eclipse

UCCE Training: Learnings & Implications

What we did

Eclipse team trained Plan International Peru (further 'Plan Peru') staff in using the User-Centred Community Engagement (UCCE) methodology to inform improved design of Aprendiendo Unidos, a non-formal education programme implemented by Plan International as part of the Education Cannot Wait consortium in southern Lima.

Based on learnings from the Ethiopia pilot, we split UCCE training into three sessions: General UCCE training, Interactive Digital Surveys training and Co-Creation Session training. This was done to ensure that the field team had enough time for hands-on practice before each key stage of the UCCE and to avoid information overload.

All training sessions were delivered in Spanish by a member of the Eclipse team.

The General UCCE training session took place on the first day of the field pilot. It was planned to run for 2 hours but took only 1 hour. While it was initially planned that the training began with the project managers (a Plan Peru Grants Specialist and the Aprendiendo Unidos Programme Coordinator) would attend this session, four Data Collectors were also present.

The Interactive Digital Surveys training took place in the afternoon of Day 1 and took 4 hours to complete. It was attended by both project managers and four Data Collectors. A Disaster Risk Management specialist interested in the UCCE methodology was also present.

The Co-Creation Sessions training took place on Day 4, one day before the beginning of the Co-Creation Sessions with the target population. The training lasted 4 hours and was attended by the Aprendiendo Unidos Programme coordinator and 4 Data Collectors).

User research during UCCE training sessions was conducted by the Project Lead and the Research Lead through in-context observation. Observation findings were supplemented with user interviews at the end of the field pilot.

The training guides used in this pilot can be found here:
- General training: English | Spanish
- Interactive Digital Survey training: English | Spanish
- Co-Creation Sessions training: English | Spanish

What we learned

Delivery in local language leads to better training outcomes

While it is understood that training in local language is typically going to be better, there is an operational complexity to this and, as such, it was initially planned that the Peru Pilot training was to be delivered in English. However, once the project started, it was clear that the training would not work in English and the decision was made to change the project to deliver the training in Spanish. As such, the Peru pilot was the first time User-Centred Community Engagement (UCCE) training was delivered to the field team in their native language and without the use of an interpreter. It was delivered by an Eclipse researcher who was a native Spanish speaker and closely familiar with UCCE. All materials and guidance for UCCE were also translated into Spanish ahead of the pilot. Delivering UCCE training in the local language resulted in a more engaging and nuanced training, with the field staff feeling comfortable to ask questions and discuss anything they didn't understand with the trainer. The trainer was also able to participate more fully in hand-on practice exercises and other UCCE activities, providing advice and guidance to the project team when necessary.

Initial translation of UCCE materials was too literal and required ad hoc changes, leading to delays in distribution of materials to the field staff

The main challenge with delivering UCCE training in a new language was translating the materials that are used during the training and throughout the pilot. Initial translation into Spanish was commissioned from a third party translator in advance of the pilot. After its completion, however, it was discovered that the translation was too literal in places, used an incorrect dialect and applied technical terminology inconsistently across some documents. During the Interactive Digital Surveys training, Data Collectors also pointed out that language used in the translated surveys needed to be amended and made more inclusive, e.g., using more gender-inclusive and age-appropriate questions. This resulted in Eclipse staff needing to proofread and adjust translation across all materials, leading to heightened workload and delays in distribution of some of the materials to key field staff. As a consequence, field staff had less time to review and familiarise themselves with some documents, which had an impact on the extent to which field staff understood and internalised UCCE guidance materials. It has been suggested that, if time allows it, a more collaborative approach to translation, working together with the local language team and Data Collectors could help solve some of these issues.

The connection and interaction between different components of the UCCE methodology was not sufficiently explained in the training

Following the first day of training, the field team quickly developed a good overall understanding of the UCCE methodology and the Digital Toolkit. However, the overview and how different steps of the methodology were less clear and easy to understand. The aspect of the methodology that was the least clear to the team was the link between the different components of UCCE: for example, how Interactive Digital Surveys related to Co-Creation Sessions, or how the first and the second round of surveys differed from each other. This became more clear as the pilot went on and during further activities, such as the Report Output Session and the Co-Creation Sessions Training. However, helping the field team develop a better understanding of the different stages of UCCE and their roles in each stage from the outset would have helped them in gaining more confidence in the methodology earlier on in the project.

High level of engagement among Data Collectors was key to positive training outcomes

Data Collectors were very engaged in all UCCE training sessions. They were keen to learn about the methodology, asked a lot of clarifying questions, and readily participated in role play exercises designed to provide hands-on practice with core UCCE components: Interactive Digital Surveys and Co-Creation Sessions.

Data Collectors took initiative to adapt UCCE methodology and activities to the local context

All Data Collectors had experience with pen and paper surveys. Most also knew about different digital survey solutions available, such as Kobo, although most had not used these in the past. Furthermore, Data Collectors had previous experience with facilitation of focus group discussions and other similar community engagement activities with adolescents. This experience, along with their knowledge of the local context, enabled the Data Collectors to play an important role in adapting certain aspects of UCCE prior to deployment. Specifically, the Data Collectors suggested rephrasing survey questions in Spanish, advised on adjustments to the way they worked together to gather survey information and on the timing of how different activities they were involved in would work best in this context.

Splitting UCCE training between different components worked well but contributed to a weak understanding of the connection between different UCCE components

As detailed above, based on learnings from the pilot in Ethiopia, we divided the UCCE training in Peru into three sessions: General UCCE training, Interactive Digital Surveys training and Co-Creation Sessions training. As expected, splitting UCCE training in this way worked well, as it allowed the team to focus on one UCCE component at a time and avoided information overload. However, it also appeared to contribute to the challenge described above related to the team's understanding of the connection between different UCCE components.

Programme introduction added value to UCCE training

The General UCCE training was followed by an introduction of the Aprendiendo Unidos programme to the Data Collectors working on the pilot. This introduction was not planned in advance but was a good addition to the training, as the Data Collectors were seconded to the pilot from a different project and were not familiar with this programme. However, it would have been better had this introduction to the Aprendiendo Unidos programme taken place before the General UCCE training and time be given to discuss the strengths and challenges of the programme to data. This background could in turn have helped identify areas where UCCE could focus and provided more context and clarity on UCCE pilot objectives for the Data Collectors.

Survey and guidance run-throughs added value to the training

Based on learnings from Ethiopia, we added run-throughs of an Interactive Digital Survey and a Co-Creation Session guidance before the hands-on practice activities in the respective training sessions. While these additions made the training sessions longer (approx. 4 hours each), they were also very valuable for the field staff. The run-throughs helped the team understand what was required of them and discuss anything that was unclear as a group or with the trainer, ensuring that all team members developed a shared understanding of the methodology.

Lack of an evaluation mechanism resulted in knowledge gaps that became apparent only once UCCE implementation began

UCCE training sessions consisted of a combination of presentations and hands-on practice structured as role play. One shortcoming of the training was a lack of any mechanism to periodically check in with the team on their level of understanding of key concepts and activities. While the team showed a good overall grasp of the UCCE methodology, there were some gaps in their understanding of the approach which became apparent only once

the implementation of the Interactive Digital Surveys and the Co-Creation Sessions began. These gaps could have been identified and addressed earlier if a lightweight evaluation mechanism was designed into the training structure. In user interviews, some Data Collectors also suggested that they would have benefitted from more opportunities for recap and reflection during the training.

Role play effectiveness is determined by culture and context but role play can also add value beyond practice

Peru pilot reaffirmed our findings from the Ethiopia pilot regarding role play activities being easier in some cultures and harder in others. In Peru, the team easily engaged in role play activities, even when detailed roles were not specified. Role play activities provided not only valuable hands-on practice time for the team but also allowed us to identify a number of bugs and issues with surveys that previously went unnoticed. Co-Creation Session role play offered Data Collectors an opportunity to reflect on how general Co-Creation Session guidance could be best adapted to their local context and the population they would be engaging during the sessions, as well as to ask questions about the activities if anything was unclear. In user interviews, Data Collectors suggested that piloting surveys and Co-Creation Sessions before implementing with the larger sample of the target population would be helpful as a supplementary activity during UCCE training - this echoed suggestions brought forward by some Save the Children staff in Ethiopia.

The explicit link between survey results and Co-Creation Sessions inputs sets UCCE apart from more traditional community engagement approaches

In user interviews, Data Collectors noted that the explicit connection between Interactive Digital Surveys and Co-Creation Sessions designed into the UCCE methodology is what makes the methodology stand out against other community engagement and feedback collection approaches.

What this means for UCCE development

Improve future translations of UCCE materials

Translation of UCCE materials into local languages should take into consideration the use of technical language across all materials and the context within which UCCE is being implemented. Dialects used in translation matter, too. For example, UCCE materials in European Spanish will be different from materials in Peruvian Spanish, which in turn will be different from materials in Mexican Spanish. In this pilot Data Collectors (all Peruvians) had

already experience working with Venezuelan population and were somewhat familiar with Venezuelan Spanish at different levels. However, this may not always be the case and dialect differences from all parties involved should be understood and, as much as is possible, taken into consideration in planning and budgets for all activity.

Revise training materials to make the link between different UCCE components more explicit

Training decks and guidance materials should be revised to strengthen the narrative around how different components of the UCCE methodology connect and interact with each other. One possible way to strengthen this narrative in the training is to use more visual materials to demonstrate the connection. Another way could be allocating more time to demonstrate how the components linked together in previous UCCE projects. It is important to make sure that all field staff implementing UCCE are adequately supported to develop a solid understanding of this connection from the start.

Ensure that Data Collectors are familiar with the programme in advance of UCCE training

UCCE can be implemented as part of many different programmes and, as we have observed in nearly all field pilots to date, it is often the case that Data Collectors engaged in UCCE implementation are recruited specifically for this role or seconded from other projects. This means that often Data Collectors may not know the programme within the scope of which UCCE is being implemented. With this in mind, it is strongly advisable that future UCCE projects begin with a general introduction session that allows the Data Collectors to familiarise themselves with the programme at hand.

Revise UCCE training to include content run-throughs and pilot activities in training timeline

Run-throughs of survey questions and Co-Creation Session guidance materials should be included in all future UCCE training as they add significant value for the training participants. Training timelines should also be reviewed to explore the most feasible way to include pilot (or 'mock') instances of Interactive Digital Surveys and Co-Creation Sessions. These pilot activities, would ideally take place with members of the target communities, but also in the presence of UCCE trainers who would act as mentors and provide extensive guidance and feedback to the field team during and after the activities. The pilot activities should be designed in such a way as to not invalidate any following activity and, where possible, the data and ideas generated during the activities be taken be used alongside the data from regular surveys and Co-Creation Sessions.

Develop supplementary guidance on role play activities

Role play activities used in UCCE training will different vastly depending on context. With view of scaling UCCE to enable humanitarian teams use it independently across different contexts, it would be useful to develop supplementary guidance that details what role play activities we have observed working well, which cultural environments they are suitable for, and how to select the right role play activities for any given context.

Build out a Training of Trainers model for UCCE

While it is important to note that the training was successful in Peru, the value of a ToT model (an implication of our previous work in the Ethiopia pilot) and was only strengthened by our experience in Peru. To support the scale-up of UCCE, a ToT model should be developed that can be used to deliver UCCE training to different parts of a humanitarian organisation in a distributed manner. Implications detailed above should be taken into consideration when developing this model.