



Lessons Learnt Brief –  
Deployment of User-Centred  
Community Engagement (UCCE)  
in support of second phase  
BOL\_YEB POWER 4 AY

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## **Lessons Learnt brief - SAVE Bolivia**

This brief is based on the lessons learnt from interviews with seven of the implementation team from SAVE Bolivia and the observations from the two Eclipse team members who supported the SAVE Bolivia implementation team.

Each step of the methodology has been evaluated and assessed. The document concludes with a summary of what can be done to improve UCCE both for future collaboration between SAVE Bolivia, similar SAVE initiatives in other countries and UCCE more broadly.

# **1. Overview of the UCCE approach**

## **A. What we did**

User-Centred Community Engagement (UCCE) is a rapid participatory design methodology that helps field staff better understand the needs and priorities of crisis-affected communities. The original UCCE approach was designed to support the needs around Water Sanitation And Hygiene (WASH), particularly sanitation facilities in rapid onset emergency situations. UCCE enables local teams to co-create relevant and feasible solutions with community members. The UCCE methodology is built around two core, interconnected components: Interactive Digital Surveys and Co-Creation Sessions. We adapted the UCCE approach to the project developed with SAVE Bolivia, following a detailed methodology which was shared in a planning developed with SAVE Bolivia and training of the SAVE Bolivian team. We developed a specific survey that produced important information about the adolescent and youth needs regarding WASH, menstrual hygiene, and empowerment. With this information the co-creation sessions were developed with the AYs participation and possible solutions for their needs were identified. This final step was developed in three municipalities, and changes have already been implemented in one of those municipalities, Cochabamba.



Figure 1: Overview of the steps in the UCCE methodology

## B. What we learnt

While the process of UCCE started with a plan that was discussed and agreed with the Save The Children team, including funders and executors, the plan had to be reviewed and updated several times. Timing of the implementation was an important feature noted in the lessons-learnt feedback. On the positive side, the implementation team from Bolivia noted that schedules, such as the time allocated for the training, always followed an agenda and a well-designed schedule. On the other hand, we learned that people from different municipalities had other previously planned commitments. This led to the UCCE training and deployment was seen as something to be executed on top of an already busy schedule. As a result, some people from the Bolivian team noted that they had to connect to the training while doing other work-related activities or even while attending other meetings. This means that a crucial point for developing UCCE, whether

it is within a short-term intervention or a long-term process, is that the planning should be developed and agreed with all the people involved and time should be allocated for the UCCE implementation in advance. Despite these complications on the part of the Bolivian technical team, the process was completed in three municipalities, with the UCCE process still pending in 12 other centers for people with disabilities and/or shelters.

Despite the adjustments made to the plans, we learned that UCCE was useful for the Bolivian team - specifically allowing the team to try new participatory methods, but also allowing them to understand adolescent and youth needs during a program - when normally this is only available at the beginning and end of a program. We understood that UCCE allowed an in-depth understanding of people's needs, because each step of the methodology was easy to follow and encouraged the team to pursue participation in a way that is transparent and consistent.

UCCE proved to be useful for ensuring that participation was done in a clear way, meaning that the participants were listened to *and* felt listened to. The overall impression of the people who applied the survey is that they were able to really understand the adolescents and youth needs. The SAVE Bolivia team highlighted the importance of UCCE in terms of the consistency with which it can be used through a program and in the fact that the evaluation can be completed by the local teams, rather than having to bring in external experts. The team also noted that the survey tool is useful, especially because the platform offers a comprehensive systematization of the results - something that saves administrative time. The Bolivian team really appreciated the consistency of the methodology and the constant remote support from the Eclipse team.

At the beginning of the process, there was a misunderstanding regarding the expectations that the Bolivian team had and what UCCE can offer. While the leveling of expectations was a key focus from the very beginning, we found that this was only really achieved during the training. The training was the key point where SAVE Bolivia coordinator expectations were managed and it was clarified that the SAVE Bolivia team needed to work with the Eclipse team to build the survey. In other words, the

understanding that this is a collaborative approach, and it requires the input from the team in the field from the beginning, was not clear to the implementation team from the outset. This had negative consequences on the planning. Overall, the training and application of the UCCE methodology was done in a time when the SAVE teams from different municipalities were quite busy, they felt they were not consulted about timing, and therefore they could not attend the training or fully engage in the training, since they have additional work previously planned. During the execution of the project, we learnt that in some municipalities it was not feasible to work for political, infrastructure or administrative reasons. Thus, it is important that in the planning phase, the team in the field develop a feasibility analysis to properly inform the planning.

### **C. What this means for UCCE**

We need to think about adapting the UCCE methodology to ensure it can work in protracted crises and in support of long-term planning. It is important that plans and responsibilities are clarified and iterated from the outset, with the agreement and commitment of all team members. Scenario planning and proactive discussion about conflict planning and time commitments could also be a helpful addition.

## 2. Training

### A. What we did

UCCE training materials in Spanish which had been developed for a previous project supporting Education Cannot Wait services in Perú and had been used to complete in-person training were the starting materials for the SAVE Bolivia training. Those materials were reviewed and adapted to the needs in Bolivia, with a focus being the ability to deliver the training remotely via Video Conference. We created a module for each step of the methodology and each module included an online training session as well as a practical session that was carried out in each municipality, including tasks such as testing the survey, developing a Problem Tree example, and so on. We organized the modules as virtual training sessions and assigned non-face-to-face tasks, with the commitment that the different participants would complete them before the next class. A Whatsapp group was also created to provide support to questions that arose during the training.

### B. What we learnt

We learned that the training material is reasonably comprehensive and did not need much adaptation from the PERU training to potentially for across a range of Latin American countries. However, since the training was completed in a virtual environment, we also discovered that trainees expect more audiovisual resources in order to engage in the virtual environment. Overall, the training provided enough knowledge and understanding for individuals to follow the methodology and use the Digital Survey and other UCCE tools.

The SAVE Bolivia team considered that the training was overall comprehensive. They praised the additional material provided as being helpful to understand the methodology. The Whatsapp group and rapid response and assessment from the Eclipse team was also useful. Virtual learning is difficult for people that are already busy. It is clear that if more virtual training is pursued, trainees would benefit from additional content to help them focus and engage. We faced connectivity difficulties especially from those in small

cities and villages, this implied that for some the information arrived distorted. To remedy this, the possibility of having inquiries via Whatsapp was opened. Yet, our evaluation tools did not allow detailed assessment of individual learning. A survey or quiz at the end could help in this regard. The participants suggest different time schedules, and if it is virtual, they expect to have more didactic material such as videos, pictures, or more detailed examples from previous projects.

## C. What this means for UCCE

When possible, the training for UCCE should be completed in person or within a group session where attendance and focus can be assured. If that is not possible it is important to develop additional training material and content to help trainees engage. In addition, training could be made available 'on demand' to allow trainees to train based on their personal schedules and revisit materials they did not understand on first review. A mechanism to assess understanding at the end of training, some confirmation of attendance and attainment would also be of benefit. Lastly, having structured FAQs and the ability to escalate any unanswered questions to a real person would be of considerable benefit.

## 3. Interactive Survey/design

### A. What we did

We designed a survey and illustrations for use in the survey alongside the team in Bolivia. The survey was tested and improved several times, to make sure that the final version of the survey was adapted to the Bolivian context. We then created two variations of the survey, one for AYs and another directed to their Caregivers. Following the completion and use of the surveys in the field, the Bolivian team shared additional requirements for the survey, and we created an additional 2 surveys for both AYs and Caregivers for use in additional municipalities.

### B. What we learnt

This project proved that the survey could be adapted to different purposes and learning to use the platform is intuitive. This opens the real possibility to transfer these skills to people in the Bolivian team.

We identified that to make the survey tool more accessible to people with disabilities, or low literacy we can use features such as: 1. High contrast mode; 2. Large text mode; 3. Use captions and subtitles in images to eliminate ambiguities, we learnt that the tool is not 100% self-managing and requires some ongoing help, either from another team member or from the team at Eclipse.

For future iterations we recommend, following the spirit of design thinking, that divergent survey design sessions be structured with all the decision makers (stakeholders), facilitating the negotiation of the categories and questions from the beginning. This should help stop rework like the ones that occurred concerning the wording of the questions or the details of the images.

In general, the platform is intuitive in the way it is built, if the person using it has experience with other surveys such as Google or Survey Monkey. The survey builder could be improved with more extensive tutorials or some guides such as a FAQ with



basic information such as how to save progress, and explanation of the actions (features and affordances) that are available and those that are under development. This would save time on the learning curve. The process of receiving feedback was delayed because a unified response from Save the Children took time to develop. For this reason, it is necessary to create a format and spaces for feedback. Furthermore, it may be important that the draft versions of the surveys are tested and piloted by the local implementation teams themselves.

Regarding the update, deploy and test of the IDS I on Android tablets, the Eclipse team was working on the assumption that the field team in Bolivia would have access to tablets, for which the screens and the survey had been optimized. In practice this did not happen and the field team in Bolivia had to use their own telephones and equipment. As will be seen in the next section, this brought some difficulties as the UCCE surveys are not optimized to be used on cell phones.

## C. What this means for UCCE

Opportunity to both update the process by which the local team input into and are consulted on the survey design, plus improve the accessibility and utility of the survey builder tool. More tutorials and/or support in building a survey using the survey builder tool could also be provided, allowing local teams to build and deploy surveys with minimal or no external support. This would also allow local teams to be able to tweak or make small changes to surveys as needed.

It would also be of benefit to be transparent about what features are available in the survey builder, what is understood as a requirement but not yet built and if/how users of the survey builder can list any additional requirements they have. Ultimately, this survey builder functionality could become more self-supporting. An idea previously discussed and not yet implemented, is to make the survey builder code base be more readily available as open-source code so that a wider community of developers could support the ongoing iteration of the survey tool.

## 4. Interactive Survey/application

### A. What we did

The survey was applied in five municipalities, yet some of them experienced technical problems. There was a survey directed to AYs and another directed to their Caregivers. The launch of the survey was one of the moments of greatest participation and involvement by the extended SAVE Bolivia team. We managed to gather feedback on different aspects of the survey, which allowed for a better adaptation of the survey to the needs in Bolivia, this included: the questions, their wording, the illustrations, and a learning process of how the survey works on tablets and on people's cell phones.

### B. What we learnt

The survey was the most engaging feature of the methodology and the Bolivian team participated actively on the building of the questionnaire and generating feedback from the field. Since the programme POWER 4 AY is just starting, having access to a virtual tool (digital survey) was very helpful. The heatmaps were considered particularly useful.

The lack of suitable tablets made the process of collecting the survey difficult. While having a general survey is extremely useful, if we have different participants (children with disabilities) it is still important to make different versions of the survey. The Bolivian team also noted that the images and questions were not fully contextualized for each group of users (people with disabilities, people in detention centres etc). In addition, there were several reported failures in the platform, with the images not uploading to some phones.

### C. What this means for UCCE

Considering that the survey is a crucial step in the implementation of the UCCE, any project implementing UCCE should ensure that they will count with adequate equipment, ideally tablets that UCCE is optimized for. Going forward it would also be possible to further optimize the surveys to work on cell phones and to clarify rules around using personal cell phones for data collection.

## 5. Report Session Output

### A. What we did.

The coordinator of the project in Bolivia had training and access to the platform where survey results were accessible. The coordinator met with the local team of each municipality to analyze the results of the survey and define the Problem Tree to be used in the co-creation sessions.

### B. What we learnt.

The summarized report information was seen as one of the most useful features of UCCE. This value was seen as being increasingly useful with the more municipalities the survey is rolled out to. The survey output saves time to the team and allows for a comprehensive access to and analysis of the information. The access to this data was only in the hands of the coordinator, and people in the different municipalities were unfortunately not able to download and consult the survey results themselves, instead relying on the coordinator to download and share the information.

### C. What this means for UCCE

There is an opportunity to optimize both the process by which survey results are downloaded and the individuals in the team that can download the information.

## 6. Co-Creation Sessions

### A. What we did

Based on the survey results, each municipality organized the main problems or needs expressed by the AYs, this was expressed in a visual format with the Problem Tree methodology. The Problem Trees were then used within the co-creation sessions to create and discuss possible solutions to those problems or needs with the participation of AYs and their Caregivers.

### B. What we learnt

This methodology is particularly helpful because most people working on humanitarian projects already have some level of familiarity with co-creation methods. Even so UCCE provides a useful step-by-step version of co-creation that proved easy for the local teams in Bolivia to follow.

This step of the UCCE methodology was seen as being very helpful. Most apparent was the ability for the local team in Bolivia to support active listening of the participants' needs and to support participants to create solutions to identified problems.

The methodology would benefit from further adaptations for people with disabilities. We need to improve the tools for documentation, and the ability to have decentralized communication with the different teams in the field.

### C. What this means for UCCE

UCCE should maintain this step of the methodology providing even greater support for a range of co-creation sessions for participants of different ages.

## 7. Decision-Making Session & implementation of changes

### A. What we did

Three municipalities attempted to do a decision-making session, but it seems that it was not carried out in the format outlined in UCCE. Although Eclipse stated their intention to create Survey II as an evaluation survey, SAVE Bolivia directed Eclipse that they had their own evaluation tools that they would like to use. Eclipse offered to digitize these formats integrating them with the rest of the methodology, but this was not required at this stage.

The municipality who did implement the changes was positive of the impact of those changes and being able to track those changes back-to-back to the problems identified in the UCCE survey. It is also worth noting that changes in WASH can be implemented in a short time, yet there are aspects of the POWER 4 AY programme that require mid and longer-term implementation.

### B. What we learnt

From early in the process it was evident that some municipalities would not immediately complete this step in the UCCE methodology, although they might complete it later. It was difficult to track the extent to which the methodology had or had not been followed by different municipalities.

While we understand implementation of change will be implemented in a longer period of time in different municipalities, from the experience we had with La Paz, Cochabamba and Sucre we know that the decision-making process was the only step of the methodology in which the materials we provided were not well used. In response, we could think about generating an easier to follow set of materials, but more importantly, we would like to agree on the best way to document the decision-making process, the implementation of changes, and the final evaluation. This should be carried out in a way that is transparent but also easy to deliver by the people on the field. Even without full documentation, the Bolivian team has noted that there are minutes signed with the

administrators of the centers with which work was carried out. The latter are administered by the government; thus, local authorities should agree with the improvements proposed before implementing them.

## C. What this means for UCCE

UCCE is an end-to-end methodology that works, relying on each step of the methodology being completed. Clear decision-making is key, and implementation of changes is also key as, without it, the continuity of user-centred involvement and the value of the participatory approach can be questioned. We should develop material to ensure that the decision-making session is completed and can be traced. In addition, as UCCE is also now being used in protracted crises and longer-term planning, the decision-making tools can be further adapted to support immediate, short, mid and longer term planning. Lastly, it would be interesting to develop a more flexible and modular structure that could, in time, allow different components of UCCE to be used independently, and/or the methodology have several paths through it according to the needs of the local teams.

## 8. UCCE in the future

It is important to facilitate the continuity of the project, in terms of evaluation of immediate, short, mid and longer-term and long-term changes, and to develop the skills among the Bolivian team for designing their own surveys. The methodology and the tool have proven to be useful in emergency contexts, and on this occasion, it proved to be useful for application in Bolivia as an example of a longer-term project.

To improve the follow-up of the process and its application, the tool could become a platform that indicates to each user, according to their role and function within the team, a list of tasks and the deadlines to execute them. For people who act as listeners and observers, such as Eclipse or project funders, there could also be mechanisms to monitor progress, detect blockages and be proactive in supporting project progress.

The platform could offer a dedicated space and a documentation assistant, which allows different users not only to securely host the information and documentation of their processes, which others can consult, but also indicates the correct way to do so.

Digital surveys have proven to be a way to encourage and engage more people in the project. They are also a great vehicle for working with people with cognitive or literacy difficulties. For this reason, it is recommended that each iteration of the language that is built should be accompanied by aids, such as images. Users should be able to adapt the way in which the information is displayed to their needs, such as high contrast modes, default images, font size amplification, among others.

Although the support materials were given in the training sessions and copies of them were delivered and subsequently distributed by SAVE through its own channels, it would be useful to have a platform that hosts the training materials, query sheet - FAQ-quiz, etc, as well as the possibility of establishing a content strategy to provide more interactive training possibilities, and guides that help people in their day to day.

Overall, the Bolivian team expects to be able to adapt the survey to different social interventions that require community participation, they know they have already developed useful skills, but they feel they would not be able to apply them without access to the survey platform. They mention different social projects in which they envision the use of UCCE for listening to people's needs, and they consider that the survey is an important step in the process of listening to adolescents and youth in an honest and transparent way.

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