**Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices**

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

UPSHIFT

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Italy

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- [ ] Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools

- [x] Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development

- [ ] Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession

- [ ] Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation

- [ ] Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

UPSHIFT in Italy is implemented by UNICEF Europe and Centrale Asia Regional Office (ECARO)'s out-posted office in Italy, in partnership with the CSO "Junior Achievement Italia".

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

- 21st century skills
- entrepreneurship education
- school-to work transition
- social inclusion of disadvantaged adolescents
- unaccompanied minors and young migrants and refugees

6. What makes it a best practice? *

UPSHIFT is UNICEF's flagship 21st century skills building model aiming to empower disadvantaged adolescents to design innovative and creative solutions to problems identified in their local communities. Implemented in over 40 countries, UPSHIFT is part of the World Bank's Solutions for Youth Employment Impact Portfolio and is recognized by the global partnership Generation Unlimited as a front-runner solution.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)
   This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:
   i) Which population was affected?
   ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
   iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

With one of the highest school drop-out rates in the EU, Italy registers 13,1% of young people who prematurely abandoned their studies. While the national unemployment rate is 9.2%, the youth unemployment rate stands at 22.1%. The incidence of NEET is registered at 23,3%. These trends hide much worse situations, depending on the young people's geographical location, gender, and socioeconomic background. Disparities in opportunities appear even more pronounced for disadvantaged children and youth, such as those living in poverty, outside a family or in vulnerable family contexts, children in institutional care, and children with a migration background. At the individual level, a lack of self-motivation and self-esteem, relational difficulties, or limited time- and resource-management skills can make the difference in a young person's choice to abandon education and training paths.

To respond to these challenges, the UPSHIFT programme in Italy is implemented since 2018 by UNICEF ECARO in partnership with Junior Achievement Italia. UPSHIFT puts adolescents in front of a real and concrete social challenge, for which they have to create an innovative and creative solution with social impact. By combining entrepreneurship education, training and learning-by-doing workshops, with mentorship and seed funding, UPSHIFT equips them with the life skills needed for a successful school-to-work transition and social inclusion. While young people benefit from building 21st century skills, motivation and self-esteem, the wider community benefits from the social impact of products and services designed by participants.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

i) What are the main activities carried out?

ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?

iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?

iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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UPSHIFT in Italy was first launched in 2018 and is now implemented in Sicily, Latium and Lombardy. The implementation is carried out both in the formal education system and in non-formal education settings. The core UPSHIFT content is entirely modular, allowing it to be adapted to different contexts and to the profiles and specific needs of participants. Here below are outlined the phases of the UPSHIFT programme:

1. "Innovation & Creativity Camps", where participants are put in front of a real and concrete social challenge, for which they have to create an innovative and creative solution. Participants are supported by JA Italia's trainers and by mentors from the business sector. The Camp can be implemented face-to-face, in blended modality or entirely online. At the end of the Camp, participants present their ideas in front of a jury, which provides feedback on how to develop their ideas.

2. "Ideas in Action for UPSHIFT", where trained teachers/educators/tutors deliver the modules, supporting teams to understand the communities they live in, analyze problems and transform them into solutions and business ideas with social impact. At the end of this phase, students present their ideas in front of a jury panel composed by business volunteers and other relevant local stakeholders (Demo Day), which provides them feedback on how to further develop them.

3. "Incubation phase", which combines training workshops and mentorship to the teams, who are supported in further developing their ideas with social impact (prototyping, analysis of the customer journey, development of business plans and marketing, etc.).

4. "Crescere Che Impresa per UPSHIFT": this course specifically targets UASC and young migrants and refugees, supporting them to a better understanding of their aspirations, interests and professional future, and providing them with the tools needed to explore different job sectors and emerging professions.

At completion of the programmes, participants have access to the exam to obtain the Entrepreneurial Skills Pass (ESP), an international certificate accredited by the European Commission.

UPSHIFT includes active involvement of the private sector and volunteers from the business community. For instance, in 2021-22, mentors were involved from EY, Fitzcarraldo Foundation, JA Alumni, HSBC, the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers, Ashoka GEN C, University of Palermo, and other local stakeholders), increasingly consolidating the mentorship component of the programme.

The main budget sources: UNICEF thematic funds; Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB); the European Commission; and Hydro.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)
To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:
i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

In Italy, UPSHIFT is included among the models piloted within the European Child Guarantee, the EU Commission's initiative to combat child poverty and social exclusion, for which model testing is being implemented in Italy by UNICEF in collaboration with the national authorities. Morover, over the 4 years of implementation, UNICEF and JA Italia's counterparts in Europe showed interested in replicating the model as best practice in countries.

With regards to the impact on policies, UPSHIFT implementation brought forward the collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Education (MoE) on the skills building agenda, promoting the mainstreaming of UPSHIFT within the Italian school system. In 2022, a strategic MoU was signed between UNICEF and the Italian MoE, promoting UPSHIFT programme within the Italian school system, which builds progressive institutional ownership to ensure the sustainability of the programme. The MoU has the objective of promoting the UPSHIFT programme in the school system, with particular attention to disadvantaged students in fragile schools. In particular, the MoE requested a replication of the UPSHIFT programme in lower secondary schools (students aged 11-14) in the 2022-23 school year, within the curricular Civic Education programme. This request was also reiterated by the MoE's National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Research in the field of Education (INDIRE), with which the pilot will be conducted. Collaboration was strengthened also with the local Education Offices of Sicily, Milan and Latium.

As of June 2022, over 3.200 adolescents were involved in UPSHIFT, of which 20% were unaccompanied minors and young migrants and refugees. Based on an evaluation in 2021, an average of 70% of UPSHIFT participants showed increased learning outcomes, taking initiative skills (learners are willing to have a go at solving problems that affect their communities). The majority showed enhanced team-working skills, motivation and perseverance skills (learners want to follow their passion and create value for others), and increased employability skills (planning, management, self-awareness and self-efficacy).

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)
    To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:
    i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
    ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
    iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

    The key-trigger for transformation is UPSHIFT's focus on social inclusion and diversity as the pivotal innovative approach of the programme in Italy. Building upon the Child Guarantee framework and objectives, UPSHIFT target groups now include students with a migration background and disadvantaged Italian students in upper secondary schools. School selection was carried out based on a set of indicators of disadvantage, including dropout rates, percentage of students with a migration background and average of learning outcomes. Definition of challenges was characterized by the common thread of social inclusion, with the aim of engaging students in creating youth-led solutions to respond to social problems.

    Among the main challenges is the out-of-school implementation with target UASC and young migrants and refugees within catch-up schools. During the last 2 years, a higher age-range of participants in catch-up schools has been noted, mainly due to the changing profiles of young migrants and refugees arriving in Italy. Moreover, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, higher drop-out rates with this specific target group were observed, mainly because of the online modality. Nevertheless, the programme shows positive results in terms of learning outcomes, skills building and participation. Plus, diversity within the Italian and migrant/refugee communities results in greater intercultural exchange and understanding, thereby increasing opportunities of social cohesion.

11. Conclusions (250 words)
    Please describe why may this intervention be considered a "best practice".
    What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented "best practice" or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

    Among the main recommendations is the adaptation UPSHIFT programme to the specific needs and profiles of participants. One of the main tools to do so is the development of specific challenges that respond to and engage the participants. Moreover, the length and content of modules must be adapted to the needs of the young participants. For example, in out-of-school contexts, evidence shows that shorter modules and a focus on job orientation worked better for UASC and young migrants and refugees.
    Another key-factor for sustainability in the in-school context is the teachers' training and active involvement, while it is important to also build an eco-system around the programme - i.e., with the involvement of private secotr and other key-stakeholders.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the "best practice" for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

- https://www.unicef.org/innovation/upshift
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s10bBKOi_l4
- https://www.unicef.it/media/upshift-il-percorso-di-educazione-all-imprenditorialita-di-unicef/
- https://www.unicef.org/eca/staying-apart-connected-during-covid-19
- https://www.unicef.org/eca/stories/upshift-shifting-gear-response-covid-19
- https://www.unicef.org/innovation/stories/young-people-active-changemakers