



AGORA

ANNUAL REPORT 2015



A YEAR OF GROWTH AND LESSONS LEARNED FOR

UNICEF'S GLOBAL HUB FOR LEARNING



About Agora



Agora is UNICEF's Global Hub for Learning and Development. It offers tailored learning solutions to UNICEF's staff, partners and supporters. Launched officially in February 2015, it provides a personalized access to over a thousand learning opportunities. The portal also supports career development and development planning through innovative online tools.

As of 2016, Agora is managed by the Learning and Knowledge Exchange Unit in the Division of Data, Research and Policy (DRP)

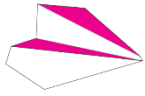
Come in and learn more at <https://agora.unicef.org>

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2015 ON AGORA IN FIGURES



100%
of countries in
the world
connected to
the platform



25,241
active learners
– **10,567** of
whom were
external users



32,228
course
completions
recorded



1200+
learning
activities
offered in the
catalogue



9,009
staff members
completed
Ethics and
Integrity in
UNICEF



92%
of female staff
and **89%**
of male staff
connected to
Agora.



94%
of users
qualified their
experience on
Agora as Good
or Excellent.



92%
learners
satisfied with
the
support
received

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Agora officially launched in February 2015 and has succeeded in becoming a core learning and development tool in UNICEF within its first calendar year. This report provides a global picture of usage, platform development, and lessons learned.

The first part of the report shows a steady and significant growth of the platform in terms of reach and usage. This growth occurred in both UNICEF and the wider UN/NGO community we work with to achieve results for children.

The second part highlights the publishing of hundreds of learning opportunities and the provision of innovative services and technical upgrades such as the “Agora Offline” player – an innovative tool addressing current connectivity issues.

The third part looks at three particular learning programmes implemented and supported through Agora, with indicators of results achieved and lessons learned:

- *The HACT online course reached most programme staff and indicators show positive correlation between country offices completion rates of this training and their HACT implementation performance.*
- *The Ethics and Integrity in UNICEF e-module became the first module mandatory to all staff for which accurate and detailed compliance data could be provided. Various lessons were learned from this experience.*
- *Ebola safety – able to respond quickly to an emerging threat and keep our people safe.*

Agora’s catalogue is easy to navigate, extensive, diverse and presents staff with a wide variety of learning opportunities. Our future focus will be to incorporate more UNICEF training materials that are currently geographically or business area isolated.

2015 was a year of growth and lessons learned for UNICEF’s global Hub for Learning and Development. Agora has great potential to support the implementation of UNICEF’s Strategic Plan, and further efforts should be made in 2016 to consolidate and build on these results.

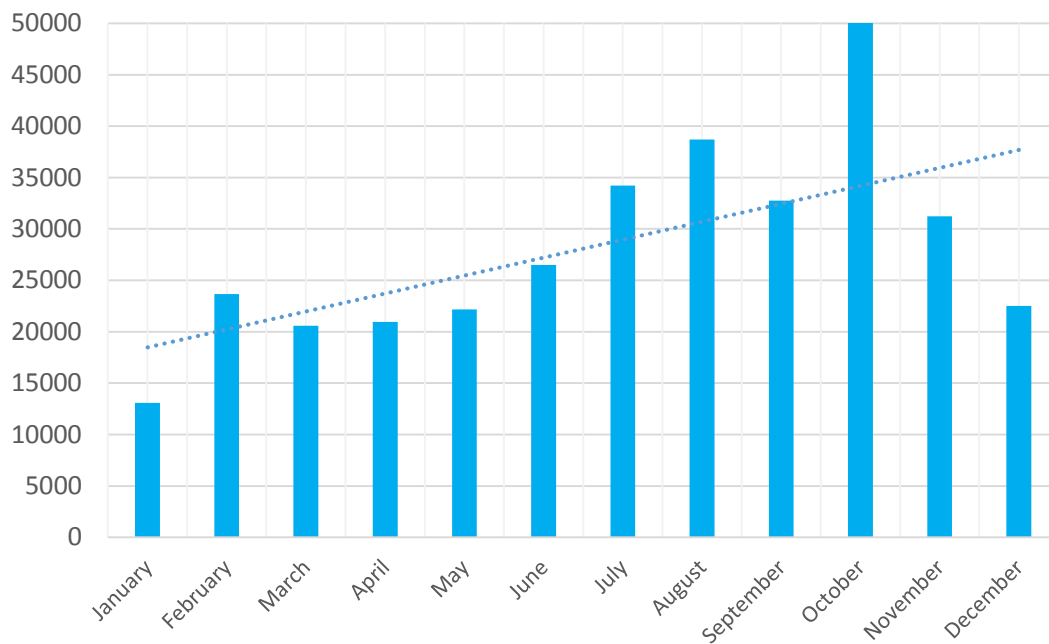


USAGE ANALYTICS

1- OVERVIEW

In 2015,
25,241 active users connected to Agora from
68,152 devices (average of 2.7 devices/user), for a total of
337,081 sessions (average of 13/user; 925/day).

The following chart represents the number of monthly sessions in 2015.



Comment: The overall usage growth has been significant for the platform.

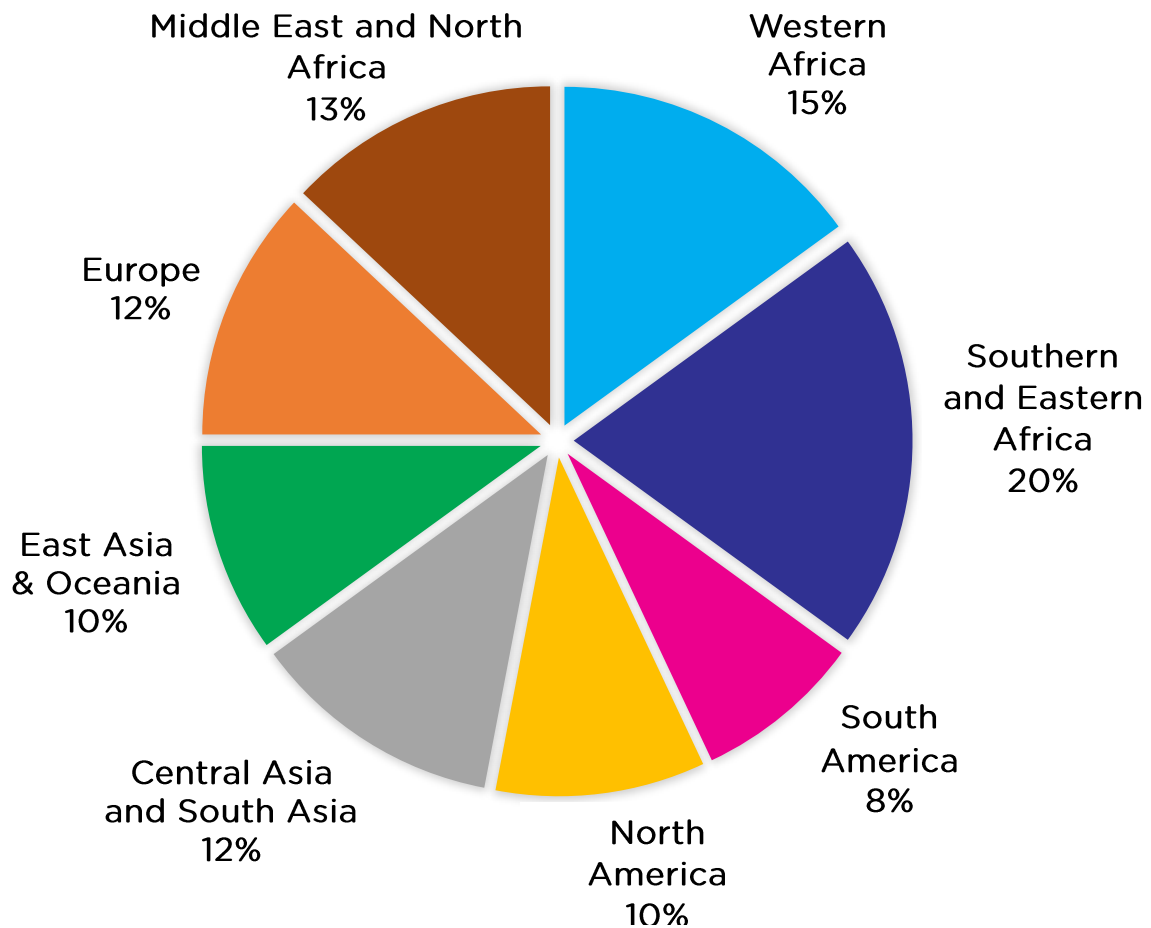
The month of October saw a surge in connections as the deadline for the “Ethics and Integrity at UNICEF” course was set to 31 October. The second half of December has been quiet, probably due to end of year celebrations.

2- SOURCES OF TRAFFIC

Agora was accessed from
ALL COUNTRIES in the world.
Without exception.



The following chart illustrates the repartition of connections by region:



The data, obtained through Google Analytics, does not exactly match UNICEF regions definition. One can observe that nearly 50% of traffic comes from Africa and the Middle-East.

3- TECHNOLOGY USED TO ACCESS AGORA



Type of Device

70% Desktop
25% Laptop
4% Mobile



Operating System

92% Windows
4% Macintosh
2% Android
2% iOS



Browser

66% Internet Explorer
23% Chrome
7% Firefox
3% Safari

NOTE: While Agora was designed to be mobile-friendly, the limited amount of mobile friendly learning activities may explain that less than 5% of connections took place from a mobile device.

Average load time

<i>Continent</i>	<i>Average load time / page</i>
<i>North America</i>	<i>2.2 sec</i>
<i>Europe</i>	<i>3.7 sec</i>
<i>South America</i>	<i>4.2 sec</i>
<i>Asia / Oceania</i>	<i>4.8 sec</i>
<i>Africa</i>	<i>6.2 sec</i>

On average, it took 4.99 seconds for user to open Agora pages. Countries with the most challenging average connections were:

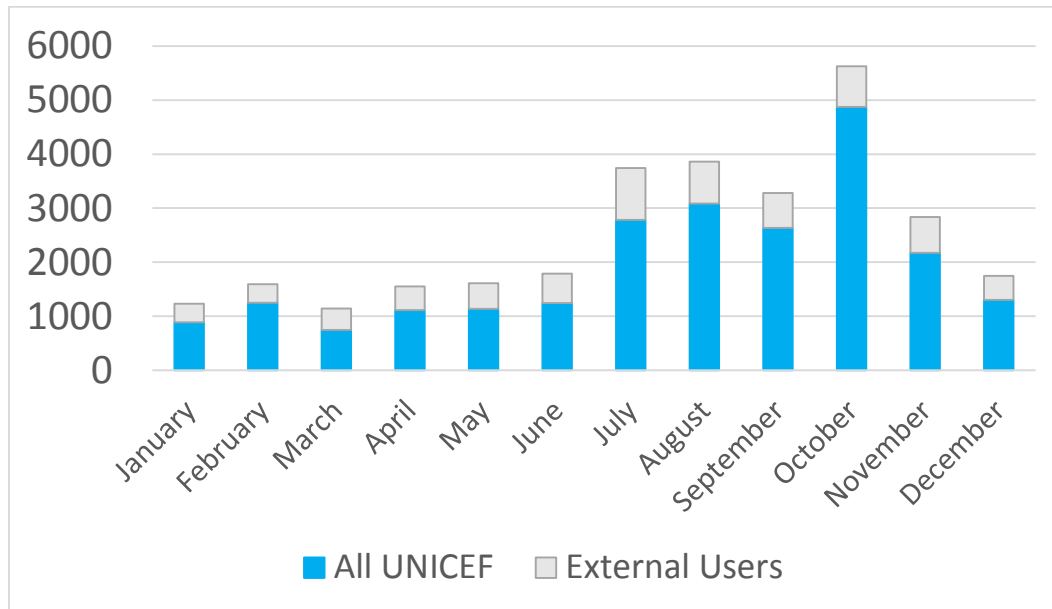
Benin (50 sec per page), China (37.1 sec per page), Congo (27.3 sec per page), Yemen (24.9 sec per page) and Iran (21.4 sec per page).

Very few users complained about the performance of the Agora platform, which leads us to believe that these load time spans compare with those of other websites.

4- LEARNING ACTIVITIES ENROLMENTS AND COMPLETIONS

In 2015, there were **101,298 enrolments** and **32,228 completions**, across 314 different activities.

Activity Completions evolution



NOTE: the HACT and Ethics mandatory courses boosted figures for the second semester.

The 5 most popular courses were:



Ethics and Integrity in UNICEF

9,009 Completed



HACT

4,949 Completed



Prevention of Sexual Harassment & Abuse of Authority

907 Completed



Basic Security in the Field

743 Completed



FACE form

694 Completed

5- DEMOGRAPHICS OF UNICEF LEARNERS

BY GENDER

<i>Gender</i>	<i># of staff who visited Agora</i>	<i># of activities completed</i>	<i># of completion per user (average)</i>
<i>Female</i>	<i>5495</i>	<i>12,864</i>	<i>2.17</i>
<i>Male</i>	<i>6050</i>	<i>11,951</i>	<i>2.13</i>

** Gender information is only available for certain categories of staff.*

Comment: Agora provides, in effect, equal access to learning activity access among male and female staff members.

BY CATEGORY OF STAFF

<i>Category</i>	<i># of staff who visited Agora</i>	<i># of activities completed</i>	<i># of completion per user (average)</i>
<i>Senior Managers (D, USG, ASG)</i>	<i>72% (101)</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>1.1</i>
<i>IP</i>	<i>90% (3174)</i>	<i>6207</i>	<i>2.0</i>
<i>NO</i>	<i>92% (3571)</i>	<i>8807</i>	<i>2.5</i>
<i>G</i>	<i>89% (4652)</i>	<i>9546</i>	<i>2.1</i>
<i>Others (incl Consultants & Interns)</i>	<i>1521</i>	<i>2249</i>	<i>1.5</i>

Comment: National staff were the most active users of Agora, completing more courses than other categories of staff. Senior Managers connected the least, and almost exclusively to complete the Ethics and Integrity in UNICEF online training.

BY REGION

	<i># of staff who visited Agora</i>	<i># of activities completed</i>	<i># of completions per user (average)</i>
<i>CEE/CIS</i>	<i>556</i>	<i>1216</i>	<i>2.2</i>
<i>Copenhagen (SD)</i>	<i>352</i>	<i>664</i>	<i>1.9</i>
<i>EAPRO</i>	<i>1027</i>	<i>2884</i>	<i>2.8</i>
<i>ESARO</i>	<i>2445</i>	<i>6244</i>	<i>2.6</i>
<i>LACRO</i>	<i>710</i>	<i>1211</i>	<i>1.7</i>
<i>MENA</i>	<i>1261</i>	<i>2562</i>	<i>2.0</i>
<i>NYHQ</i>	<i>1074</i>	<i>1184</i>	<i>1.1</i>
<i>ROSA</i>	<i>1434</i>	<i>3028</i>	<i>2.1</i>
<i>WCAR</i>	<i>2751</i>	<i>5950</i>	<i>2.2</i>

Usage by region has varied throughout 2015. Overall, usage has been steadily strong in EAPRO, EASRO, WCARO and ROSA.

While there has been a surge in usage at the end of the year, as staff were invited to complete the Ethics and Integrity in UNICEF course, usage in NYHQ continues to lag behind.

FOCUS: External learners on Agora

While the focus of 2015 was the rollout of Agora to UNICEF staff, access to some learning opportunities has been open to external learners (other UN agencies, partners and the general public) since the launch of Agora.

10,567 active learners were non-UNICEF staff.

This represents 42 % of the total population of users.

Who are these external learners?



Other UN agencies	24%
NGOs	13%
Governmental actors	4%
Education institutions	4%
UNICEF National Committees	2%
UNICEF Donors	2%
Others / Non-specified	51%

The 5 most popular courses among external learners were:



HACT

1761
Completed



**Ethics and
Integrity in
UNICEF**

576
Completed



**Competency
Based
interviewing**

296
Completed



**Introduction
to Child
Protection**

272
Completed



**Ebola Safety
e-module**

240
Completed

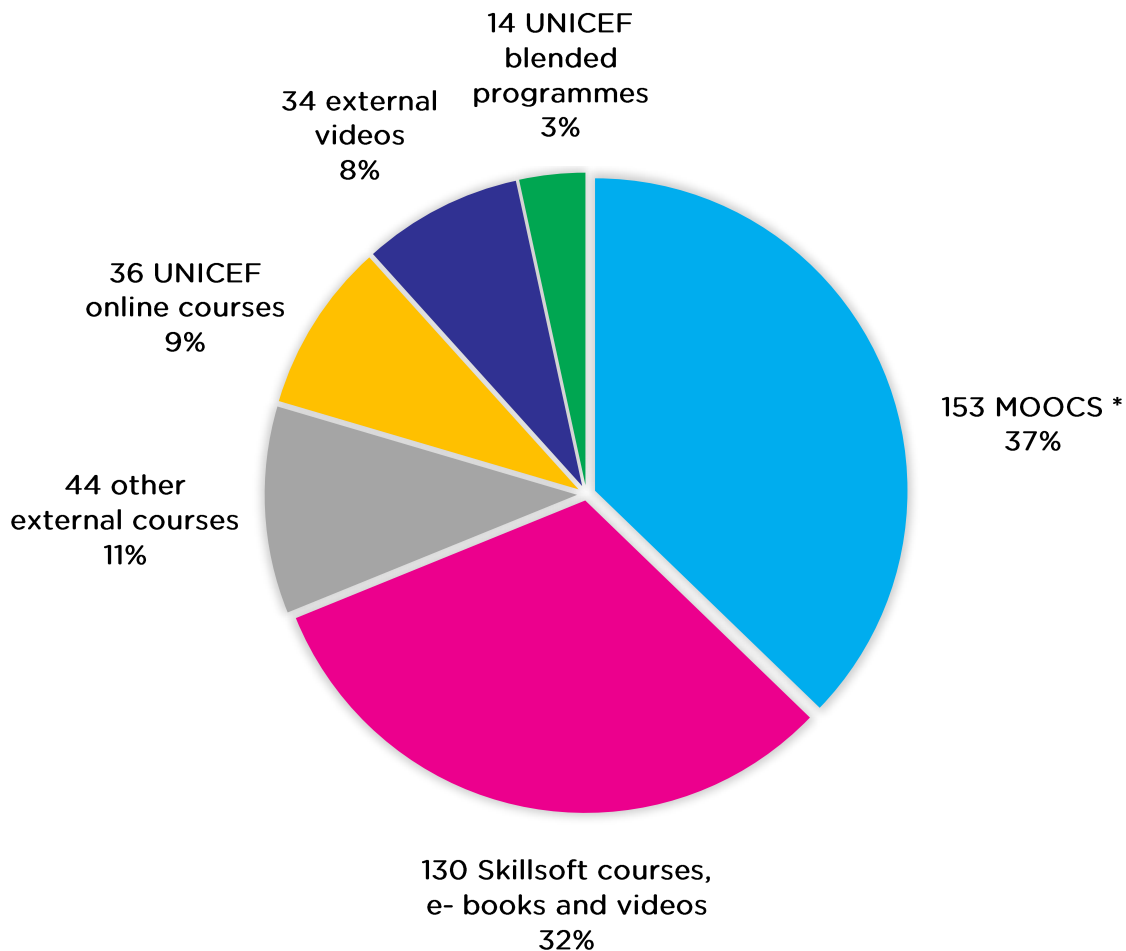


PLATFORM DEVELOPMENTS

6- LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES PUBLISHED

The Agora catalogue consisted of **1217 learning activities** as of December 31st 2015.

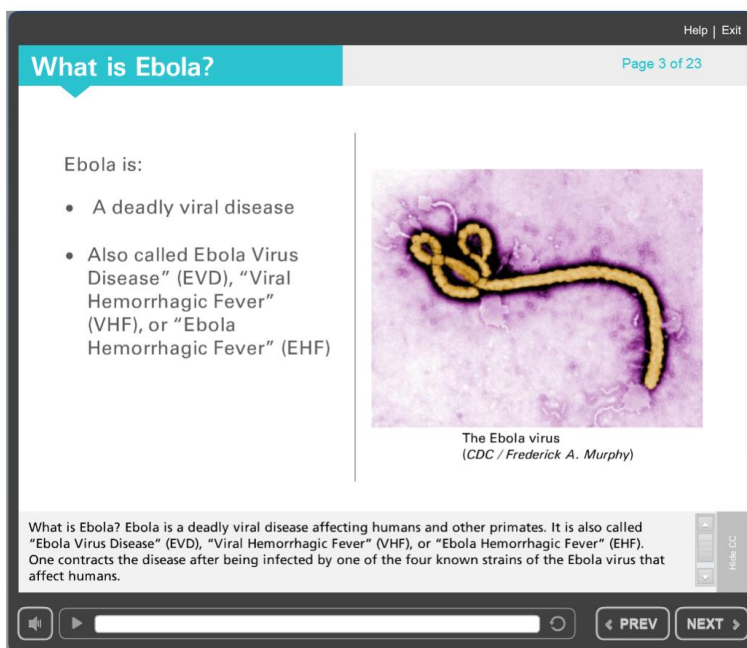
411 of these activities were published in 2015, after the launch:



* Massive Open Online Courses are online courses using a mix of self-learning (quizzes, videos, documents) and peer-learning (discussions, peer-reviewed assignments) elements. Many MOOCs are delivered by reputable universities and free.

The most significant UNICEF or UN system courses added:

- HACT and FACE form modules
- The Ebola Safety e-Course
- Prevention of sexual harassment and abuse of power course (SHAP)
- Performance management modules (Mid-year review, Performance assessment and 360 Degree feedback)
- Ethics in Evidence Generation
- Integrating Child Rights into Development Cooperation
- Social Economic Policies for Child Rights with Equity (migrated content)
- Ethics and integrity in UNICEF (in 3 languages)
- Career management solutions (Self-assessments solutions and Preparing for a Transition to Retirement module)
- GSSC training packages for various audiences
- The immunization e-learning series (5 courses)
- Introduction to UN Procurement Harmonization
- VISION Supply Chain courses (series created by the Supply Division)



<< Launched in January 2015, the Ebola safety e-course reached 1326 UNICEF staff and external learners.

Partner content also included:

- The Sphere e-learning course in French & Spanish, as well as the new Sphere Facilitators training packages
- 7 courses from the Headington Institute relating to stress and well-being management
- 15 courses from the FEMA related to Business Continuity
- Various courses from the UN System Staff College

7- FEATURES UPDATES

Personal Learning activities

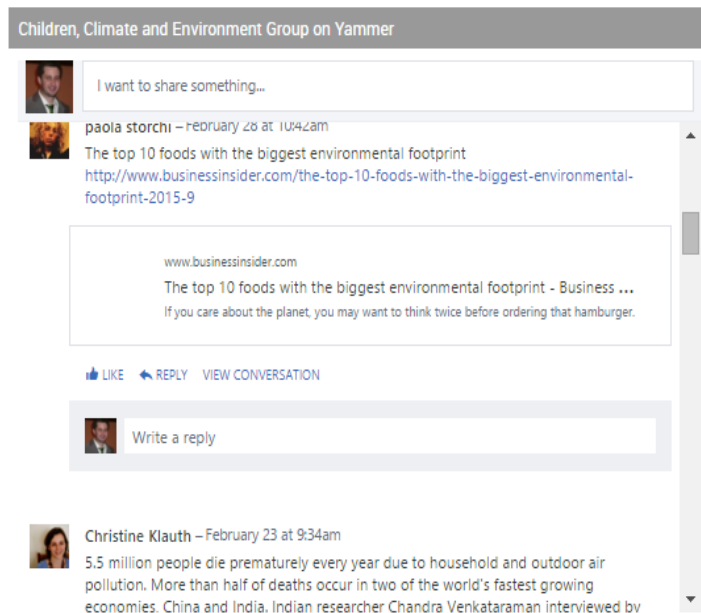
The “Personal learning activity” publishing tool was finalized and launched in March 2015. This solution allows learners to add formal and informal learning activities that are not integrated to the Agora catalogue. This can also be useful for staff interested in adding information about learning activities undertaken before the implementation of Agora.

Reporting improvements

New reporting features now allow to report based on all the classifications created to structure the catalogue. To ensure better quality of reporting data, a thorough review of existing reports also led to the development of a solution to automate production of reports at quarterly, and to a better definition of regional audiences.

Yammer integration

Yammer is UNICEF’s peer-to-peer knowledge sharing platform. A custom “Yammer block” was developed for Agora and integrated in various courses and learning channels on Agora. This solution ensures the incorporation of existing topic based discussions in relevant context on Agora, instead of creating additional and separate threads that could weaken collaboration and knowledge sharing at the organizational level.



<< The Yammer block can be used to link to a particular group or discussion thread. It can be styled to fit nicely with a particular course design.

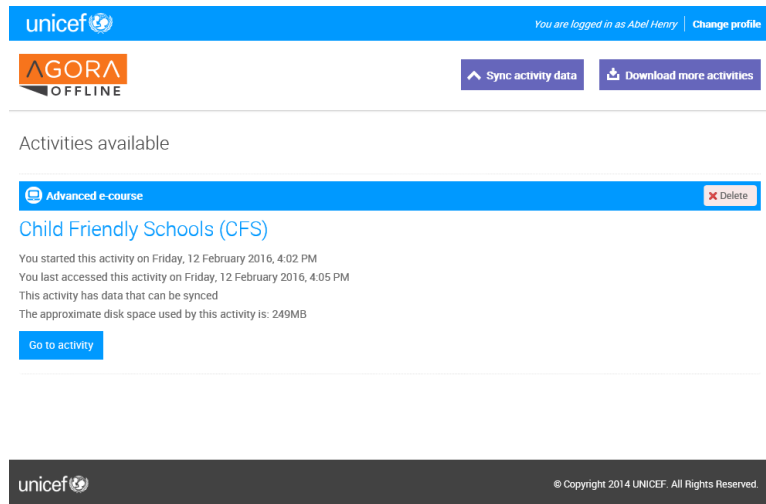
Announcements solution

A custom announcement solution was added to Agora, building on open source developments from another Totara client. The solution makes it possible to send email messages to specific Agora audiences. It uses newsletter features such as HTML based emails, web version of emails and “unsubscribe” options.

Agora Offline

Agora Offline is a desktop application that allows staff to complete courses without need for a fast internet connection. It is an additional service for staff travelling or located in an office with slow or limited internet connectivity.

Agora Offline was released on all UNICEF computers at the end of December. A shortcut now appears on the desktop of staff members. The official launch occurred early 2016. For all project information and documentation to be easily accessible to both UNICEF staff and external users, a dedicated web page was created: <https://agora.unicef.org/offline>



<< Agora Offline offers a similar learning experience as the Agora web portal for dozens of compatible online courses.

Other developments in brief:

- The platform software has been upgraded to “Totara 2.7”, bringing new features for face-to-face activities and reporting.
- A one-click course duplication solution, for fast and consistent publishing.
- Login process improvement, which reduced need for support. Agora became the first UNICEF system to use a new responsive corporate profile login page, allowing users to have a pleasant experience on tablets and smartphones.
- The Skillsoft e-courses / e-books repository was upgraded to Version 8, and switched to a Java-free version delivery format. This improved the experience of learners and solved most issues reported over the past years.
- An Agora Sandbox site was set up for training and testing purposes.
- The catalogue design was improved based on feedback, for easier search capabilities on computer, tablet and smartphone.

8- SUPPORT

The workload associated with all support and troubleshooting tasks is estimated to a third of the project team's efforts (or a full time job equivalent).

8.1 End user support

The number of requests for support remained reasonably stable throughout the year, in spite of the continuing usage increase. This is due to the effective support from the ITSS Service Manager team, and to our ability to fix user experience challenges with custom adjustments (especially for the login processes).

For requests relating to use of specific learning activities, most requests came from learners who did not know how to access their completion certificate. The team decided to keep educating learners and keep the course evaluation as a pre-requisite to the delivery of completion certificates. The second main source of request for support has been the unclear main menu and navigation of the "Ethics and Integrity at UNICEF", leading many users to not be able to access the final assessment. In the future, we should really address such issues at the source, as we lost many hours of work just guiding users, who in some instances, had already been struggling on their own for a long time.

8.2 Secondary administrators support

As more and more administration rights are being delegated to colleagues in DHR, Supply Division or the GSSC - as well as specific reports with SMEs - there has been a considerable increase of the hours of support provided to these "secondary administrators" of the portal.

8.3 System testing and bug fixing

Using a customized open source platform does generate a significant amount of continuing testing and bug fixing related tasks. We hope that as we refine major developments, the need for testing and maintenance will decrease in 2016.

At the end of November 2015, a glitch with the SAP HRIS user feed led to the accidental cancellations of thousands of registrations. The issue occurred as the data exported by UNICEF did not include some essential information. The source of the issue was rapidly identified, and accounts reactivated without users noticing anything but restoring the reporting data integrity took significant efforts from both UNICEF and Catalyst to be fixed, towards the end of December. The integration workflows and processes have since then been improved.

9- COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING

9.1 System demonstrations and overview sessions

The team delivered dozens of tailored demonstration and overview sessions to Divisions in HQ and field offices. Presentations were also organized for various UN agencies and NGO partners interested to learn more about UNICEF's initiatives.

9.2 “Agora updates” Newsletters

The “Announcements” plugin initial release was used to launch the first newsletter in May, to all UNICEF staff, directly from Agora. It allowed the newsletter to be formatted for compatibility with various email clients and on mobile device. Five other newsletters were sent out in 2015.

9.3 Information about learning technologies services and project documentation

Pages were created to make information about the 11 e-learning services Long Term Arrangements (LTAs) available to all UNICEF staff, and help offices interested in creating learning activities know where to start. The Agora reports and roadmaps were also published on Agora, for transparency.

9.4 External promotion

The Agora champions' channel was created and announced through the PFP newsletter to National Committees and key partners and through the Agora newsletter to all UNICEF staff. A Facebook page was created as a first step to reach out to external audiences. A selection of courses were published on the “Relief Web” training catalogue of learning opportunities, and improved the referencing of the Agora site so it could be more easily found through a search on Google.



STORIES & LESSONS LEARNED

10- End users survey analysis

Through November and December, we sought formal feedback through a user survey. We promoted the survey through the Monthly newsletters and also from the home page of Agora. We received 136 responses to the 17 questions survey.

Calls for improvement

“The catalogue feels crowded; it is not always easy to find what we need”

“Support was needed at some point” (50%)

“More information is needed to use Agora for the first time” (20%)

Positive feedback

“We like the number of learning opportunities available to us”

“The support received was satisfactory” (92%)

“The platform is easy to use”

Overall, the survey feedback was very positive. It suggests that Agora has been very well received by end-users who appreciate both the content of the platform and its features.

A few areas of improvement were identified. Users reported having occasional issues finding relevant learning activities due to the large volume of the catalogue.

It was also found that half of the survey respondents needed some form of support with the system. This was not visible through either the Global Help Desk or the Agora support mailbox, and further investigation will be needed.

STORY 1: HACT e-learning module: Enabling effective programming with practical training

OVERVIEW

The Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) is an inter-agency framework for transferring cash to government and non-government implementing partners. Identified as a key component of the global HACT strategy and new HACT Policy and Procedure, the HACT e-course was developed to improve the understanding of HACT’s key elements and its accurate application across all levels of the organization.



The course was presented as “mandatory” for UNICEF staff responsible for managing results and resources in relation to cash transfers to implementing partners. The course focuses on practical scenarios and examples, to help learners apply what they learn to their own work.

USAGE AND IMPACT METRICS

In 2015, the course recorded:

14,172 enrolments – of which 9511 were from UNICEF staff.

8,309 completions – of which 5513 were from UNICEF staff.

The particular context of this programme led to think there may be a measurable impact assessment of the initiative. In the following table, the completion rate of offices or divisions is put in parallel with the average KPIs used for the HACT implementation: *the number of programme visits* and the number of *spot checks*. For each of these indicators, a score of 100% represents the minimum standards that all country offices must meet to ensure effective cash transfer. While it is hard to isolate the impact of the course from other factors – **there appears to be a clear positive correlation between completion of the HACT module and KPI indicators**. Specifically, country offices with greater than 75% course completion rates earned nearly twice the percentage points in both program visits and spot check evaluations compared to offices with less than 25% of completion rates.

HACT Performance of Country Offices & HACT course completion rates

Percentage of HACT course completion in the office	0 – 25%	26 – 50%	51 – 75%	76 – 100%
Programme Visits (% of minimum standard)	102%	149%	136%	212%
Spot Checks (% of minimum standard)	71%	79.26	104%	134%

LESSONS LEARNED

- Practical courses are highly appreciated by staff and, in this particular case, by external partners who also use the HACT framework. Learners like to learn with case studies and examples.
- The impact of tool or process specific courses can be measured. We should repeat the exercise for other similar programmes.
- It is possible to launch mandatory technical training when Subject Matter Experts take ownership of the initiative, communicating about the course, monitoring progress and committing to action in case of non-compliance.
- With that course, targeted UNICEF staff were manually enrolled. This has made reporting easier, but we will need more experience to see if this is an approach we can or should use more often, as it could also affect the image of Agora being a space for self-driven development / self-service.

LEARNERS FEEDBACK

Management commitment to HACT implementation was aligned with strong learning needs and several experts were directly involved in content and course creation throughout the development process.

Decentralized follow-up of staff e-course completion rate by newly established and dedicated HACT regional specialists.

The overall experience of the course was reported as follows (5566 respondents):

Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1.3 %	5.2%	26%	49.2%	18.31%

Many comments illustrated the fact that the course provided essential and practical knowledge and skills needed by staff to support programmes:

“It’s a very educative course and I wouldn’t add or change anything because it covers all fields of necessary information that one needs to know or learn.”

“The course has the right information that staff needs to perform their duties in what concerns to HACT framework.”

“The course is great as it provides practical examples. Content delivery was excellent, the activities were very engaging.”

“A very useful and in-time learning tool for programme and budget/finance staff.”

“This course helped me to understand and improve my knowledge about HACT and implications that it has in the Country Programme and the importance of joint operational with other UN agencies.”

STORY 2: “Ethics and Integrity at UNICEF” Monitoring training in UNICEF

OVERVIEW

The Ethics and Integrity at UNICEF online training launched in June 2015 is the first attempt to use Agora’s reporting features to accurately measure and enforce compliance to a mandatory training.



Pursuant to the Ethics Office’s mandate to strengthen an ethical culture throughout UNICEF, the purpose of the online training is to promote a common understanding of best ethical practices and standards of integrity.

The course is composed of a set of interactive modules including discussions, examples and case studies. The course introduces the obligations incumbent upon staff according to the Charter of the United Nations, the UN Staff Regulations and Rules, and other administrative issuances. It seeks to equip staff with the knowledge needed to make ethical decisions with confidence.

USAGE and COMPLIANCE METRICS

The overall compliance rate by the end of 2015 for staff on a FT and Permanent contract was 77%. Compliance among consultants was 66% but we cannot report on their location with certainty.

Region	Compliance rate as of October 31 st 2015 *	Compliance rate as of December 31 st 2015
MENA	56%	67%
EAPRO	74%	79%
CEE/CIS	56%	71%
WCAR	83%	88%
ROSA	63%	68%
LACRO	68%	79%
ESARO	62%	75%
All HQ	54%	62%

* Deadline given to staff to complete the course.

LESSONS LEARNED

This initiative was an occasion to learn a number of practical lessons:

- The Executive Director, Anthony Lake, was among the first learners to complete the course, to lead by example when asking all staff members to do the same. The response to this approach was very positive. Compliance in other parts of the organization also proved to also be closely related to the division's or office's senior management completion status.
- The Ethics Office was very invested in the monitoring of progress, provision of reports for offices and regions and communications / reminders.
- Field offices compliance rates were overall higher than for headquarters, though the difference narrowed close to the deadline and post the deadline.
- In spite of some difficulties in certain region, completion of the course appears to have been possible from all UNICEF offices.
- Dozens of end users were stuck towards the end of the course due to the poor navigation menu design. We should make sure that all similar courses have a very simple and clear navigation and flawless progress tracking.
- The Ethics office has been greatly involved in the roll out of the course and closely monitored completion statistics by regions.
- Good response to the deadline and high compliance rate: a total of 9964 staff (including interns & consultants) completed the course by 31 October.
- The course was completed in all three languages in which it was offered: English, French and Spanish. (7493 staff completed the course in English; 1968 staff completed the course in French and 503 staff completed the course in Spanish)

FEEDBACK FROM LEARNERS

Not everyone enjoyed the experience of completing a mandatory course. **Nevertheless, 96% of feedback from end users, collected through the anonymous post-course survey, was positive** (with 76% of colleagues even saying it was “very good” or “excellent”):

“The course was really engaging as it contains all ethical as well as unethical conducts the international civil servants should refrain and how best interest of the UN can be served to win the trust of all”

“The flow of the content and appropriateness of the examples are excellent. It's a good course and made you feel that what you did well as a UN staff counts; and that is why it is important that we remain true to the Vision of the United Nations!”

“The course is very spot on and appropriate for staff and so I would recommend every year, staff retake the course as a reminder of their ethical compliance.”

“The course was very informative, at the same time compact, had direct links to basic documents. There are possible scenarios (many of them from real life) that can assist to grasp information, I found the course very interactive and interesting.”

“Great course and it helped me to fill the gaps in my understanding about integrity and ethics specifically the details about how to deal with unethical issues and whom to consult. It was very empowering.”

STORY 3: “Ebola Safety e-learning module”: Responding rapidly to critical knowledge needs

OVERVIEW

During Q4 of 2014, WCARO Human Resources colleagues contacted the Agora team to look for ways to provide essential information about the Ebola virus disease and how to stay safe while going on mission in the region which was then on alert. An e-learning module was developed in two months, and it was officially launched in January 2015.

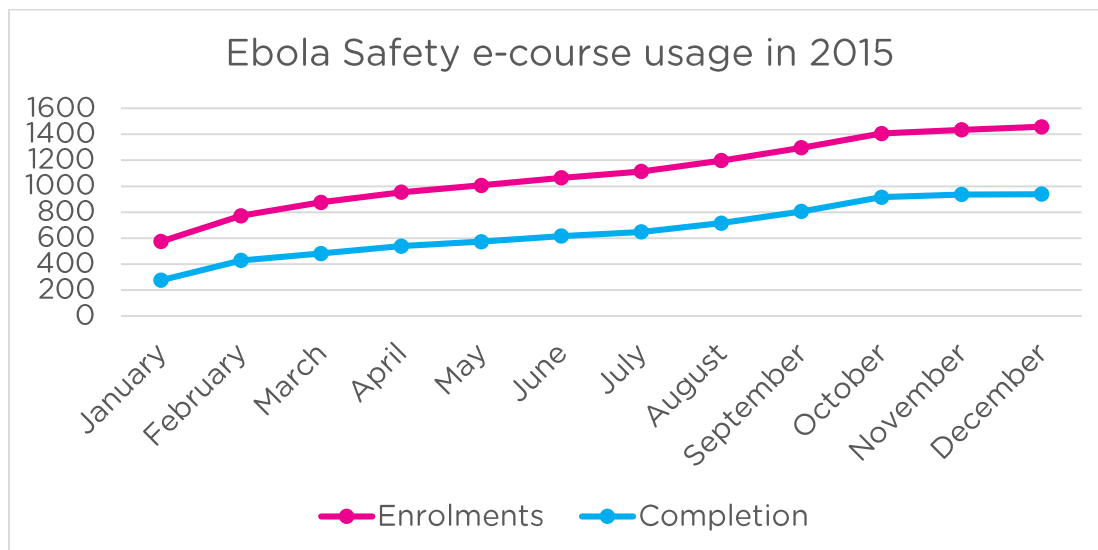


Completion of the course became a prerequisite for all staff travelling to the region or already working in the region.

It rapidly became popular with other populations of learners within UNICEF but also from outside. The course was shared with various UN agencies and NGOs who expressed the demand.

USAGE METRICS

In 2015, 1458 learners enrolled in the course on Agora, 939 of whom completed the course. Data is not available for learners who took the course on partners' platforms.



LESSONS LEARNED

- It was possible to move fast with a special vendor selection process based on other similar projects justifying the urgency of the request.
- The vendor did not prove to be able to respond to our needs as fast as expected. Consultants allocated to the project were following the same project management techniques as for other elearning initiatives, in spite of a contract that clearly requested for a rapid prototyping approach.
- Subject Matter Experts were not available to develop this basic module, so learning and development team had to research and source the content itself, before getting it validated by experts inside and outside the organization.
- We were not sure if a French and/or Spanish version of the course would be needed. The course made use of plain and simple English and it proved to be fine for the needs of staff involved in the Ebola response.
- While various other UN agencies and partner NGOs expressed interest in collaborating in the development of the course, we made the right choice moving ahead without waiting for their organizations were also struggling to involve subject matter experts.
- Once the course was ready, it was shared with all interested UN agencies and NGO partners without requesting the signature of a MoU. This proved to be an effective way to disseminate the course rapidly.

FEEDBACK FROM LEARNERS

While developed rapidly, the course was very well received by learners. 98% of learners indicated they would recommend the course to a colleague or a friend.

The overall learning experience was reported as follows:

Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
0.74 %	1.06%	17.75%	47.50%	32.94%

Here are some of the specific comments made by learners:

"This course is very important to staff to know how to prevent Ebola disease and then share with their beloved families and friends."

"More update materials should be shared with staff members on a regular basis. The approach given to handling this Ebola Virus should also be applied to other cases of viral diseases."

"It was an excellent course with important information about Ebola. Lack of information can lead people to panic and fear. Through this course, I now understand clearly everything about Ebola's transmission and prevention."

"I'm fully satisfied with this course and I thank very much those who contributed in preparing this course, which will help me protect myself, my family and community. Thank you so much for your valuable effort."

11- OTHER LESSONS LEARNED

ABOUT THE AGORA INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION:

11.1 - ISSUES AND CHALLENGES:

Major system upgrades

The system upgrade to Totara 2.7 has been significantly more labour intensive than anticipated. UNICEF had to issue a new contract, according to the terms of our agreement, but the implementing vendor did take responsibility for 60% of the work caused by the integration of certain custom developments as well as the automation of certain tasks for future upgrades.

The upgrade required a great amount of testing for both the Catalyst and UNICEF teams, leading to dozen of tickets and bug fixes to be managed.

Custom development and timelines

While the vendor has produced quality developments, most of the time on budget, it has not managed to provide realistic timelines. UNICEF hired a consultant to help with the scoping of custom development, but this had only partially solved the issue. We should consider this for future improvements of the platform.

Imperfect reporting capabilities

While the system allows the production of a great number of reports, data associated to some of the custom developments still needs to be better integrated in the reporting solution. We also found that the system is not very effective at managing aggregation of specific data sources (without having to export and manipulate data sets) or the selection of a specific data set before sharing reports or the systematic delegation of reports relevant to our field offices and divisional focal points.

Challenges to hire and retain talent to support the project

The Agora project team currently includes one fixed term position, a temporary appointment and two consultants. It has been very difficult to hire qualified temporary staff based in New York, which is why our two consultants are working remotely (from Tennessee, USA and from New Zealand). The T.A. only moved to NY a year ago, after two years as a consultant based in Rome.

The learning and technology market is very dynamic, with more positions opening than qualified and experienced personnel available.

Capturing learning activities happening at the local level

As the Publishing Workflows solution development and testing took significantly longer than expected (about 20 months longer than in the initial implementation plan), we were not able to effectively capture learning activities taking place at the office level. For Agora to truly capture and support all learning in UNICEF, this will need to be an area of focus for the project team in 2016.

Limited development planning culture

Few learners made use of a development plan in Agora in 2015, and the use of the development-planning box in ePAS or PAS form is usually limited to a few specific learning activities that do not clearly relate to performance improvement or career goals.

Limited mobile usage

In spite of a fully responsive interface, very few connections to the site were done through mobile phone. This may be due to the limited number of learning activities truly compatible/user-friendly on a mobile device or by the expectation from users that they would need a dedicated app to be able to use the platform on their smartphone.

11.2- SUCCESSES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

A strong brand

The use and promotion of the brand “Agora” has been effective. The brand is useful in that it disconnects the product from a particular team, for it to become truly a portal for all offices of UNICEF. It is now a recognized name both in UNICEF and outside, with partners. It is associated with bright colors and engaging designs. We have also made sure to promote the idea that Agora is responsive by referring to mobile, tablets, and building responsive email communications.

An innovative and user-friendly platform

Another success of the initiative has been to position Agora as a highly innovative portal. We have created a number of original development that have attracted the interest of other agencies and actors outside the UN, such as the new learning catalogue, the Agora Offline player, the publishing workflows, the Learning Channels, and dozens of smaller developments.

Contributing back to the Totara core product

Several of the custom developments of UNICEF/Catalyst were integrated into the core code of Totara 2.7, such as the reports delegation solution or the menu management plugin. Yammer embed code was shared back to the Moodle LMS community. Those contributions will help UNICEF make the Agora initiative most sustainable, and ease future upgrades of the system.

Partnerships for content

Through the signature of MoUs (based on a standard template created by UNICEF) agreement were signed with various UN and NGO partners for the exchange of existing self-learning modules. The exchange of materials can bring important benefits for UNICEF:

- Avoid creating courses that are similar to existing courses from partners.
- Ease access to knowledge about how partners approach specific issues.
- Share UNICEF's best practice with partners, and make it easy to access through their internal systems.

Partnerships for system upgrades and maintenance

Catalyst initiated discussions with several potential clients about the use of the Offline Player, one of the main innovative components of the Agora initiative. As Totara is currently not interested in maintaining and distributing the offline player, interested partners can be referred to Catalyst for now. Other UN and non-UN organization expressed interest in using some of the customizations made to Agora such as the report sharing capabilities, the Publishing workflows or the revised learning catalogue.

We will continue looking for ways to get development adopted, supported and improved by partners in 2016.

Reaching all categories of staff in UNICEF, in all regions

One of the best surprises of this first year of implementation is that Agora is reaching learners in all parts of the world. Most staff members have had a chance to use to portal, and most of them regular visit the Agora portal.



LOOKING FORWARD...

*By Ian Thorpe, Chief, Learning and Knowledge Exchange
& Abel Henry, Agora Project Manager*

Early 2016 the Agora team joined the newly created Learning and Knowledge Exchange team in the Division of Data Research and Policy. This transition helps strengthen the synergies between learning and knowledge exchange and it enables us to provide a comprehensive and complementary set of learning and knowledge exchange solutions to staff and partners focusing around the UNICEF Strategic Plan and the SDGs for children. Based on this new approach and building on the experience highlighted in this report, **the following developments are expected in 2016 for the Agora initiative:**

New **individual development plans**, integrated with the Achieve performance management system will allow more structured individual development and better mapping of learning intentions at the local, regional and global levels.

The project team will **improve and personalize communication about learning and development opportunities**. While still primarily targeting UNICEF staff, we will also be expanding our outreach to share relevant learning opportunities with external users / partners.

Thematic learning channels will be further developed as a means to guide users to relevant learning resources in a particular area as well as to integrate formal learning with informal peer-to-peer learning taking place on Yammer.

To support and mobilize individual UNICEF offices, the team will also systematize **the creation and delegation of custom learning and development reports**.

Learning activities will continue to be sourced and/or developed to improve knowledge and skills that are critical to the realization of UNICEF's Strategic Plan. Projects relate to areas such as climate change, child rights, civil society organizations, results-based management, urbanization, WASH, resource mobilization and immunization. We will also be working to expand the catalogue to include learning events, courses and resources created by UNICEF offices across the globe.

The project team will further **develop partnerships with NGOs and UN organizations** to access content developed by partners, and to disseminate UNICEF courses through their learning portals. We will also develop partnerships with organizations using the same learning system, to collaborate on developments and share costs of maintenance of features developed by UNICEF.

Reports data and analysis of the user survey will be used to **improve guidance materials, training, users' login process and catalogue navigation**. Based on availability of time and resources, improvements will be made to the Agora Offline player and **new features will be developed** relating to learner recommendation solutions, reporting and integration with other UNICEF systems (Onboarding platform, Skype for Business, SharePoint).

For more information

If you have additional questions or queries related to this report, please email us at agora@unicef.org or reach out directly to:



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