

Planning for UCCE: Learnings & Implications

What we did

In preparation for the UCCE pilot in Peru, the Eclipse Experience team worked closely with Plan International UK and Plan International Peru to organise project logistics. This was the first UCCE pilot outside the WASH sector and the first being carried out in an urban environment. As such, from the start, it was acknowledged that this new context would provide new challenges and learnings. While acknowledging the need to deploy UCCE in short turnaround it was understood from the start that this pilot would have to very quickly mobilize team members from all sides. The project planning was further challenged by the need to approve the funding and by the time this was only completed six weeks prior to planned travel, immediately before the Christmas holidays.

UCCE planning was headed by the Eclipse Project Lead, with support from the Eclipse Research Lead, and by a Grant Specialist from Plan Peru, with support from a Programme Specialist from Plan UK.

Two weeks before travelling to Peru, Eclipse developed a timeline of in-field activities that was shared with the humanitarian partners. This timeline was built out based on our experience with previous UCCE pilots in Ethiopia, Iraq and Bangladesh. It included details of different UCCE activities listed in a chronological order, a description of roles that both Eclipse and Plan Peru teams would be expected to play during the pilot, as well as basic logistics information such as times and locations of activities where these were already established. The timeline was subsequently revised several times in consultation with our humanitarian partners before and during the course of the pilot.

Other preparation activities included:

- Knowledge transfer - understanding the details of Aprendiendo Unidos, the non-formal education programme that the UCCE approach was commissioned to support;
- Revising the UCCE training and guidance materials in accordance with learnings from the Ethiopia pilot and with view to adapt them to the new context;
- Creation of Interactive Digital Surveys;
- Creation of visual stimuli to use in the Interactive Digital Surveys;
- Commissioning and managing translation of UCCE training and guidance materials and the surveys into Spanish.

What we learned

A good understanding of context and population is crucial for planning and organising UCCE implementation

In preparing for the Peru pilot, Eclipse team largely worked on assumptions developed through our experience with implementing UCCE in the previous three pilots - each of which as a displacement camp. This proved problematic, as we quickly discovered that the context in Peru challenged many of our assumptions about how a UCCE pilot should run.

The context in Peru, working with displaced populations in an urban environment, presented the first of such challenges. It impacted the implementation of core UCCE components in different ways - these are discussed in detail in Interactive Digital Surveys and Co-Creation Sessions briefs. Overall, we learned that UCCE would benefit from further processes to support the planning and to bring all parties onto the same page. Most significantly, identifying the right locations and venues for data collection and community engagement was more difficult than in camp-based settings, which we did not fully appreciate ahead of arriving in Peru and starting training. This challenge was primarily a function of a displaced population that was widely dispersed across Lima, often lacking a permanent place of residence and work, and - as it often happens in megacities that afford a certain level of anonymity to millions of city dwellers worldwide - largely unknown to our humanitarian partner.

Having a better understanding of these challenges earlier in the planning process would have allowed us to better plan for logistical details such as Interactive Digital Survey deployment locations and recruitment of participants for Co-Creation Sessions.

Lack of clear communication about project management roles and responsibilities resulted in delays and poor coordination of activities on the ground

In the weeks leading up to the field pilot, planning was led by a Grants Specialist from Plan Peru side and the Eclipse Project Lead. Activities were planned with the assumption that once the pilot begins, its management will be taken over by the Programme Coordinator of the Aprendiendo Unidos programme acting as the Project Lead. However, the project management responsibilities were never fully transferred and the Programme Coordinator was not available for some of the key stages of the UCCE pilot due to capacity and circumstances outside of their control. As a result, the pilot was run with project management responsibilities divided between two members of Plan Peru staff, but as both

were involved in other projects, neither was present for the whole duration of the pilot. This resulted in many planning and organisation responsibilities and decisions falling on the Data Collectors, who had little knowledge of the Aprendiendo Unidos programme and of Lima Sur (the southern part of Lima where the pilot took place). It also led to Eclipse researchers having to be involved in the pilot in a project management capacity, which clashed with their responsibilities as observers.

Lack of clarity around technical staff roles and responsibilities resulted in key programme staff not being engaged in the pilot

UCCE is designed to be used in different types of humanitarian programmes. It is also designed to be led and owned by the programme team - not the Eclipse team. This is why the engagement of programme staff - specialists in their area of work, or 'technical staff' as we refer to them in UCCE training and guidance materials - is crucial from the start. In WASH programmes, technical staff involved in UCCE include WASH managers, officers and engineers. In Peru, this role was supposed to be taken up by teachers engaged in the Aprendiendo Unidos programme. However, the teachers were not sufficiently engaged in UCCE and were absent during such crucial activities as training sessions, Report Output Session and Co-Creation Sessions.

On the one hand, the failure to engage technical staff from the early stages of this project is related to a language barrier in the context of extremely short project planning timelines. As this was a pilot project, Eclipse led the development of UCCE surveys, with input from the Plan teams, and also led the adaptation of UCCE training and guidance materials. One member of the Eclipse team was a native Spanish speaker but they were not involved at the early planning stages as Eclipse were working on the initial assumption that the training would be completed in English. Technical staff in Peru did not speak English. And because of the tight timelines, there was also no time to translate work in progress to solicit meaningful input from all members of the Aprendiendo Unidos team. As such, it was not possible to involve the Aprendiendo Unidos team more fully in the pilot planning. This resulted in a situation where a range of decisions, including changes to survey questions, had to be made following the start of Interactive Digital Survey training and without the involvement of technical staff.

On the other hand, once the pilot started, we learned that our communication about the role and responsibilities of technical staff - or, indeed, who exactly counts as 'technical staff' for this project - was not sufficiently clear. As a result, the Project Managers were not sufficiently supported in securing the participation of these team members in UCCE, with a number of UCCE activities clashing with their responsibilities as Aprendiendo Unidos teachers.

Overall, Aprendiendo Unidos teachers were largely not involved in the UCCE pilot until the Decision-Making Session. This resulted in a number of shortcomings and inefficiencies (e.g., last-minute changes to survey questions, weak expectation management, and lack of support given to facilitators during Co-Creation Sessions) that are detailed in component-specific briefs.

What this means for UCCE development

Develop formal guidance on how to plan for UCCE implementation

With a view to UCCE scale up and enabling UCCE implementation with little to no Eclipse involvement, it is important to develop clear guidance on how to plan for UCCE deployment in the field. The guidance should include, at a minimum:

- Clear outline of roles and responsibilities of the Eclipse staff and their role as observers;
- A planning checklist;
- Key planning activities;
- Tips about contextual differences and how these affect UCCE implementation;
- Suggested timelines and budgets for UCCE deployment in different context, ie, camp and non-camp, rapid onset emergency and prolonged crisis (e.g., these should take into account the urgency of the need plus regulatory, funding, operational and resource issues for the specific context);
- A clear, detailed explanation of roles and responsibilities of a standard UCCE team: the Project Manager, Technical Staff and Data Collectors.

It could be valuable to explore how the guidance can include visual and interactive elements to communicate key information (eg., technical staff roles, sequence of activities, etc.). If considered as part of a Training of Trainers model, this guidance can also be imagined as a stand-alone module delivered by Eclipse to senior members of staff in humanitarian organisations.

If UCCE is going to be able to respond to rolling out for projects with short planning lead time, including rapid onset emergencies, it is important to acknowledge that planning time will be a challenge. Further information on processes, roles, risk mitigation and trouble shooting could all be useful materials that could support a rapid planning process. Furthermore, having this information available in local language and being able to complete training remotely and/or on demand would also help speed up the planning cycles and the speed of deployment.

Most importantly, in considering UCCE scale up pathways, it will be important to explore how UCCE planning and deployment can be sufficiently internalised within humanitarian organisations' own processes and systems to make it quicker and more seamless. In order to achieve this it would be useful to have specific guidance around suitable timelines and levels of support within the humanitarian organisation that can support the planning process independently of Eclipse. Integration into any humanitarian organisation would need to take their own processes and guidelines into account.