

Decision-Making Session: Learnings & Implications

What we did

The Decision-Making Session took place on the last day of the field pilot. As planned, it was facilitated by one of the Project Managers and attended by the other Project Manager and Aprendiendo Unidos teachers. Data Collectors were not present. The session took approximately 3 hours to complete.

The Decision-Making Session guidance was simplified and amended based on learnings from Ethiopia and shared with the facilitating Project Manager one day before the session. Eclipse researchers were present to observe the session. Observation findings were supplemented with interviews with both project managers that were held after the end of the session.

See Decision-Making Session facilitation guidance here: [English](#) | [Spanish](#).

What we learned

Advanced preparation resulted in high quality of facilitation

The session was led by one of the project managers, who prepared for it by reviewing the facilitation guidance shared with him in advance of the session. Compared to the preparation approach used in the Report Output Session, this seemed to work better, as the project manager was well-prepared for the session and successfully led the team through the decision-making process and the main activity of the session: the Ideas Portfolio - a list of the key ideas that were generated in the Co-Creation Sessions.

The project manager clearly explained session objectives and successfully managed the discussion of ideas that took place among the participants. For example, after reviewing all ideas from one Co-Creation Session, the project manager would do a recap of what was discussed and agreed on by the team before moving onto the next set of ideas. When ideas were similar to what was already happening or implemented as part of the “Aprendiendo Unidos” programme, the project manager reminded the team that the ideas they were reviewing were from the perspective of the community members, which steered the discussion onto why the existing measures were not seen as effective. When it became clear that many good ideas and suggestions were being discussed by the team, the project

manager asked one of the teachers to take notes of the discussion to share them with the whole team after the session. The teacher took notes in a table divided in 4 columns:

1. Idea/Solution proposed by community
2. Number of votes (after being added up)
3. Steps to achieve this
4. Coordination / Logistics / Facilitators (who/what is responsible)

In the follow up to the session, the project manager suggested that the guidance could have been shared earlier than one day before the session, as it was short notice and put unnecessary pressure on him to adequately prepare for the session.

Creating separate Ideas Portfolios for findings from different Co-Creation Sessions was not conducive of prioritising ideas from all demographic groups

What worked less well was creating a new Ideas Portfolio for each demographic group. Once all ideas from one Co-Creation Session were prioritised and discussed by the team, the project manager would take down the sticky notes with ideas from the Ideas Portfolio poster and use the blank poster to review the next set of ideas. This meant that the team did not end up with an overall view of prioritised solutions across all demographic groups and that they couldn't compare and group similar ideas from different Co-Creation Sessions.

Validity of ideas from sessions with younger children was questioned

Generally, the team felt that some of the ideas from the Co-Creation Sessions were useful and would add value to improving the Aprendiendo Unidos programme. In follow up interviews, data collections also talked about how some of the UCCE outputs confirmed some of their existing assumptions about the programme while others challenged their perception of certain aspects of Aprendiendo Unidos. But the team also expressed some doubt in the value and validity of ideas that came out of Co-Creation Sessions with younger children. Several teachers remarked that the problems and challenges in creating suitable materials for children, especially with abstract concepts such as education. In this example, it would have been worthwhile taking more time to ensure the questions were better adapted for children while avoiding a situation where the children were being guided or biased.

Absence of a break during the session made participation in the session difficult

Participants were very engaged throughout the session, discussing ideas, evaluating their feasibility and suggesting different implementation options to make certain ideas more feasible. The team - at the suggestion of the project manager - also took detailed notes of their discussion and assigned roles to people who were responsible for implementing different ideas. The session was carried out effectively, but it was noted, that it was not possible for both of the project managers to remain engaged for the second part of the activity - a crucial part as this is where input around the practicality of making changes to the and some of the Aprendiendo Unidos programme is most keenly needed.

Lack of continuity of staff between Co-Creation Sessions and Decision Making Sessions resulted in a lack of understanding of the context of some ideas reviewed by the decision-makers

Several times during the Decision Making Session the team stumbled when it came to understanding the background and the context of certain ideas they were discussing. This information was important as it would have helped the team understand better what exactly the community meant when putting forward these ideas and - where necessary - what alternative solutions could be proposed that would make the idea more feasible. Unfortunately, because most of the team were either absent from or distracted during the Co-Creation Sessions, they were not active participants or observers during the crucial discussions that happened in the sessions and resulted in ideas put forward by the community. Furthermore, the team did not have access to the filled out Problem Tree posters with problems and causes from the Co-Creation Sessions. As a result, when the question of interpretation arose, the team had to rely on their own perception and interpretation, which were not informed by causes or discussions that happened within the community during Co-Creation Sessions. The exception to this was the Project Managers who ended up facilitating a breakout group during the Co-Creation Sessions with children aged 13-18 and as a result was able to provide useful explanation and context to the ideas that came out of that session.

What this means for UCCE development

Revise Decision-Making Session guidance

The facilitation guidance for the Decision-Making Session should be revised to include the following:

- Instructions for the facilitator to remind the team about how different UCCE components link together and how community members go from problem to cause to ideas in Co-Creation Sessions;
- Instructions for the facilitator to review Problem Trees in full in preparation for the session (not just the ideas lists) and have photographs of the Problem Trees at hand if they are required during the session;
- More clear guidance around how to gather ideas from the Co-Creation Sessions together into a single set of ideas (the Ideas Portfolio) that is taken into the Decision Making Session.
- Making sure all attendees are able to dedicate their time to the meeting and also to ensure that, if needed, there is a break to help maintain energy and focus.

Explore how ideas reviewed in the Decision-Making Session could be further prioritised by group

As we learned in this pilot, there are some cases where the field team may want to look at ideas from different demographic groups separately or to rate and prioritise ideas based on their relevance to different demographic groups. To accommodate such cases within the UCCE methodology, it would be valuable to explore how this additional level of prioritisation can be included within the framework of the Ideas Portfolio activity. In line with this, guidance could be given to ensure there are no unconscious bias towards specific genders of demographics introduced at this stage.

Strengthen guidance on technical staff participation in UCCE activities

The role of technical staff in the UCCE approach should be made more clear in UCCE training and guidance. Technical staff should be involved throughout the UCCE project - not just in the Decision-Making Session - because they play a vital role in expectation management, know the programme, know the community, understand the context, and are an important link between the community and the project managers and other stakeholders when it comes to decision-making.