE to enhance the quality of teaching and improve students' outcomes through innovative approaches based on scientific knowledge in the areas of education and child & adolescent development. Building on their existing partnerships with the MoE and the Bureau for Education, Montenegro Country Office is developing a modality for integrating and scaling UPSHIFT through formal education. Currently, the plan is to accredit UPSHIFT by the National Education Council and develop a training programme for teachers and school psychologists and pedagogues, which will allow for UPSHIFT to be utilized in formal education and complement the existing curricula in secondary school.

Section 4: UPSHIFT case studies

4.1 Jordan

Start	2016
Programme stage	Scaling
Target cohort	Vulnerable adolescents and young people aged 14-18
Population reach	Direct - 20,124 (60% female) Indirect - 50,409 (70% female)
Geographical reach	National reach - across all 12 Governorates
Setting	Social innovation labs, Makani centres, out of school settings
Language	Arabic

Context

63 per cent of the Jordan's population of 10 million are under the age of 30. Of this cohort, 20 per cent are between 15-24 and 40 per cent are under 18.³¹ 39 per cent of young people aged 15-29 are not in education, employment or training.³² Jordan also hosts nearly 1.3 million Syrians of which about 20 per cent are youth. 84 per cent of Syrian youth are out of school or unemployed.

Programme objectives

- Equip adolescents and youth with skills for the 21st century
- Facilitate the transition into adulthood and employment
- Promote social cohesion, in host communities

Scaling Strategy

Jordan Country Office is scaling UPSHIFT by partnering with the Ministry of Youth, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development, and national NGOs. The approach is to identify key entry points and opportunities to leverage sectoral and cross-sectoral programming, build local capacity, and strengthen national systems.

Scaling pathways

- Makani Centres³³ - There are over 150 Makani centres in refugee camps, in host communities, and informal tent settlements across Jordan. The integration of UPSHIFT with Makani's Life Skills component expands the reach of the programme to the most vulnerable young people.
- Madrasati Programme³⁴ - Jordan River Foundation (JRF), supported by the Ministry of Education, is delivering UPSHIFT through its Madrasati programme. The goal is to train 200 teachers who will reach 20,000 students and support 200 youth-led initiatives.
- Nashatati Programme³⁵ - UPSHIFT is being integrated as an extra-curricular activity in 200 schools as part of the UNICEF's existing Nashatati after-school programme in partnership with the Ministry of Education.
- National Youth Centres - In partnership with the Ministry of Youth, UPSHIFT is being integrated with the existing life skills programme at government-run youth centres across the country. Current life skills facilitators are trained to deliver UPSHIFT.

4.2 Tajikistan

Start	Mid-2017
Programme stage	Scaling
Target cohort	Vulnerable young people between 15-24
Population reach	3952 young people
Geographical reach	8 towns and districts, including remote areas
Setting	Innovation Labs in Centres for Additional Education and Youth Centres
Languages	Tajik and Russian

Context

Tajikistan is a low-income country with an economy heavily reliant on remittances from migrant labourers. Over 29 per cent of young people (15-24) are not in education, employment or training. Almost half of those with secondary education cannot find jobs one year after leaving school. As a result, many boys see labour migration as their only option, while many girls look towards on marriage and motherhood.

Programme objectives

- Improve skills for 21st century
- Enable youth social entrepreneurship
- Provide facilitated employment opportunities for the most marginalized youth

31 Government of Jordan Department of Statistics, Jordan Population and Housing Census 2015: Main results, 2016.

32 Ibid.

33 Makani (my space in Arabic) is safe space where vulnerable children and young people have access to multiple services under one roof. It links interventions in education, child protection, and adolescent and youth participation to promote children and young people's full development and physical, cognitive, social and emotional well-being. There are 151 Makani centres located in towns, Syrian refugee camps and informal tent settlements (ITSs) in Jordan.

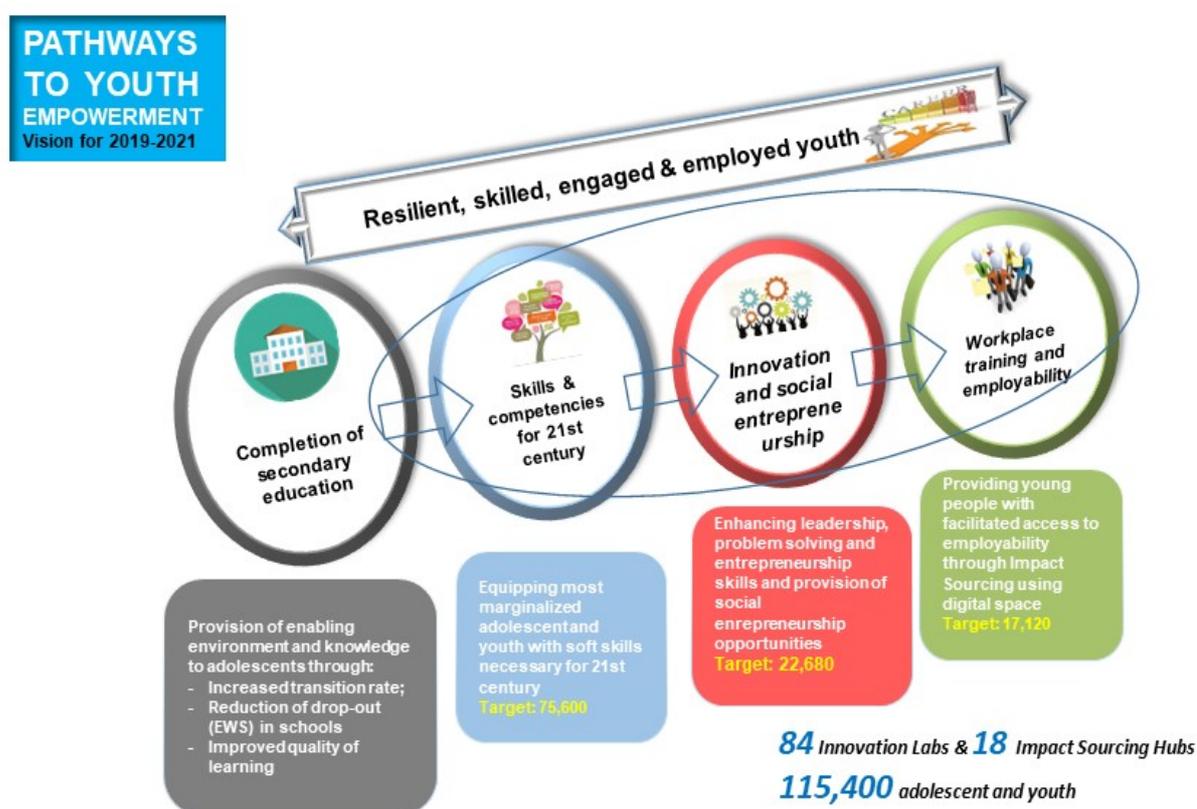
34 Madrasati (my school in Arabic) launched in 2008 under the auspices of the Jordan River Foundation seeks to empower both for Jordanian and Syrian students through enriching after-school learning and providing them with life skills that are necessary to contribute to social cohesion in the Jordan.

35 Nashatati (my activities, in Arabic) was launched by Ministry of Education in collaboration with UNICEF and Generation for Peace in 2017. The programme is aligned with the 12 core life skills as conceptualized in the MENA Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) initiative.

Scaling strategy

UNICEF Tajikistan has identified the existing education and youth infrastructure as entry points for UPSHIFT. In early 2019, the Ministry of Education approved UPSHIFT as non-formal education curriculum and the expansion of Adolescents Innovation Labs (AILs) in Centres for Additional Education (CAE) for those aged 14-18 and Youth Innovation Labs (YILs) in Youth Centres (YC) for those aged 19-24 in all the districts. In the coming 2-3 years, UNICEF Tajikistan will establish around 80 Innovations Labs covering all CAEs and YCs across the country, train 33,600 youth in life skills and social entrepreneurship every year, and create 16,000 jobs for marginalized youth through impact sourcing. CAE staff are involved throughout the process to encourage a sense of ownership and to prepare them to lead the Innovation Labs in the future. Figure 10 illustrates UPSHIFT Tajikistan pathways to youth empowerment at scale.

Figure 10: UPSHIFT Tajikistan - Vision for youth empowerment 2019-2021



4.3 Lessons

From its early beginnings as a youth social entrepreneurship initiative in Kosovo in 2014, as of late 2019 UPSHIFT is now being implemented in 20 countries³⁶. During this period of experimentation, iteration and scale, some key lessons have emerged.

Reaching the most vulnerable adolescents

Girls, adolescents with disabilities, LGBTQI, adolescents from racial or ethnic minorities and the poor continue to face systemic barriers to accessing learning and employment opportunities. UPSHIFT Country Offices have taken actions to improve their reach to the most marginalized by actively seeking out the most marginalized adolescents through community groups and other partners and ensure they are

³⁶ As of October 2019, UPSHIFT has some presence (from Pilot to Scaling) in: Armenia, Belarus, Brazil, Burundi, Croatia, Jordan, India, Italy, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Moldova, Montenegro, Nicaragua, North Macedonia, Serbia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Vietnam

provided with the information and support needed to allow them to actively engage with the programme; supporting efforts to address discrimination and advocating for marginalized adolescents, and improving equitable access adopting a place-based community-building approach to programme delivery. It is vital to engage these youth in the design of the programme and to consciously design to overcome the challenges and barriers they may face in accessing the programme. This will be an iterative, learning process.

Digital as an enabler, not an end goal

In a digital world, many people and partners ask whether UPSHIFT can be delivered more cost effectively and at scale, through digital means. The Global Innovation Centre undertook a digital scoping study in early 2019 to explore this question. The results indicate that UPSHIFT should remain a largely face to face programme, as the skills-building, empowerment and equity elements would be severely diluted, if the programme were entirely digitised. However, there is scope to digitise part of the capacity building of trainers and facilitators (within the non-formal education system), which will support systematic scale up. There is also scope, at country level, to supplement UPSHIFT programme delivery with digital tools and platforms, where young people have equitable access to those tools.

Balancing programme fidelity and adaptation

It is challenging to find the right balance between maintaining the fidelity of the UPSHIFT programme and adapting the programme to reflect the circumstances of the young people and the community where it is to be implemented. There are contextual factors such as availability of trainers and resources, cultural norms and the unique characteristics of the young people that impact the delivery of UPSHIFT. Contextualising UPSHIFT to fit local circumstances is needed to ensure it is relevant and appropriate - one size does not fit all. Given these factors, a number of practical guides and tools have been developed to assist Country Offices to identify "core components" of effectiveness. At the same time, adaptations made by Country Offices are documented and shared with colleagues in other Country Offices who are working with UPSHIFT.

The importance of building evidence

Scaling and sustaining UPSHIFT requires evidence based on a clearly articulated theory of change. Evidence of effectiveness must go beyond the number of adolescents and young people who participated in the programme and include evidence on what works and what does not, for whom and under what circumstances. More effort is required to develop mixed method tools (because quantitative and qualitative methods cannot exist without one another for true understanding) to evaluate programme design, implementation, and to understand what changes have occurred and what components of UPSHIFT are most effective for achieving the planned outcomes. As UPSHIFT gains traction across different regions, the demand for timely and usable evidence of success will only grow.

Building a community of practice

UPSHIFT aims to catalyse a global movement of young problem-solvers and building a community of practice will support this goal. A community of practice is a group of practitioners with a common sense of purpose who agree to work together to solve problems, share knowledge, cultivate good practice and foster innovation. Local communities of practice made up of UPSHIFT leads in the Country Office, partners, educators, and development practitioners will strengthen the ecosystem of actors for scaling and sustaining UPSHIFT. The exchange of knowledge and practices across communities of practice will improve programme quality, allow for meaningful contribution to the larger goals of UPSHIFT, and advance a culture of continuous learning. To this end, the UPSHIFT Global Team has adopted two knowledge management strategies: 1) to provide Country Offices with access to knowledge and tools to support their UPSHIFT efforts and knowledge sharing events, and 2) document knowledge and experience from Country Offices and make this accessible across the UPSHIFT community of practice and to the wider development community.