eclipse

Decision-Making Training & Session

What we did

Decision-Making Training and Session were two new components that we added to the UCCE methodology for the Ethiopia pilot because it was unclear how decisions were made in the previous pilots.

We created a dedicated guide for the Decision-Making Session and planned to train the project manager in running the Decision-Making Session once the Co-Creation Sessions were completed. However, after discussions with the SCUK Humanitarian WASH Advisor, we decided to simplify this approach. We hosted a light-weight overview session with the WASH Advisor, who then facilitated the Decision-Making Session with the project team. The WASH manager and one WASH officer participated in the Decision-Making Session. The WASH Advisor followed the session guide loosely, blending activities in the guide with his own know-how. The original guide to the Decision-Making Session can be found here.

The project team went through the following process to arrive at design decisions:

1. The team created 3 master lists of all ideas from the Problem Tree posters (one list per area of focus: Outside the latrines, Inside the latrines, or Handwashing facilities). Ideas on each list were marked by which session they were from (e.g., boys aged 5 - 8, girls 9-12, etc.) and organised by problem area (e.g., door, door handle, hole, etc.). While creating the master lists, the team also translated the ideas from Somali into English.

2. Taking one idea at a time and writing it on a sticky note, the team populated an Ideas Portfolio matrix (see Decision-Making Session guide for details) for each focus area. Each idea was evaluated for popularity (number of votes from the community) and technical feasibility (availability of materials and technical skills) before being placed in the matrix. Similar ideas were grouped together.

3. The team reviewed ideas in the top two quadrants of the Ideas Portfolios. These were ideas that received the most votes from the community and that were ranked by feasibility from 'Very Hard' to 'Very Easy'. The team discussed each idea in terms of:

   a) Resources and budget needed
   b) Responsible person (e.g., WASH Engineer)
   c) Timeframe

What we learned

Decision-Making Session took too long

Initially the session was supposed to take 2 hrs 25 min. Several factors resulted in it taking far longer (over 4 hours). One reason was that the master lists of ideas were not created at the end of each Co-Creation Session as was originally envisioned in the guidance for the sessions. This meant that the project team had to create the lists during the Decision-Making Session. Because the session took place as part of the pilot and was facilitated by a staff member who did not speak Somali, the ideas also had to be translated from Somali to English, which also took time. In the original Decision-Making Session guidance, only the most popular ideas had to be added to a single Ideas Portfolio. During the actual session, the project team analysed all ideas that came out of the Co-Creation Sessions, which added to the session duration, and created a separate Ideas Portfolio for each area of focus (three in total). Finally, another contributing factor was that the Problem Tree posters were not adequately labeled in Co-Creation Sessions, so they had to be organised and labelled during the Decision-Making Session.

Feasibility of ideas was initially assessed in terms of technical feasibility

When designing the Decision-Making Session guidance, we worked on the assumption that budget considerations would be central to assessing the feasibility of individual ideas. However, upon discussion with the Humanitarian WASH Advisor, it became clear that this was not necessary during the Ideas Portfolio activity. During this activity, feasibility was assessed only as technical feasibility, meaning that the project team considered the materials and skills available for implementing each idea. Budget considerations were included at a later stage, when reviewing the most popular ideas under each area of focus. Here, each idea was evaluated based on units required and their estimated costs.

UCCE outputs can support evidence-based fundraising

Not including budget considerations in the feasibility assessment may seem counter-intuitive and may not be appropriate in all situations but in the Ethiopia pilot, the Humanitarian WASH Advisor suggested that the ideas that came out of the UCCE process can be used as evidence to support raising additional funding for WASH programming in the project context. This was one of the main learnings from this pilot. This approach means that implementation budget is not necessarily a prerequisite to using UCCE to inform humanitarian programme design, meaning that UCCE can be integrated more seamlessly alongside the regular humanitarian funding cycles.

What this means for UCCE development

Simplify the Decision-Making Session guidance to make it more flexible and light-weight

Decision-Making Session guidance should take into account regular decision-making processes used by humanitarian staff and aim to support and structure these processes through the use of decision-making tools common in the design space. Activities in the session can be further simplified and streamlined by (1) limiting the number of ideas to review for each focus area and (2) directly transferring ideas from the Problem Tree posters into the Ideas Portfolio matrix.

Clarify steps to be taken in Co-Creation Sessions to prepare outputs for the Decision-Making Session

Ensure that Co-Creation Sessions guidance for the project team specifies what to do with ideas after each session: create an Ideas List for each area of focus, ordering ideas by the number of votes and specify which Co-Creation Session each idea is from.