

UNDP ARMENIA'S APPROACH TO INNOVATION

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INTRODUCTION

About the project

UNDP Armenia commissioned FutureGov to evaluate their approach to building innovation into their ways of working. During a five-day visit to Yerevan, FutureGov interviewed a wide range of people connected to the Armenia mission, including staff from all departments, citizens that benefit from their work, and partners who collaborate with UNDP. With input from all these stakeholders, we were able to develop a deep understanding how far the country office has come in recent years, as well as what can be done to further embed innovation in the country office's approach.

UNDP ARMENIA'S VISION

UNDP Armenia's vision is to improve the quality of life for the entire population. The organisation is helping to build a resilient country that can withstand crisis and drive growth that has an impact on everyone's life.

More impact through innovative approaches

The vision of UNDP concerning innovation is to be able to respond to today's complex and interconnected development challenges with agile and flexible solutions outside traditional project cycles to achieve greater impact in fast-changing environments. UNDP has begun working differently by creating space to experiment, adopting an outside-in approach that is driven by the clients' perspective and needs, and taking measured risks. It means engaging with different and sometimes unexpected development actors, for example tapping directly into the experience and expertise of young people, local communities or entrepreneurs, to help refine problem statements and define and implement solutions. It also means using different modalities of problem-solving, for example, hosting social innovation camps and issuing social challenges to crowdsource development solutions. It means adopting agile and flexible management approaches, such as prototyping and rapid feedback loops to avoid waiting for annual reviews to make course corrections. (Amended from source: Dossier on Innovation in UNDP, January 2014).

In UNDP Armenia, for day-to-day work, this means that collaboration and communication with citizens will be more important, teams will work closer together and with outsiders to approach challenges with more creativity and projects will require flexibility from staff to adjust ideas quickly based on feedback from beneficiaries. By improving its capability to innovate, UNDP Armenia believes that it can work even more effectively to improve the country's development outcomes.

Building capacities inside UNDP and personal development for employees

However, UNDP has also an internal objective connected to applying innovative approaches, which is to build new capacities inside the organisation. Using human-centred design will give employees the opportunity to develop new skills alongside their profound expertise in the development sector. New approaches help employees to get closer and to be inspired by the world outside UNDP. It allows them to recognize future challenges earlier. It inspires them to develop a wide range of possible solutions quickly. It makes it possible to test several solutions without heavy investments and supports employees to decide confidently which solution will lead to the biggest impact. Reaching these objectives will make UNDP Armenia the home of innovation inside the country and inspire other country offices to use new ways of working.

UNDP - an organisation fit for the market

Additionally, innovation will give UNDP Armenia a unique, advantageous position in the development sector to find funding and donors, especially as donors are looking more and more for new sustainable approaches in development work.

THE STORY SO FAR

Social innovation incubators were the start of something bigger

In the beginning, UNDP Armenia's innovation strategy was to focus on collaborating with people who are eager for, and pushing for change. The social innovation incubator and later the event series "Kolba Café" created a network of like-minded individuals including staff from other UN agencies, NGOs, civil servants and most importantly members of the public. Kolba brought together the people who wanted to contribute their ideas in order to change the way services and development projects are designed in Armenia. These efforts changed how UNDP was perceived from the outside and led to the creation of Kolba, an innovation lab inside UNDP. Kolba is a physical space and a team, which currently has four members. It is also the centre of a network of like-minded people interested in change, technology, civic activism and social innovation.

Kolba became the role model of doing things differently

Kolba's activities, in combination with the management team's new emphasis on innovation, had an impact on UNDP Armenia. Members of staff who collaborate with the Kolba team still feel the difference. Their way of communicating is different - emails

are shorter and in a friendlier tone and external communication sounds more human. Meetings with the Kolba team tend to be less formal - sometimes even outside the office over a coffee. The people they collaborate with are not the usual development experts, but they bring in new skills and different perspectives. Even the small differences in Kolba's way of working inspire colleagues and partners to think about doing things differently and help them to understand what the term "user friendly" means. Kolba is changing the organisation's culture by showing on a day-to-day basis what "innovative approaches" are.

Kolba is not the focus of this evaluation, but they play such a central role in UNDP Armenia's approach towards innovation that we need to understand Kolba, in order to understand the whole.

WHERE YOU ARE TODAY

How we did it

To understand how innovation is embedded in UNDP's approach, we conducted a range of qualitative interviews with people inside and outside the organisation. The participation and honesty of each individual interviewee has been essential and we are confident to reflect a valid snapshot of the situation at this moment of time. With the gained insights, we were able to place UNDP Armenia on the innovation maturity model.

“Innovation is an essential thing. If we don't do that, we are just not relevant and can't compete with others.”

WHAT MAKES AN ORGANISATION INNOVATIVE?

FutureGov's innovation maturity model is a framework to assess an organisation's way of working, and to identify opportunities to progress and become even more innovative.

The model reflects what we have been evaluating the organisation against and summarizes its current progress. In the following section we will expand on the reasons for our assessment.

UNDP Armenia on the maturity model

UNDP Armenia and Kolba lab have found strong advocates for innovation in the UNDP leadership. Hosting social innovation camps and crowd-sourcing ideas with the public has become daily practice. External experts, including UNDP's Innovation Team in the Regional Hub, Social Innovation Camp Limited and Bethnal Green Ventures, supported some of this work initially, but in 2013 UNDP Armenia introduced its own full time lab, Kolba, to drive innovation and change. New roles have been recruited specifically for this. Kolba's first exemplar projects have been delivered, showing momentum and promoting a new way of doing things. Though successful in many respects, these projects have not managed to completely convince everyone of the value in this type of working and thinking.

UNDP Armenia has progressed a huge amount since the concept of innovation was introduced and has now passed the tipping point. The

organisation is on stage 6 on the maturity model, which means that there is still opportunity to progress in order to mainstream innovation.

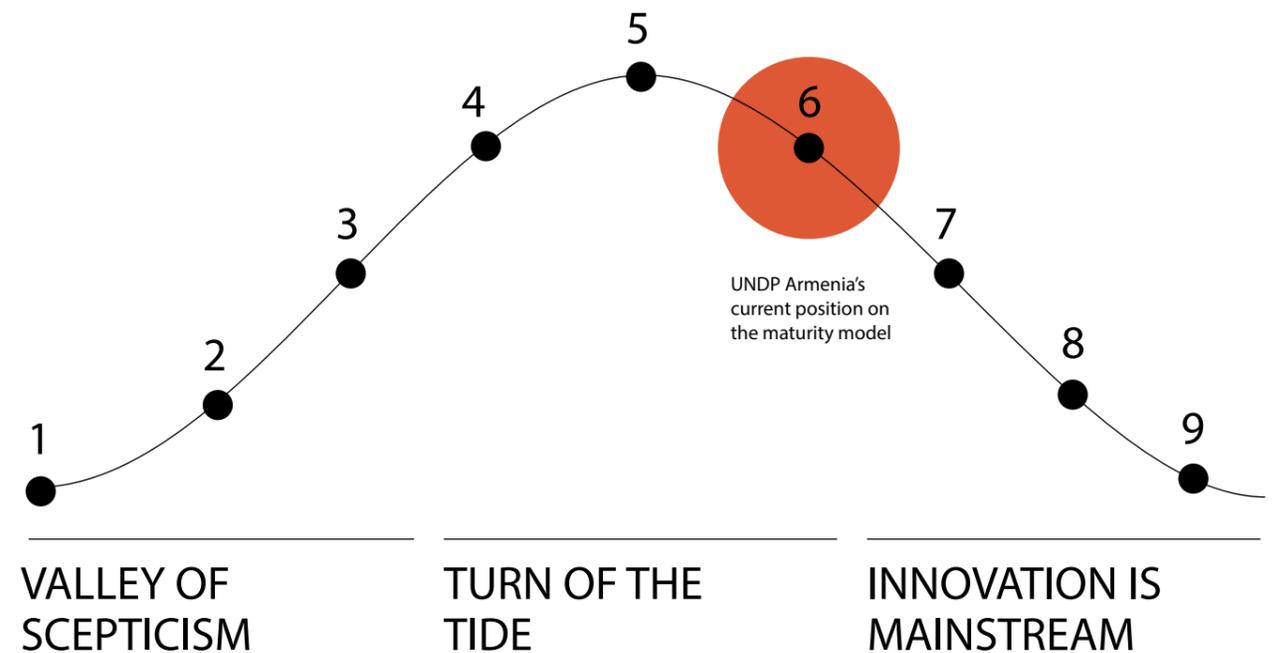
Where to go from here?

New approaches have been adopted by individual teams - sometimes with Kolba's support, sometimes independently. Co-design workshops with service users as experts took place, toolkits to guide the human-centred design process have been used and at the beginning of projects ideas have been crowdsourced. UNDP Armenia is keen to continue, and grow this positive development. However, to progress some challenges need addressing:

How can the organisation remove possible barriers stopping people from using human-centred design and design thinking in their everyday practice? How can people be motivated to experiment with new methodologies? How can the Kolba team have an even bigger impact inside and outside UNDP?

The four building blocks of innovation

This report answers these questions by exploring four building blocks of innovation: the strategy to guide it, the way it is fostered by the organisation's culture, the existing skills and processes used and the manifestation in the actual outcomes like projects or initiatives.



1. Individuals like the chief executive start to think about innovation
2. Hacks & ideas harvesting
3. External support & experiments with toolkits
4. Training & setting up a part time lab without dedicated resources, but champion middle managers
5. A fully working full time lab with new roles created
6. Successful delivery of some exemplar projects
7. Steady pipeline of projects for the innovation lab
8. New roles created and recruited throughout the organisation
9. Innovation is mainstream and embedded in the organisation. Closure of the innovation lab.

STRATEGY & INNOVATION

What does strategy need to do to foster innovation?

A strategy which fosters innovation needs to outline a vision people comprehend and can buy in to. Developing this strategy is often down to senior management, but in order to bring it to life and to make it tangible, the entire team should be asked to participate. If senior management takes the time to clarify their motivating values and compelling purpose behind it, people can take part in the discussion in order to explore how it can be interpreted and applied to their day-to-day practises. The ideal scenario is a strategy that is co-designed by the entire organisation and leaves freedom for action, but also provides clear guidance.

The term innovation is well known and used widely throughout UNDP Armenia. The staff feel encouraged by the UN country senior management to do things differently and try new approaches. They believe that using an innovative approach, thinking and doing things differently and in a human-centred way, will help UNDP to become more effective and lead to better, more impactful results. Better results and measurable impact is essential for winning donors and partners when competing with other development agencies and NGOs for funding.

All employees I spoke to at UNDP Armenia are aware that “innovation” is something the organisation wants to encourage and support. But not all members of staff know about the importance of innovation for the organization and that it is more than “the sexy topic for the UNDP”. A closer look at individual projects reveals that only a small number of people have put innovation approaches into practice. The actual meaning of the term is not clear and it can be interpreted in many different ways. For some employees innovation is an output, some look at it as a technology driven approach, others see it simply as a new term used in external communication.

One interview partner wondered if other country offices have managed to create a stronger narrative around the term, and whether there are opportunities to elaborate on UNDP Armenia’s story about innovation.

A strong narrative about innovation can help staff to understand what the goals and benefits of innovative approaches are for the organization, but also for the individual.

Not a definition of the term “innovation” – but guidelines or design principles, which go along with it for example “designed around the people’s needs”, “designed with experts and people”, will help to make the strategy tangible.

“Innovation is the sexy topic for the UNDP.”

Project coordinator

DELIVERY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH KOLBA

During a workshop with the Kolba team, we defined three different service users for the innovation lab: active citizens, staff of UNDP Armenia and civil servants who want to change things. The main objectives are better-designed UNDP projects and better public services.

This represents a shift in strategy when compared with the previous focus of innovation work done by UNDP. The focus of Kolba is no longer on social innovation camps incubating social enterprises run by members of the technology, innovation and civic activism community. From an outside perspective, this change in strategy was a good decision, working with this active and open community allowed the team to gain experience with the subject and methodologies. The team is now ready to work with a more difficult, yet influential audience: program developers and policy makers. Without doubt, this is an ambitious challenge and the Kolba team will need to focus its resources on this. The team may find that they struggle to develop additional services, such as Kolba Media - a future service that helps UNDP to communicate in a more user friendly way through visuals and moving image - alongside this challenge. There are many areas like this, where Kolba can have a positive impact. The real challenge is to prioritise, not only as a team, but also within the organisation as a whole.

“If I’d know [sic] more about what they do – I could approach them not only if I need tools, but also for other things.”

Project coordinator

Not all UNDP staff members understood what Kolba does and what its objectives are. The Kolba teams’ colleagues struggled to understand how to make use of Kolba’s skills and what kind of support to expect. Some members of the Kolba team observed a tendency “to let them do the research” instead of learning how to do user research.

A clear mission statement and service offer from Kolba could help UNDP colleagues to understand what Kolba does and what kind of support they can expect from them. A “service menu” can be used to communicate to their different user groups what they offer.

Kolba demonstrates what a new way of doing things could look like and it inspires people who are connected to it. Its reach is wide, not only to other agencies in the UN, but also to people in government. An invitation to an informal meeting over a coffee to have an update is what people outside UNDP look forward to. A different, more visual language in presentations is something people feel inspired by.

If the Kolba team sets the standard inside and outside the organisation – can they even go a step further in terms of openness, transparency and collaboration? Getting rid of the blinds and starting to use the glass window as a “shop window” into the world of Kolba might make it easier for their colleagues to approach them. Other teams might even get inspired to do the same. Not only the Kolba team, but also other members of staff such as managers can become role models to make the strategy and vision tangible and bring it to life.

There was a common perception that civil servants aren’t keen to invest energy in doing things differently, and pushing the boundaries of what is possible. However, the civil servant I spoke to disagrees. Previously Kolba had focused on other areas – maybe even avoided the challenge to have an impact on how the government works. However, Kolba has built its own reputation and now government has become interested in the innovation lab. Now could be a good time to collaborate more.

Kolba has demonstrated its capability to build a network of like-minded innovation enthusiasts. This network can be used to find allies within the government. Creating an ‘Open Challenge’ for civil servants could help build a network of officials who are really motivated and hungry to change things.

“A summary of a strategy in only three bullet points - that has an influence even on us, people inside the government.”

Civil servant

“There are ways to come up with our own ideas – but it is a long-winded process. Kolba could be the short cut around the bureaucracy.”

Civil servant

CULTURE & INNOVATION

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Members of staff who agree fully with the statement
"I feel encouraged to think differently and try new
things by my manger".

What does a culture that fosters innovation look like?

Teamwork over hierarchies

In a culture that fosters innovation, ideas can come from anyone and are taken equally seriously, no matter if they are a project assistant or the country representative. It is not important who had the idea, what is important is the team that will build and develop it.

Teams are trusted and given responsibility

Teams are given responsibility to organise themselves and are responsible for their outcomes. They are trusted to make the right decisions and allowed to make mistakes in order to learn.

A sharing culture to overcome silos

Sharing experiences and exchange with outsiders is essential to bring in new impulses and perspectives. Forming cross-departmental networks helps to overcome siloed work practices.

An environment which allows creativity

The working space does not need to look like Google's campus to enable creativity. But, the space needs to allow people to collaborate. Many meeting rooms force people to sit down in front of their laptops to have long meetings to talk about things. Meeting rooms need to be able to be transformed for workshops, where people can get into a more active "doing mode". Furniture needs to be modular, so it can be pushed aside so that walls can become canvases for ideas.

Role models like Kolba have an impact on UNDP's positive culture

Almost everyone at UNDP Armenia feels encouraged to try out new approaches, experiment with new methodologies and even be allowed to make mistakes. This positive culture is not only because of management, but also because of the impact of Kolba. They played an important role in forming today's culture inside the organisation by showing how things can be done differently. Kolba started to break down silos by bringing teams and development portfolios closer together. But also with regards to collaboration with partners - Kolba has become an additional bridge to the outside world.

“Kolba Cafe gave us a chance to hear the most important problems from outside this building. That made us less isolated and exposed us to these new ideas.”

Country project coordinator

The Kolba Cafe provides a valuable bridge between UNDP and the outside world. The event series “Kolba Café” was intended to be an internal event where interesting people from outside the organisation were invited to inspire with a new perspective and where the different teams could exchange beyond silos. Because there was demand, these events were opened to the public and allowed a wider exchange with people from outside the organisation.

The events remain very popular with the outside world, however the attendance of UNDP staff is declining. Some reasons given for this pointed towards the heavy workload of UNDP staff, but also a lack of curiosity in what Kolba is doing.

Some people think the Kolba Cafe should be more fun, including snacks and drinks or take place outside the UN building, so staff are happy to free themselves from their everyday workload to join. Another reason why staff don't attend is that their role at Kolba Cafe is very passive, there are only there to listen. If colleagues from outside the Kolba team helped with the agenda and the invitation of guests they might feel more ownership and are more happy to attend the event.

In order to enable internal exchange, the original format - an internal Kolba Cafe might be something to hold on to.

“Kolba never invited us to share our experience, but we would have been happy to do that.”

Country project coordinator

Even though there is a risk of isolating the innovation process by the creation of a separate innovation lab, staff outside the Kolba team never felt frustrated or jealous about not being part of it.

However, there were different views on who “owns” innovation: I spoke to one team who felt that they are doing innovative work, following a technology driven approach, but receive less attention inside and outside the organisation. Also there is potentially a risk that people outside the innovation team feel that they are not responsible to do innovative work, as there is a separate unit dealing with it.

Another person mentioned, that she used innovative methodologies in a successful project, but never received an invitation to present her work at Kolba Café. Some employees feel their own innovative efforts are overshadowed by Kolba's whereas others might feel intimidated by it and feel they need permission to act in Kolba's territory of innovation.

As Kolba's role is to support other teams, they are dependent on people who want to work with them and ask for support. For some people it might be difficult to overcome their pride and ask others for help to become more innovative - so they prefer to do their projects by themselves.

As an organisation UNDP Armenia needs to value and better appreciate all efforts using innovative approaches in order to motivate and recognize the individuals' efforts, especially if not part of the Kolba team.

The organisation has started to adjust Kolba's role in the right way: It needs to become less about “helping” others to become more innovative but more about collaborating on projects throughout the entire design process. Staff from other departments can become temporary or project based team members of Kolba, so they can develop skills and gather experiences with applying design processes. On the other side, Kolba team members could be embedded as human-centred design specialists in other departments' project teams.

One of the possible reasons for not being able to bridge the gap between the champions and the rest of the team might be that Kolba Lab has created separate projects, outside their normal challenges. Some employees feel that projects like the social innovation challenges are “not real projects” and therefore don't create any impact.

However, there are also members of staff who do not believe that human-centred design is a way to find solutions to very complex problems. They think that only experts have enough knowledge to design impactful solutions. As long as they are not shown evidence or impact of doing it in a different way, it will be difficult to gain their interest.

Kolba has started with this already and it needs to continue to apply the design process to core projects themselves in order to prove the success of the process and create a track record of demonstrator projects. This will not only make the methodologies tangible but also convince sceptics.

An impact evaluation framework which helps to measure success of each individual project can play an important role during discussions about “the right” approach.

“Its much more work to do this kind of work. You need to speak to people in the field. I think that could people stop people from using this methodology.”

Country project coordinator

Adopting principles and methods from human-centred design does not automatically mean doing more work, but often working outside one’s comfort zone. For many people this feels exhausting, sometimes frightening. In order to motivate the first brave employees who experiment with doing things differently additional incentives are needed, especially to make up for the negative feedback and criticism they were confronted with by other colleagues or middle management.

Depending on the organisation, performance reviews are not necessarily the best way to anchor innovation. UNDP Armenia already uses opportunities beyond financial recognition, which value the efforts of individuals such as missions abroad to talk and teach about the new approaches applied. As next step the organisation should think about possible ways to show its appreciation for entire teams not only individuals.

SKILLS & INNOVATION

What are the skills you need for innovation?

In order for employees to be innovative in the broadest sense, it is less their actual skills which matter, but more their attitude towards work and learning. When recruiting, characteristics like curiosity, creativity, being a team player, flexibility and intrinsically motivated are things UNDP Armenia specifically looks out for. However, is this also reflected in the corporate policies about recruitment?

In order to learn new things, one needs to be comfortable to step outside their comfort zone in order to do things differently. This alone however does not lead to new skills - the ability and time to review and reflect upon the recent experiences is what triggers learning.



David Kolb's learning cycle

The innovation process: design thinking & human-centred design

Designers and innovators do not rely on creativity alone, they also have a process that develops and guides the projects they are working on. This process is often referred to as design thinking or human-centred design. This process and the skills it involves are described below in the skills mapping template, which was used during a session that employees were invited to attend.

“It needs to be clear why this thing or that thing is considered innovative.”

Project assistant

The difference between the traditional way of working and the new - more innovative or human-centred way of working - is not clear to many staff. Some terms are misunderstood or used incorrectly. Some people think that open procurement is comparable to crowd-sourcing, or that design research can be done during a town hall meeting. For many, prototyping is synonymous with a pilot program. This suggests that even though all members of staff are experts in their field, only few have had the chance to develop the practical skills in innovation and human-centred design.

There is a huge opportunity to gather more experience of putting the service user at the centre of attention throughout the entire design process. For example staff can be trained in user research to understand the citizen's real needs, defining a brief in order to find solutions for these needs, coming up with ideas together with the service user and early, light touch prototyping in order to get feedback from citizens.

Kolba has become a role model to engage citizens through open challenges and crowd-sourced ideas. However, user research to discover user needs has not yet been applied in a similar way. More practical examples how user research can be done and what results to expect from the discovery phase will help teams to fill terms like “user research” with meaning.

Collaborating with human-centred design experts or design thinkers during a project will help the teams learning by doing and create a better understanding what a good design process looks like.

“We reached a stage where people need to see very practically what innovation is.”

Senior management

All members of staff are familiar with the concept of innovation, but only a few apply innovative approaches like human-centred design. This could be because they are not confident enough to translate the theoretical knowledge into practice during live projects. As one employee points out, speaking to real users can be daunting because as an expert you need to leave your comfort zone and do things you have no experience with. Giving staff the opportunity to experiment with some of the methodologies in a safe environment would make it easier to find the courage to go outside to meet “real people”.

In one case an interviewee explained that the experience of participating in a co-design workshop and seeing, in real life, what she had heard about before gave her the confidence to be able to organise a co-design workshop herself.

A safe environment such as internal projects will enable employees to test some human-centred design methodologies like user research. This will create confidence to apply new methodologies in their day-to-day practice.

Some members of staff might feel more comfortable if they had design thinking experts on their side during a project. Support from experts might increase staff's confidence to use new tools independently.

WHERE YOU ARE TODAY - SKILLS

- Team scores
- Adjusted team scores

The team scores were adjusted in a retrospective meeting with the Kolba team, because there was a feeling that the theoretical skills are there but are not applied sufficiently.

Interpretation of the skills session

There is a huge opportunity to create a shared understanding of what good design looks like in the field of development. Collaborations with experts in human-centred design such as service designers, ethnographic researchers or illustrators who can bring early prototypes to life might be helpful to form a better understanding of what these skills actually look like.



OUTCOME & INNOVATION

What makes projects innovative?

Innovation becomes tangible and real only when you can see actual interventions, well-designed projects and real outcomes. However there are different definitions of what makes an outcome innovative. Traditional approaches are often technology driven and outcomes of research & development departments. Another more modern way is to follow the example of companies like IDEO, who start each project with understanding the user's needs. Only once they identified these, they move on to develop solutions, which align with business needs and are feasible.

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Members of staff who agree fully with the statement "enough people use and benefit from our solution".

It does not say automatically anything about the impact or success of projects, but only few projects within the socio economic, environmental and also the democratic government portfolios have used a truly human-centred design approach so far. This means that there are not yet enough outcomes to assess whether new approaches are more successful than traditional approaches. Sceptics can use this as an argument for not changing their way of working.

When planning the year's work, there might be the opportunity to ask each team to choose at least one project they will work on together with Kolba following the Kolba approach. This would help Kolba to create outcomes, which are comparable to the work of the other teams and could demonstrate the impact of new approaches.

"We have not tried the new approach yet, but we are planning to. (...) There was a presentation about design thinking - that's exactly what we need. These methodologies are the things we might have been missing in previous failed projects: empathy and prototyping."

Project coordinator

Impact evaluation in the development sector is complicated and difficult. Sometimes the impact of an intervention can only be measured years after the intervention took place. By then, the correlation between cause and effect have become even more complex, and therefore difficult to prove. There are opportunities to lay the base for a successful impact evaluation by thinking about possible impact metrics during the early stages of a project. However, this is only possible, if the problem the intervention is trying to solve is clear and well-defined at the beginning of the project. In some instances there was an impression that the problem a project is intended to solve is not clear enough or too generic. This can be seen as an indication that the initial discovery and define phases have been skipped or have not delivered the desired results: a clear, user-centred problem statement.

It needs to become the norm that each project UNDP works on starts with a human-centred problem statement. The development of additional short-term metrics can be used to evaluate success of projects more quickly. Qualitative user feedback from beneficiaries can play an essential role and can give the current anecdotal evaluation a more solid framework.

UNDP ARMENIA - A MODEL FOR OTHER COUNTRY OFFICES

We support the approach to embed an innovation lab in an organisation. This gives innovation a space where people can discover what it practically means and gather experiences how it can be applied. A lab shows how serious the organisation is about innovation and gives permission to people to experiment with different ways of working in order to produce great outcomes. Something Kolba supported by the senior management team did particularly well and worth replicating elsewhere is connecting citizens, UNDP employees and experts to form a network of like-minded people. The activities around this network have reached a high presence in social media, lead to a growing network and made people curious about Kolba.

Kolba has become a public face of UNDP Armenia with regards to innovation on social media and influences the public perception of the organisation in a positive way.

Something to pay attention to is whether Kolba's approach of focusing on supporting other teams is applicable in other country offices. This approach requires individuals to feel confident enough to ask the innovation team for support. If this is not achievable it might be more effective for innovation labs to work independently on their own demonstrator projects. This could be broken down into pipeline of projects that are both short term and long term. Short term projects show success quickly and spread the innovation practise widely, whilst long term projects show a greater impact over time.

In the long run, the goal of an innovation lab must always be to make itself redundant through mainstreaming innovative approaches inside the entire organisation.

WHAT AND HOW TO CHANGE

How change happens

In order to change an organisation, different levels need to be considered: the individual, the team, the organisation as such and the wider society it is embedded in. Change only happens if the entire system is considered. Each individual layer needs different triggers and support in order to think and to do things in a new way.

Change needs to be driven holistically. There is no one intervention that can solve everything. When building a programme of change to get from where we are today, towards the innovative culture that UNDP Armenia wants to create, you must design interventions which touch all of the following:

1. Leadership and role-modelling
2. Incentives and rewards
3. Skills
4. Structures
5. Physical environment

Change takes time. External partners and consultancy can create an initial push, but it needs to be owned by the organisation which is in it for the long haul. Internal ownership, momentum and a co-created change process helps to minimise resistance against change.

THREE THINGS TO DO NOW

Being clear about your vision and making it tangible for employees and colleagues

UNDP Armenia has a clear vision of what their innovation goals are. Yet, not everyone is aware of what this vision exactly means, how it changes the everyday practises and the results of UNDP's work. There is an opportunity to speak less about innovation, but more about the desired objectives this approach brings, so that the vision becomes more tangible. Possible ways to do that are design principles or outcome metrics connected to innovation. Clearly defined objectives will lead to metrics, which make innovation measurable and tangible.

The Kolba team - supported by the senior management - plays an essential role in making innovation tangible. Even if it is a small team, it has ambitious goals: better UNDP programs and better public services. In order to achieve these, Kolba needs to focus and prioritise carefully possible future directions. How the development of Kolba Media is helping to reach these goals needs to be explored further.

In order to create better UNDP programs, it might be worth rethinking Kolba's tactics: So far, it has not been enough to offer support to other teams - only few have used the offer in order to design projects following the human-centred design process.

There is an opportunity for Kolba to play a more central role in the research, design and implementation of projects, beyond developing a portfolio of solutions or opportunities through public challenges.

Could the team reframe the way that they engage with colleagues?

What if the three different departments picked one project for Kolba to work on? What if members from other teams joined the Kolba team to support Kolba's projects? These new cross cutting project teams, under the project management of Kolba, could work on a pipeline of short-term and long-term projects beyond the current portfolio structure.

Fostering a culture biased towards action

Most of the staff feel encouraged by the management to do things differently and try new approaches. However, a closer look at individual projects reveals that only a small number of people have put innovation approaches into practice. By exposing more staff members to the practical side of innovation, a critical mass can be reached, which is needed so new approaches can become mainstream.

Role models, such as the Kolba team have a big impact on how things can be done differently. How can the management influence the culture by becoming a role model for doing things differently?

Developing skills to put the citizen in the heart of the organisation

Working in a different way means that different, additional skills are needed, especially those, which help the organisation to put citizens at the heart of it. As an organisation there is an opportunity for UNDP Armenia to develop skills such as user research, visualising ideas and prototyping in order to test and get feedback from citizens quickly. Not all employees have practical experience with these new approaches and therefore don't feel confident enough to apply them. Internal exemplar projects can become a safe space for experimentation. Doing projects together with innovation experts or creating new roles inside the teams can provide the reassurance needed. The current development of a "creatives" roster - a pool of freelancers UNDP can use if additional resources or skills are needed - is a good step towards this.

IDEAS FOR YOU TO EXPLORE

In several brainstorming sessions together with the Kolba team and colleagues from FutureGov, we developed a wide range of possible responses to some of the challenges Kolba & UNDP Armenia faces.

UNDP Armenia is a unique organisation with cultural characteristics, we could only understand and recognise to a certain extent in the time on site. Therefore we don't want to tell you which approach will work best and match the employees and context of your organisation. Only UNDP as an organisation itself has the expert knowledge to discuss, prioritise and choose possible options to explore further. We believe that UNDP Armenia should be the owner of that change process.

Instructions for an idea sorting workshop

The following suggestions can be used in an idea sorting workshop with all members of staff, hosted by the Kolba team. Together you can discuss and explore, which ideas make employees most excited or even inspire them to come up with their own suggestions. How can some approaches be tested and iterated? Which approach works best for what kind of employees? In order to help you to answer the later question, we developed two UNDP Armenia personas, by finding similarities in our interview partners' thinking, behaviour and needs. We matched the ideas with the persona, that would best resonate with them.

Mari



Project assistant

Mari has started her career three years ago. She is not sure yet, if she wants to stay at UNDP for the rest of her life. Sometimes she gets frustrated by the bureaucratic hurdles. She wishes it would be easier and quicker to make a connection between cause and effect.

But, she is still excited about learning and wants to develop new skills, because she knows that this will allow her to progress faster in her career - inside or outside UNDP.

She is excited about trying human-centred design methodologies and when she first did some design research she was really nervous. It took a lot of her energy to step outside her comfort zone and she felt uncomfortable when approaching service users for some feedback. However, she thinks it was worth going through that, because she realized how much these insights helped her to make decisions when designing the solution. It would have helped her, if someone with more experience would have helped her a little. The other day she took part in a co-design workshop - she can't wait to try it out herself. She feels confident trying it out, because participating in this workshop showed her how it is done.

Mari is happy to spend a little extra time to read about methodologies and even stepping out of her comfort zone is OK for her, but she hopes, that she will receive some recognition by the organisation. So far, it feels as if only her manager profits from her efforts.

Davit



Project coordinator

Davit is an expert in the field of development work, he has worked in the field for more than 25 years and has been with UNDP longer than anyone else. Sometimes, for example when there is an extreme weather condition, he is even asked to speak on TV as an expert.

He has seen many "new hot things" being introduced to UNDP - and this new conversation around innovation is something he has been doing for years. He understands what human-centred design is, but does not believe in it. He can't see how it can be applied to his field of working. He believes, that the problems he and his team is trying to solve are too complex, citizens can't contribute, but experts can. His projects are some of the ones which have the biggest impact - why should you change a working approach? Only if there is solid evidence that these new approaches work better, he is willing to reconsider his position, but so far this has not happened yet.

Maybe he would look into these new approaches a little bit further, he admits that he is a bit curious. But he does not feel comfortable asking someone else for support - unless it is an expert.

Being clear about your vision and making it tangible for employees and colleagues

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For Mari & Davit, short term

Design principles

Design principles are widely used to translate a strategy into tangible guidelines. They provide guidance during the design process without limiting individuals to have new ideas and do things differently. How might design principles for UNDP look like? Get inspired by the ones GDS or Facebook use:

www.gov.uk/design-principles

www.facebook.com/notes/facebook-design/facebook-design-principles/118951047792

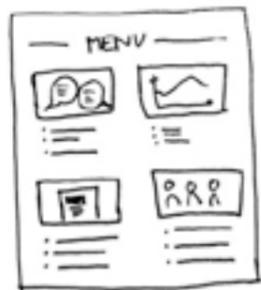


For Mari & Davit, short term

Innovation checklist

What exactly does it mean - to use an innovative approach when designing & implementing a project? A checklist with individual steps can provide guidance and reassurance throughout the process. A checklist can also work as a reminder for example to think about impact metrics at an early stage and not only after the project has been implemented. Get inspired, by the way checklists are used in medicine:

www.who.int/patientsafety/implementation/checklists/en/



For Mari, short term

A Kolba service menu

What if Kolba had a clear service menu and other teams and agencies had some credit they could spend on Kolba services? If a team or agency runs out of credit they could be asked to pay or offer services in return..

Fostering a culture biased towards action

Creative approaches towards UNDP processes

As described, the way internal things are done differently - by for example Kolba - has an impact on the UNDP culture - it challenges everyday practices and sets new standards.

How can UNDP change existing internal processes to influence the culture in an even more positive way? The monthly staff meetings might offer an opportunity to staff to experiment with creative approaches. What if each meeting was planned & designed by a different team each month?



For Mari & Davit, long term

A transparent culture & a place to meet

In many companies, the coffee machine plays an essential role in breaking down silos. Often it is in the kitchen where people meet, have some small talk but also exchange about what they are working on right now. The UNDP office does not have a place or meeting point, which fosters this lateral exchange. Many offices blinds are closed too, this makes passers unwelcome and doesn't reflect a culture of transparency and collaboration.



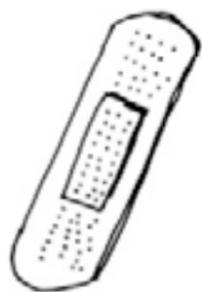
For Mari & Davit, short term

Sharing success stories

Sharing experiences and best practise examples is a great way to overcome silos. Why not find a format where everyone is invited to share the lessons learned, no matter which team or approach? And maybe it does not even need to be one's own story, but something inspiring from the outside world? The Kolba team experienced during the innovation camps, that participants became more curious about design thinking, once they knew about examples how successful companies such as Apple or Nike apply it.



For Mari & Davit, long term



For Mari, long term

Reduce the fear of failure

A different approach towards fostering sharing inside an organisation is not only to share the glorious pieces of work, but also the failed projects. The idea behind this is to use failure as an opportunity to avoid making the same mistakes again within the organisation. Additionally, these sharing sessions will have an impact on the organisation's culture as people become less frightened of failure. This idea has its origins in start-up culture, but the development sector has already picked it up, as this online community shows: www.admittingfailure.org



For Davit, long term

Working from outside the office

For outsiders it is difficult to get into the UN building. We heard from people who did not go there, because they did not have their ID with them. So what if the employees worked from outside the office, where they have a chance to meet citizens or get exposed to different perspectives? In case there are issues of trust, tools like Harvest make it easy for employees to account for their time.

www.getharvest.com



For Mari & Davit, long term

More responsibility for teams

In order to avoid people hiding behind their individual terms of reference and rejecting new responsibilities, team accountability can add another perspective, especially if bonuses are distributed based on a team's performance - and of course as part of a team everyone receives the same share, no matter the position in the hierarchy. Objectives such as doing at least two projects per year using human-centred design can become the team's responsibility.



For Davit, long term

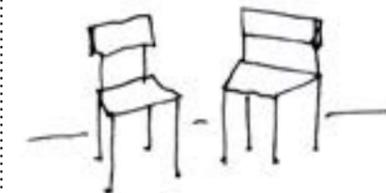
Incentivise the individual outside the formal appraisal process

Apart from contractual and financial rewards, there are other ways to recognise individual's efforts - speaking at conferences or teaching other country offices design skills is as much an incentive as attending workshop and professional development programs. "Innovation" does not need to become part of a formal appraisal process as it not something to be evaluated on a binary level. However, this does not mean, that it can not become part of a feedback conversation to show the employee, that his efforts are valued and recognised. What about introducing the "experimenter of the month"?

An open feedback culture

Feedback not only from managers, but also from co-workers helps people to reflect on their development, to identify opportunities for growth and to respond to criticism.

Retrospective meetings after a project phase is finished, allow more informal feedback beyond annual reviews. Could the management team become the role model for an open feedback culture and ask for feedback on their performance in an open discussion with the entire team?



For Mari & Davit, long term

Stay in touch with leavers

People leaving the organisation take knowledge with them - an alumni network allows staff to stay in touch, exchange and maybe bring people back in future on a contractual basis. How could an Alumni network for UNDP Armenia look like? Could it be as simple as a Facebook group?



For Mari, long term

Adjust the recruitment process to the new job profiles

Does the headoffice's current recruitment process match the possible open roles you need to fill? Do current job descriptions resonate with "innovative thinkers"? Where do research and design experts search for new jobs?



long term

Ideas, which help to develop skills (at UNDP & the government) needed to put the citizen in the heart of the organisation

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For Mari, short term

Exercise design thinking & human-centred design on internal projects

There is an opportunity in giving more people the chance to experience design thinking & human-centred design in practise, so a critical mass of possible change makers can be reached. A safe space outside the everyday projects could allow employees to experiment with new approaches and gather valuable experiences, which can then be applied to "real" projects more confidently.

Setting up a practical challenge for the entire UNDP team – for example making the office space fit for collaboration or solving a problem the city faces like a lack of accessibility - could become a space to experiment. Get inspired by the dSchool's virtual crash course in design thinking:

<http://dschool.stanford.edu/dgift/>

Provide a physical tool kit

Toolkits can provide guidance and confidence to people, who have little practical experience with human-centred design. What would a toolkit for Kolba or UNDP look like? What are the physical components and how would it change employees interactions with the toolkit, if persona templates, journey maps or even Lego's serious play were part of meeting room accoutrements? Would it allow people to develop a curiosity towards the process? Would people engage with it in their own time that prefers to avoid asking someone for support?

www.lego.com/de-de/seriousplay

For Mari & Davit, short term



Toolkit in Armenian for civil servants

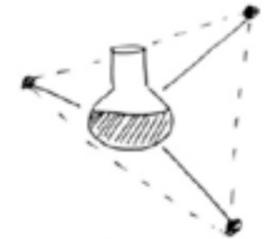
Not all civil servants speak English. The existing toolkits for the sector such as Nesta's DIY toolkit are only published in English. Could Kolba make the innovative approaches and human-centred design more popular by simply translating some of the existing tools & templates?



For civil servants, long term

Connecting UNDP, the public and government via Kolba

The Kolba team connects people - would it be easier if the team was more flexible about where they work? What if there was a Kolba co-working space close to the government where developers and designers could hire desk space and that could be used to do user testing or have meetings with civil servants? What if Kolba distributed their time between working at the government, the Impact Hub, the field and the UNDP office?



For civil servants, long term

Open challenges for civil servants

The open challenges have a lot of fans. Why not widen your fan base and set up an open challenge for civil servants?



For civil servants, short term

The Kolba newsletter

Could Kolba follow the example of FutureGov and grow their community with a newsletter collecting relevant links about innovation, and development work?

For civil servants, long term

Prepare a sales pitch for ministries and local government

It might be surprising, but we experienced that people working in local governments or in companies are intrigued by the stories we present about their service users. They hardly have the time to listen and talk to the people they are designing for. What if Kolba prepared a user research study relevant for a chosen ministry? Presenting the study would provide them a chance to speak about Kolba's vision, their ways of working and service offer.



For civil servants, long term

Space for your our ideas

Please give your idea a name

Describe or draw your idea

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