AGORA

AGORA
ANNUAL REPORT 2017

unicef
for every child

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▲▲▲ 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 in 2015, Agora provides personalized access to over a thousand learning opportunities. The portal also supports career development and development planning through innovative online tools.

DATA RESEARCH +POLICY

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 AGORA.UNICEF.ORG

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▲▲▲ FOREWORD

IAN THORPE
Chief, Learning and
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Division of Data, Research
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UNICEF

COMMUNICATION FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

2017 was another year of growth for Agora, with more users, more activity from these users, and more course completions. We also introduced dozens of new features and innovations which you can learn more about in this report.

Among the various activities undertaken this year, I would like to particularly highlight the work done by the team to ensure that information about courses and other learning activities was reaching the right people. This was done through targeted outreach campaigns, and improvements to the Agora catalogue to help learners find the right development opportunities.

A "communication toolkit" was built to help owners of learning initiatives to plan and implement communication campaigns for their courses. It has been very well received by partners both in UNICEF and other UN agencies.

We continued to keep staff informed of new learning opportunities through our monthly newsletter. We also increased our use of social media to reach out to internal and external audiences, on Yammer, Twitter, Facebook and specialised development and humanitarian aid sites.

Based on your feedback received via the 2016 annual user survey and other channels, we overhauled Agora's catalogue and search engine to make it easier for users to find relevant learning opportunities. Among other changes, indexing rules were revisited, we added consideration of start date or publication date, we introduce a "promoted course" solution to improve the visibility of key activities, we added clear indications of which courses are provided by UNICEF, the UN system or another provider, we revised the topics taxonomy to align with the new strategic plan, and we enabled features for a more intuitive free text search. In parallel we also identified hundreds of outdated and/or unpopular courses and removed them from the catalogue.

In 2018, the work coordinated by DRP on the creation of a new UNICEF Learning Strategy should be finalized. We anticipate that the strategy will both affirm the importance of a strong learning platform and innovative technologies, and provide direction for the phase 2 of the Agora initiative in terms of solutions and services.

I hope you will enjoy this report, which highlight some aspects of the story of learning in UNICEF as captured through Agora. I do invite you to visit Agora regularly to check out the latest learning opportunities. If you have any comments or questions on this report, or if you are interested in how to make the most effective use of the platform, don't hesitate to contact us at agora@unicef.org

IAN THORPE

AGORA 2017 AT A GLANCE

USAGE ANALYTICS
P.9

32,467
ACTIVE LEARNERS
▶ *18% increase from 2016*

Including 16,950 external users
(52% vs 46% in 2016)

635,909
SESSIONS
▶ *27% increase from 2016*

52,713
LEARNING ACTIVITIES
COMPLETED
▶ *31% increase from 2016*

37,675 completions (71%)
were done by UNICEF learners
& 15,038 (29%) by external users.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENTS

*To serve the needs of
stakeholders worldwide...*
P.21

24 NEW CUSTOM
UNICEF COURSES
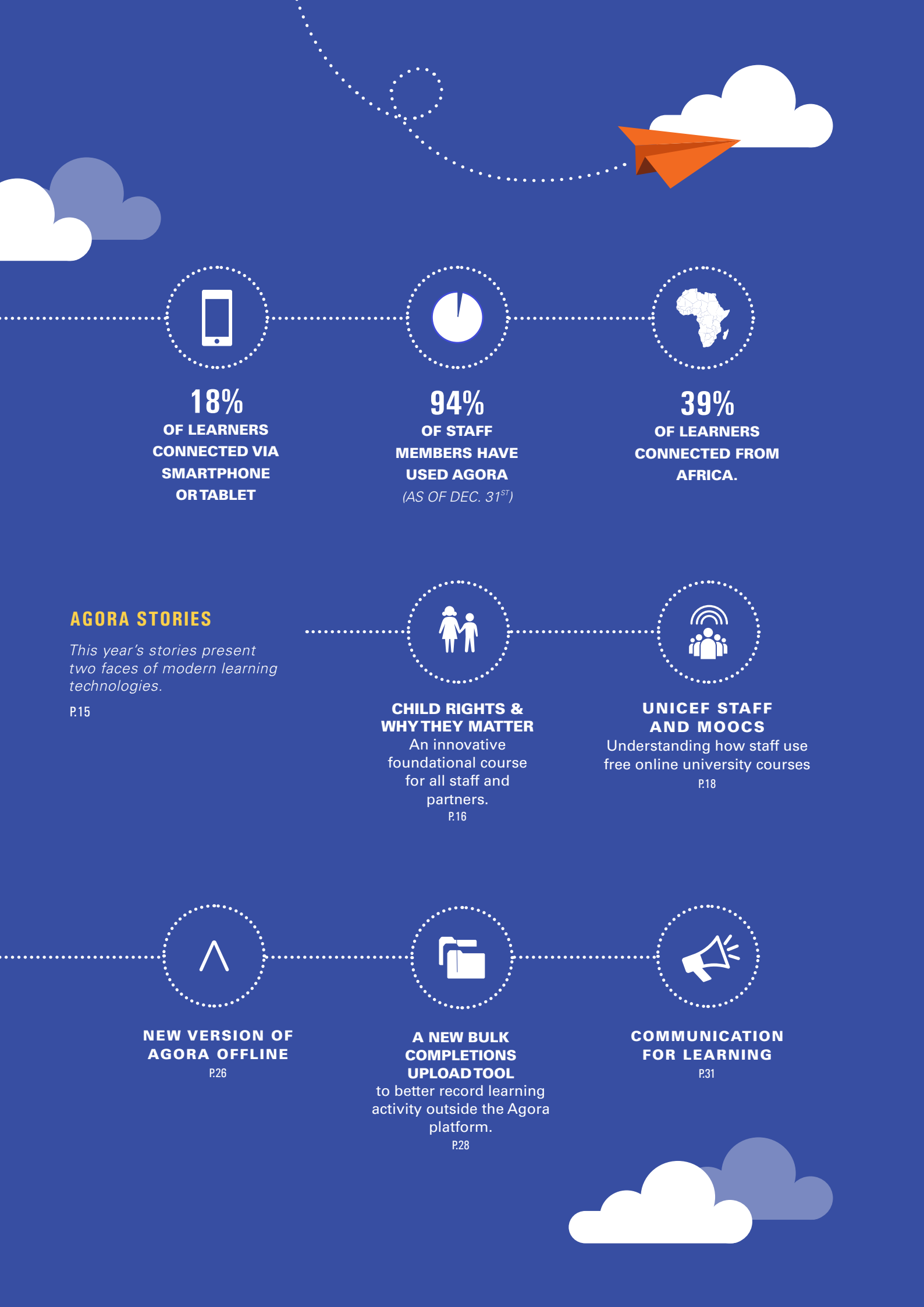and programmes were
published.
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**IMPROVED
MULTILINGUAL
SUPPORT**
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**A REVAMPED
CATALOGUE**
for an improved
searching and
browsing
experience.
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18%

OF LEARNERS CONNECTED VIA SMARTPHONE OR TABLET

94%

OF STAFF MEMBERS HAVE USED AGORA

(AS OF DEC. 31ST)

39%

OF LEARNERS CONNECTED FROM AFRICA.

AGORA STORIES

This year's stories present two faces of modern learning technologies.

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CHILD RIGHTS & WHY THEY MATTER
An innovative foundational course for all staff and partners.
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UNICEF STAFF AND MOOCS
Understanding how staff use free online university courses
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NEW VERSION OF AGORA OFFLINE
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A NEW BULK COMPLETIONS UPLOAD TOOL
to better record learning activity outside the Agora platform.
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COMMUNICATION FOR LEARNING
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ANALYTICS

▶ 2017 OVERVIEW

The number of active users increased.
Active learners connected more often and from more devices.

32,467
ACTIVE USERS
▲ 18% FROM 2016

*This includes 16,950
non-UNICEF learners (52%)*

145,538
DEVICES
▲ 45% FROM 2016

635,909
SESSIONS
▲ 27% FROM 2016

*AVERAGE OF
19.6 SESSIONS / USER
1,742 SESSIONS / DAY*

▶ SOURCES OF TRAFFIC

As in 2016, Agora was accessed from all
countries in the world. Without exception.

EUROPE
13%

ASIA
30%

AMERICAS
15%

AFRICA
39%

OCEANIA
●
1%
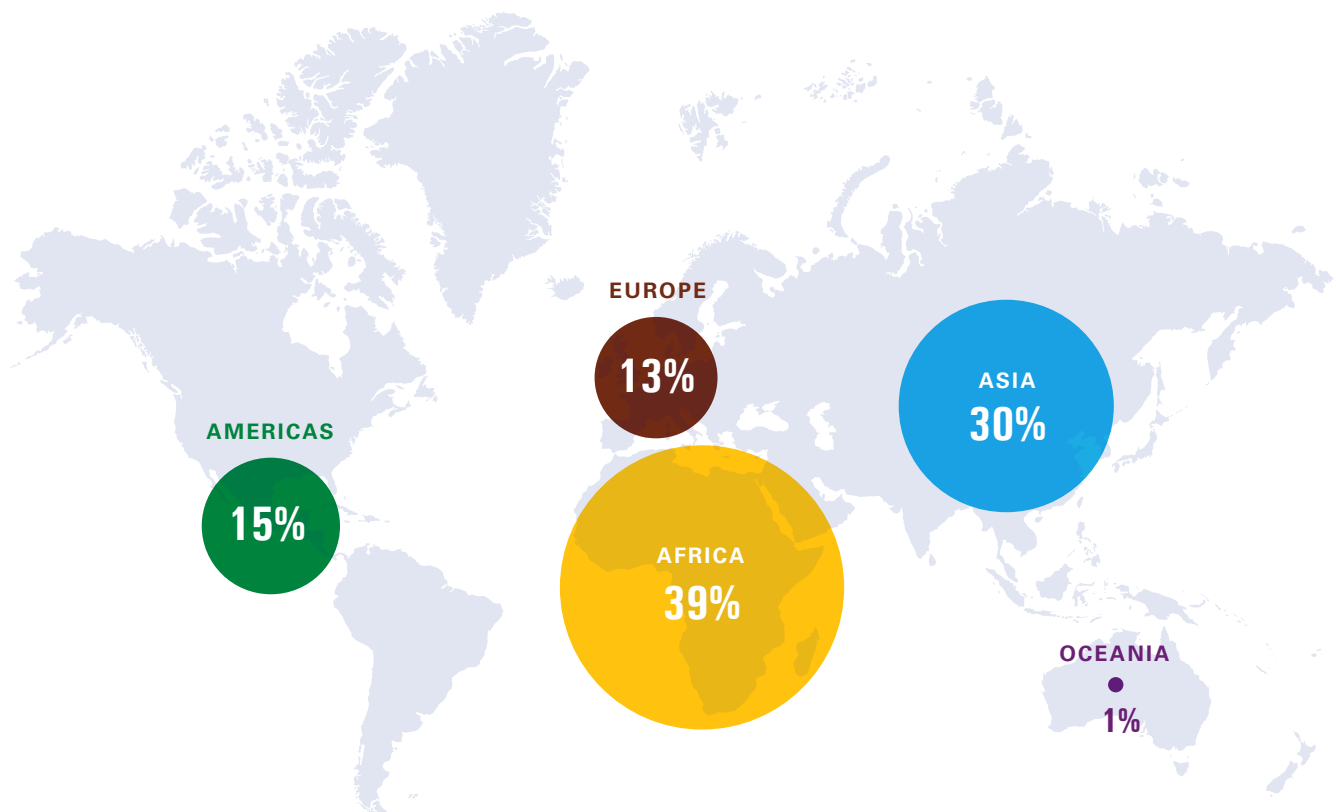
Distribution of connections by continent *(Based on Google Analytics data)*

Comment: traffic grew on all continents, particularly in Africa and Asia.

▸ HOW LEARNERS ACCESSED AGORA

It remains difficult to have definite figures for mobile and tablet usage, but all points to an increase in the number of connections via mobile / touch screen devices in 2017.

82%
DESKTOP / LAPTOP

8%
SMARTPHONE

10%
TABLET

AVERAGE LOAD TIME

On average, it took 5.96 seconds for a user to open Agora pages.

It is the second year in a row that we measure longer page load times. Overall site performance will need to be a priority for the phase 2 of development of the platform which will start in 2018.

▸ 2017 LEARNING ACTIVITIES ENROLMENTS AND COMPLETIONS

126,130
COURSE ENROLMENTS
▲ 8% FROM 2016

52,713
COURSE COMPLETIONS
▲ 31% FROM 2016

71% of these completions were done by UNICEF learners

860
ACTIVITIES FROM THE CATALOGUE WERE USED
▲ 19% FROM 2016

▸ THE FIVE MOST POPULAR COURSES IN 2017

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

5,823 COMPLETIONS

Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Power

3,154 COMPLETIONS

Results-Based Management (RBM) e-Course

3,010 COMPLETIONS

UN Human Rights Responsibilities

2,484 COMPLETIONS

Basic Security in the Field II

2,075 COMPLETIONS

NOTE: while the above data is for all users, a large majority of those completions were done by UNICEF learners.

▶ DEMOGRAPHICS OF UNICEF LEARNERS

BY CATEGORY OF STAFF

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF STAFF WHO VISITED AGORA	NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES COMPLETED	NUMBER OF COMPLETION PER USER (AVERAGE)
Senior Managers (D, USG, ASG)	74 %	117	1.08
IP	100%	7,959	2.53
NO	97%	14,936	3.46
G	82%	17,452	3.45
Consultants & interns	Data unavailable	1,946	Data unavailable

The number of activities completed in 2017 per user has increased for all categories of staff.

BY REGION

Overall usage distribution is similar to that observed in 2015 and 2016. New York Headquarters continues to catch up with regions, but other HQ offices lag behind.

|	NUMBER OF STAFF WHO VISITED AGORA	NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES COMPLETED	NUMBER OF COMPLETIONS PER USER (AVERAGE)
REGIONS			
ECAR	695	1618	2.7
EAPR	1113	3170	2.9
ESAR	2705	6061	2.4
LACR	809	1541	2.1
MENA	1658	3327	2.3
ROSA	1571	3127	2.0
WCAR	2672	5432	2.0
LARGE HQ OFFICES			
Copenhagen (SD)	341	523	1.5
Geneva (PFP)	186	156	0.8
New York	1253	2480	2.0

The use of development plans on Agora has decreased in all regions as staff members understand it is not a mandatory step of the PER process. We may also need to deliver more information and training sessions about the value of development plans and development plans related reports.

	% STAFF WITH GOAL(S) IN THEIR PLAN	% STAFF WITH LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN THEIR PLAN
ECAR	50%	63%
EAPR	38%	71%
ESAR	35%	49%
LACR	23%	47%
MENA	27%	45%
ROSA	34%	57%
WCAR	34%	57%
Copenhagen	25%	33%
HQ (all but SD)	16%	29%
GLOBAL	31%	48%

BY GENDER

The gender repartition measured on Agora in 2017 is consistent with the overall evolution of the workforce in UNICEF: as of 31 December 2017, 53% of staff members were males and 47% were females.

53% MALE
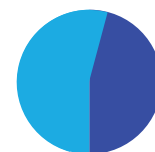
47% FEMALE

AN ANALYSIS OF COURSE EVALUATIONS

For all activities published in Agora, an evaluation form asks learners to provide feedback and an assessment of the quality of their learning experience. **Mid-2017, we analyzed the 50,931 evaluation forms relating to the 86 UNICEF custom online courses published on Agora.**

Most learners who complete the course do submit feedback because this is required to access the course certificate. Evaluation forms all include a standard set of questions, and optionally a few additional ones based on the nature of the learning activities. We ask learners to rate their overall satisfaction with the activity, then follow up with questions on duration, methodologies, relevance and quality. Learners are encouraged to provide us with both - quantitative and qualitative feedback.

We were pleased to see that the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

98% of learners who complete UNICEF online courses indicate that they **"would recommend the course they took to a colleague or a friend."**

81.8% of learners said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience. 98% indicated that they would recommend the course they took to colleagues or friends. Learners found the content to be "precise and to the point" as well as "short, but just long enough to give required information".

Average "overall experience" rating

(Out of 5, with 1 being *poor* and 5 being *excellent*)

4.1

1   2   3   4
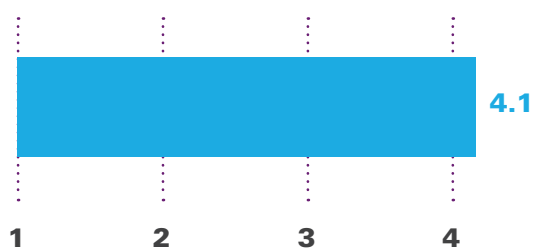
Looking at the satisfaction ratings, we see very little variation between courses. No course is very poorly rated. The most popular courses are almost all on immunization related topics. They are highly appreciated for their practical content that is easily applied to field activities.

In less popular courses, comments frequently called for more real-life examples, case studies, videos and practical hands-on exercises. In open feedback, learners frequently called for more communication about learning opportunities, within UNICEF and with partners, stating that it would benefit their work.

What do we do with detailed evaluation data?

Regular monitoring of evaluations, in combination with metrics such as the ratio of learners starting a course who complete it, allows us to identify urgent and/or technical issues with courses. The Agora team also provides course owners (*i.e.* technical teams related to the topic of the course and/or who produced the course) with direct access to course evaluations data.

PARTNERSHIPS:
UNICEF COURSES ON OTHER PLATFORMS

While most UNICEF online courses are available to external users on Agora, we also partnered with various UN agencies and International NGOs to allow them to host UNICEF content on their own learning platform. **By sharing our courses, we want to facilitate their access by reaching learners on platforms they are already using.** Having partners use our learning activities contributes to the **promotion of UNICEF's approach within the wider international humanitarian action and development ecosystem**. The Memoranda of Understanding that we signed also allow UNICEF to host relevant partner content on Agora.

PARTNER	# OF UNICEF COURSE COMPLETIONS
Disaster Ready	3213
Humanitarian Leadership Academy (HLA)	1007
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)	767
UNHCR	11
LINGOs	*Not communicated*

5 MOST POPULAR COURSES ON PARTNER PLATFORMS
Introduction to Child protection
Introduction to Nutrition
Evaluation in Humanitarian Settings
Introduction to Psychological Support
Introduction to WASH

* OCHA has published UNICEF courses in Dec 2017 – no course completions were recorded yet.

Overall, use of UNICEF content on partner platforms is lower than we expected. On that basis, we will not invest time to develop such partnerships in 2018.

A LOW-MAINTENANCE SELF-SERVICE APPROACH

► **A custom report allows the Agora team to provide partners with direct access to the online modules that UNICEF is willing to share. The report can be sorted by date and it provides access to the course information details (partners can copy and adapt as needed).**

► **MoUs guarantee that the courses will be distributed for free, that they will be updated or withdrawn within a few days. UNICEF can obtain data about the usage upon request.**

STORIES

CHILD RIGHTS AND WHY THEY MATTER

A foundational online course for staff and partners

▲▲▲ OVERVIEW OF THE INITIATIVE

This short course "Child Rights and why they matter" aims to engage all UNICEF and National Committee personnel - and eventually partners - in a common dialogue around child rights, as they relate to UNICEF's Mission, in a light-hearted and engaging way. Lasting just over an hour, the course is made up of key messages illustrated by colourful cartoons, and videos of UNICEF staff and partners from around the world.

While a number of advanced learning packages were available on how to implement child rights in programming efforts and/or policies, this module answers the need for a basic introductory package.

The e-module was developed through a collaboration between DRP, PD and PFP.

A MOBILE-FIRST APPROACH TO LEARNING

This course was built as a responsive HTML5 package. This means that the layout of the course is optimized for use on any device; smartphones, tablets or computers. The course does not require the use of Adobe Flash Player, which modern browsers will progressively phase out.

Each section introduces 'key messages' illustrated by colorful cartoons, followed by a short video providing more information. The videos feature UNICEF personnel and partners, children, teachers and members of the general public from around the world. The videos are available with or without audio description.

IN FIGURES: WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED SO FAR?

562
ONLINE COURSE
COMPLETIONS

1,802
ENROLMENTS IN
THE ONLINE COURSE

These figures are still modest. In 2018, the course will be introduced in the staff onboarding programme and in other learning paths. The ratio enrolment / completion is lower than for other courses. As user feedback is very positive, we believe that this it due to the very open / non-linear navigation which makes it harder for learners to identify sections they have not fully completed / visited.

IN THE WORDS OF OUR LEARNERS

The feedback received from learners is very encouraging.

© UNICEF/UNI74927/Pirozzi

80% OF LEARNERS RATED THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH THE COURSE AS **VERY GOOD, OR EXCELLENT**

"Really well-presented course in plain language. Especially liked the short videos of UNICEF staff. Glad to see that UNICEF finally has a clear, short, to the point course on children's rights and the child rights approach."

"Congratulations. Job well done. This material will be very helpful both for me personally and in the projects that I am working on."

"The course is very relevant to my work as child protection case worker, to understand child rights and apply them well"

"Now I feel myself confident to talk about Child Rights."

"This course is very good and I recommend that it be made mandatory for all staff since UNICEF has the mandate to promote and protect child rights"

98% of learners mentioned that they could recommend this course to a friend - one of the highest ratings for this question.

LESSONS LEARNED

► The different navigation approach made it challenging for some learners to successfully complete the course. We need to further develop best practices for responsive design navigation.

► The videos included in such responsive design online course appear to be essential to create an engaging product, especially as other types of animations and voice over cannot be easily included in responsive products.

► This course was used to pilot various elements of the "learning communication toolkit". This contributed to the reasonably high number of enrolments in only a few months.

UNICEF STAFF & MOOCS

Leveraging publicly available online courses from universities

▲▲▲ WHY ARE MOOCS RELEVANT FOR UNICEF?

Massive Open Online Courses or "MOOCs" are online courses offering open and unlimited participation. In addition to study materials such as videos, readings, and problem sets, MOOCs provide interactive user forums that help build a community for students, professors, and teaching assistants (TAs).

MOOCs have transformed personal and professional development by providing no cost or low cost access to courses from some of the most reputable universities and institutions. Many of these MOOCs deal with subjects that are relevant to the work of UNICEF´s staff members such as: public health, education, management and leadership, urban programming, WASH, human rights, climate change and sustainable development, migration, data, humanitarian issues and much more.

▲▲▲ MOOCS ON AGORA

There are thousands of MOOCs available each year, and it can be hard to keep up with new courses and/or new sessions. Every month, the Agora project team reviews the main MOOC platforms. Currently these are Coursera, FutureLearn, Edx, Open2Study, FUN, the SDG Academy and Miríada X.

All MOOCs that appear to be relevant for UNICEF are then referenced on Agora via a dedicated template. All MOOCs are indexed so that they appear in relevant searches. The MOOC page on Agora allows users to:

- Bookmark the learning activity in their record of learning on Agora
- Identify colleagues who are also interested in the MOOC
- Access a dedicated forum, where staff members can safely discuss the relevance of the course content to their work and the work of the organization.
- Access the relevant MOOC platform on which the course is delivered
- Upload a certificate or evidence of course completion to validate completion of the activity on Agora.

Once published, all MOOCs are listed in the monthly Agora newsletter, emailed to all staff members.

As of December 2017, over 250 MOOCs had been referenced on Agora and promoted to staff members.

HOW ARE MOOCS USED BY UNICEF STAFF? KEY LESSONS FROM OUR SURVEY

In December 2017, we invited the 4,956 UNICEF staff members who had bookmarked one or more MOOCs on Agora to participate in a short survey. We wanted to learn more about which MOOCs staff actually started and/or completed, and find out about learners' experience(s). 427 colleagues responded.

This confirmed that MOOCs are used and useful to UNICEF staff:

- 91% completed at least one MOOC;
- 70% actively participated in the MOOC(s) they had bookmarked on Agora;
- 42% participated in more than 5 MOOCs;
- 83% received a certificate of completion (only 286 are uploaded on Agora).
- 90% would be interested in participating in a MOOC in the future;

We also wanted to find out if the time invested in referencing MOOCs on Agora, and communicating about them in the monthly newsletter, was useful:

- 82% learned about at least one MOOC they participated in through Agora;
- 81% found the shortlist of MOOCs in the monthly newsletter useful;

WHICH MOOCS ARE POPULAR*?

5 MOST POPULAR MOOC TITLES *	5 MOST POPULAR TOPICS AMONG UNICEF STAFF *
High-impact business writing	Management & related
The art of negotiation	Communication
Excel for data analysis and visualization	Health
Project management: the basics	Data analysis
Evaluating social programmes	Sustainable development

And at the bottom of the list... a few surprises. MOOCs on emerging issues such as Climate Change and Urban only attracted a few learners. MOOCs on gender issues raised the least interest.
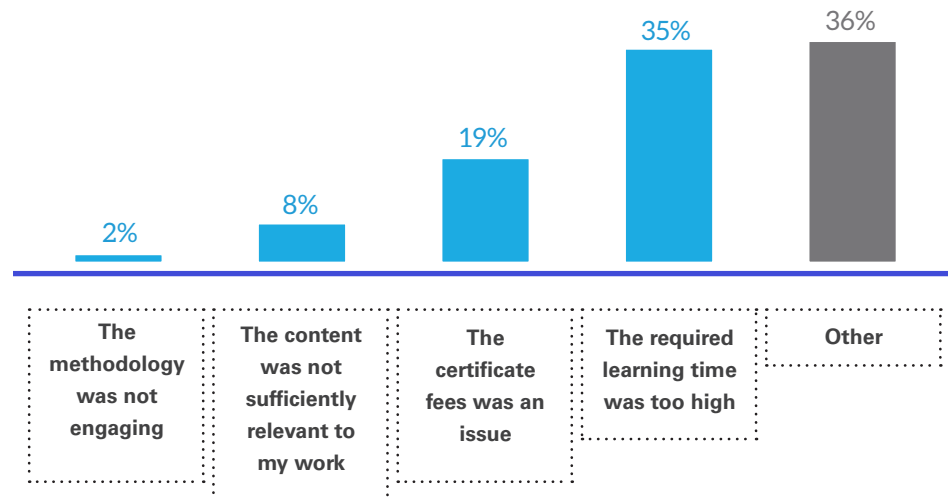
* NOTE ON UNICEF CO-PRODUCED MOOCS

The most popular courses are actually the two MOOCs co-produced by UNICEF on Social Norms (with UPenn) and on Early Childhood Development (with NYU), each with over 600 learners from UNICEF. These courses benefited from large communication campaigns so we focused our survey on other (non-UNICEF) MOOCs about which we knew less. More UNICEF MOOCs are in production or planned.

" WHAT ABOUT CHALLENGES?

We also asked colleagues who had not participated in or not completed a MOOC what the main reason(s) were. Here is the overview of their answers:

The methodology was not engaging	The content was not sufficiently relevant to my work	The certificate fees was an issue	The required learning time was too high	Other
2%	8%	19%	35%	36%

For *"Other"* issues, colleagues mentioned that the dates of the course were not suitable, that they lacked the discipline required, that they got technical issues, lack of support, a lack of knowledge about what MOOCs are, but mostly they listed many other time availability and time management related constraints.

✎ LESSONS LEARNED

► **We will continue to publish a selection of MOOCs on Agora, and advertise them in the monthly newsletter.**

► **Many learners who obtain a certificate of completion for a MOOC do not record it on Agora. We might need to better communicate about this feature and its benefits**

► **While we thought that MOOCs related to topics such as education, health, social inclusion or child rights would be the most useful, we found out that UNICEF staff are very interested in courses about management and communication.**

► **Based on the review of challenges, we should communicated better about what MOOCs are, strategies to make time to complete MOOCs, and explore further ways to help colleagues obtain completion certificates when it matters. UNDP and UNFPA have been piloting solution to allow staff members to purchase such certificates - we should find out more about their experience so far.**

PROJECT
DEVELOPMENTS

1   LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES PUBLISHED

The Agora team has developed or contributed to the development of 59 new online learning activities in 2017.

AMONG MORE THAN 300 ACTIVITIES PUBLISHED IN ACTIVITIES PUBLISHED IN 2017, THERE WERE:

24
NEW UNICEF CUSTOM ONLINE LEARNING PACKAGES

12
COURSES TRANSLATIONS PUBLISHED

15
NEW COURSES FROM UN AND INGO PARTNERS

8
THEMATIC LEARNING CHANNELS

Below are the new UNICEF e-learning titles and key new courses from partners. New translations are not listed.

The SEO and Web Accessibility courses were developed in-house, as mobile friendly online courses.

COMMUNICATION AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE:

- Search Engine Optimization - SEO (UNICEF)
- Web Accessibility (UNICEF)
- Communication for Development (UNICEF)
- Experience Capitalization for Continuous Learning (FAO)
- Learning for Digital Transformation [*Learning channel*]

© UNICEF/UN019109/Rich
The Fundamentals of Humanitarian Action was developed directly on Agora. It is composed of various resources, media and activities and it can be completed on a computer, tablet or smartphone.

HUMANITARIAN ACTION:

- Fundamentals of Humanitarian Action (UNICEF)
- LAC Humanitarian Action programme (UNICEF)
- Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response (UNICEF)
- OCHA foundation modules (OCHA)
- Introduction to the Core Humanitarian Standard (HLA)
- Beyond Response: Better Preparedness for Environmental Emergencies (OCHA)
- Child Protection in Emergencies (Plan International)
- Public Health in Emergencies (IFRC)
- Measles Control in Humanitarian Settings
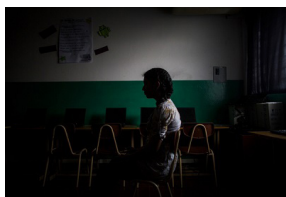
© UNICEF/UN018669/ Zehbrauskas
The PSEA course became one of UNICEF's all-staff mandatory courses.

© UNICEF/UN052531/Ayene
The Climate Change and Children course was developed by UNITAR with materials from UNICEF's Climate Change team in DRP.

AGORA's catalogue now offers a wide range of courses on Immunization, available to staff and popular among partners.

ETHICS AND HUMAN RIGHTS:

- Child Rights and why they matter (UNICEF)
- Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (UNICEF / UNPD / UNFPA)
- Child Rights Matter [*Learning channel*]

SECTORS / TECHNICAL TRAINING:

- Health economics and Financing (UNICEF)
- Resource mobilization (UNICEF)
- 20 courses on fleet management (UNHCR)
- Gender in Food and Nutrition Security (FAO)
- Understanding the dimensions of sustainable development (UNSSC)
- Climate Change and Children (UNICEF / UNITAR)
- Driving UNICEF: for drivers and fleet managers [*Learning channel*]
- RBM – delivering results for children [*Learning channel*]
- Achieve Performance Management [*Learning channel*]
- Administration Excellence [*Learning channel*]
- Wash Enabling Environment [*Learning channel*]

IMMUNIZATION:

- High Quality Measles and Rubella Supplementary Immunization Activities (UNICEF)
- Planning for Immunization (UNICEF / WHO)
- Adverse Effects Following immunization (UNICEF)
- Cold Chain Logistics and Vaccine Management during Polio Supplementary Immunization Activities (UNICEF)
- Vaccines work [*Learning channel*]

▶ HOW ARE ONLINE LEARNING ACTIVITIES DEVELOPED IN UNICEF?

For most UNICEF online learning projects, the Agora Team provides technical support upon request from subject matter experts from a UNICEF office or division. This may include recommendations on choice of technologies, high-level instructional design, and project management. The Agora Team manages and provides access to various Long-Term Agreements with online learning service providers, allowing rapid response to demand, using vetted vendors who have experience working with UNICEF. Finally, testing and set up on the Agora platform is usually managed centrally by the Agora Team. The team is also more directly involved in strategic cross-sectoral and high priority learning initiatives.

Contact us at agora@unicef.org to find out more.

IMPROVED MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT
More localization of content and a translation of the site

While the Agora catalogue launched with content in various languages, the offer remained fairly limited, and the site only provided "translation assistance' via Google Translate for users who could not navigate the site in English. In 2017 a lot was done to improve services offered to learners speaking languages other than English..

AGORA IN FRENCH

The platform and 98% of its features are now available in French. Based on this first full localization we anticipate that the addition of other languages will be much easier / faster.

Screen capture of the home page in French. The slider can also be customised to address different audiences based on language preferences.

SCALING UP THE LOCALIZATION OF UNICEF CUSTOM COURSES

Leveraging localization services included in Long Term Arrangements (LTAs) established by the Agora team, various Divisions and Country offices were able to work directly with vendors to translate and adapt existing UNICEF courses to meet their needs. 12 of these projects were completed in 2017: Welcome to UNICEF in French and Spanish, Climate Change for Children in French and Spanish, HACT in French and Spanish, Ethics in Evidence Generation in Spanish and French, RBM in French and Spanish (managed by the Agora team), Multi-dose Vial Policy in French, Procurement at UNICEF in French. In addition, many courses from partners were also obtained in other languages and published.

IN FOCUS
A REVAMPED CATALOGUE & SEARCH ENGINE
Addressing learners feedback

Having a large catalogue of learning activities can make it hard for learners to find specific activities or simply browser and discover opportunities of interest. Building on the feedback received in 2015 and 2016, we conducted a major review of the catalogue and introduced various new features to streamline content and improve search.

IMPROVING THE SEARCHING AND BROWSING EXPERIENCE

91% OF LEARNERS USE TEXT BASED SEARCHES TO BROWSE THE CATALOGUE

The search engine was upgraded to the latest version of "SOLR". This allowed us to benefit from advanced features such as **search suggestions** when no results exist for a specific entry. We reviewed all rules determining the results for searches, for example giving more visibility to UNICEF content or increasing the role of tags. We also introduced **new date fields and date based rules to highlight courses published** recently and/or starting soon, while burying old or completed learning activities.

We had introduced color coding of activities based on the topics family**,** but this classification was unclear to most users so we replaced it with a simpler **color coding indicating the type of provider**: blue for UNICEF activities, green for activities from the UN system, and gray of activities from other vendors or partners.

We also needed a solution to make courses of high relevance and/or importance even more visible to learners, especially by default (when no search has been entered and the user is browsing the catalogue). For that we created **a course promotion solution** which allow us to boost a course in search results.

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

The Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) e-learning course is mandatory for all UN Funds and Programmes Personnel

Advanced e-course
UNICEF activity

Provider: UNICEF
Language: English

Learn more

Screenshot of a promoted course displayed on the default catalogue page. This course was made mandatory in Q1 of 2017. The orange highlight and star let's the learner know that this course is currently promoted and the blue label indicated that it was created or customized by UNICEF.

REVIEWING CLASSIFICATIONS AND ARCHIVING

On the catalogue administration side, **the list of topics was reviewed** to better fit with both the new Strategic Plan, and the list of activities available. We introduced a new "archive candidates" report which helped us **archive several hundreds of courses and activities** that were not used or no longer relevant.

Finally we further invested time in **creating learning channels**, which are a more effective way of browsing learning activities on selected topics.

2 NEW AND IMPROVED FEATURES

2.1
AGORA OFFLINE
PLAYER UPDATES

The new version of the player includes a few navigation improvements, such as a direct link to find more courses compatible with Agora Offline. The theme was updated. We also added features to track how many course downloads are initiated, how many are successfully completed, and how many course synchronizations (i.e. saving progress on the Agora web portal) are performed. But the main feature improvement is that it is now possible to synchronise activity progress more than once, providing more flexibility and security for learners.

2.2
SOCIAL MEDIA & EMAIL
SHARING SOLUTION

We wanted to make it easy for learners to share specific course summary page with contacts who may be interested. On all course summary page, learners can now use new sharing options to quickly post to Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin or send an email.

Clicking on a one of the buttons pre-populates a post with introductory text adapted to the each channel and a link to the activity page.

The social media sharing options are primarily aiming at boosting promotion of the site with externals audiences / partners, while the email option provides a quick way for staff members to share information about a course with a colleague.

2.3
PERSONAL
LEARNING
SOLUTION
IMPROVEMENTS

We managed to overcome significant technical challenges to provide a more consistent end-user experience for personal learning improvements. The "status" that learners declare in the form can now be linked with the activity status on Agora. Likewise, the completion date now reflects the date declared by the user rather than the date they uploaded their certificate in Agora. It is now also possible for a learner to delete a personal learning activity.

These improvements will make for more accurate records of learning, and reduce the need for training and support.

2.4
QUICK VIEW
SOLUTION
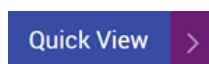
Some simple learning resources, also described as "bite-size" or "micro-learning" activities, do not really require a formal registration process. They should be easy to access. We introduced the "Quick view" button which allows seamless access to such resources, from the catalogue or via a direct URL. Registration is recorded in the back-end, but the learner is given the option to unenrol to remove the activity from her/his record of learning.

2.5
THEME UPDATE

Agora was among the first UNICEF sites to introduce elements of the new brand guidelines. We abandoned the "magenta" as accent colour and changed the "Agora" project logo.

2.6
MULTIPLE CERTIFICATES & DIRECT CERTIFICATE

Answering a request from users and content creators, we also modified the way certificates were issued on Agora, to allow multiple certificates to be included in a single a course. We added a quick link to certificates on the record of learning page. The new solution also supports certificates in French, and editing of the activity name appearing on the certificate (previously set to strictly match the course name on Agora).

2.7
NEW LEARNING PATH SOLUTION

As the native "learning programmes" features of Totara did not meet UNICEF's requirements, we developed a new approach to the design of structured sets of courses called "learning paths". The new solution allows the inclusion of a course within a course, displaying the completion status of that course. This simple approach allows content to be assembled and presented with great flexibility. We have since developed learning paths for orientation and for technical tracks.
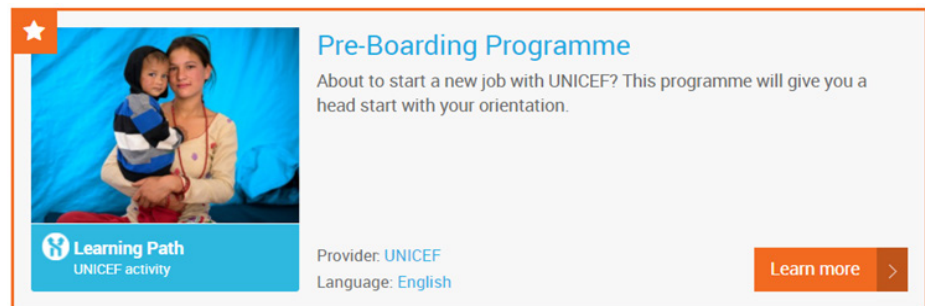

The Pre-Boarding Programme is one of the first Learning Paths designed with the new solution. It is recommended to prospective staff and new hires who want to learn more about UNICEF and its work.

2.8
UNIFIED MESSAGING SOLUTION

The ability to email audiences (i.e. groups of users dynamically identified based on defined criteria) has been further strengthen and it has helped us

We created a new dashboard for all announcements on Agora, which looks like a basic mailbox, and we incorporated blocks displaying tasks and reminders (generated from other parts of the system). The solution is complemented by an "alert counter", like what is found on many mobile apps, so that learner can quickly identify if they have messages requiring their attention.

The Agora team remains convinced that targeted and efficient communication about learning opportunities is critical, and the introduction of the "unified messaging solution" is an important step forward for the initiative.

**2.10
MOBILE CATALOGUE
VIEW**

While we were introducing a few new "mobile friendly" online learning activities, we also improved the mobile view of the course catalogue (to make it more compact) and the home page slider (which was not displaying text properly on small screens). Other parts of the site were also maintained and improved to ensure that Agora is easy to use on mobiles, tablets and computers.
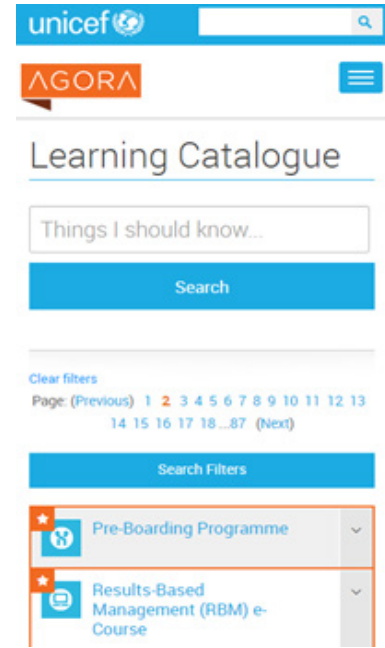
Screen capture of the new mobile view

**2.11
COURSE
COMPLETION
RECORDS
BULK UPLOAD
SOLUTION**

While Agora is meant to be the system for all learning activities to be recorded, in practice we are still not capturing most workshops and a lot of external learning activities. In practice, we do have the technical features to record such activities, but a lot of training and support would be required to effectively enforce universal recording on Agora.

Answering to requests from Learning professionals in DHR and DRP, we developed tools to quickly upload learning records on Agora. Using an excel spreadsheet, it is possible to enrol learners and mark completion of workshop sessions in bulk. This solution is particularly effective for large training initiatives.

**2.12
REPORT DATA
SOURCE
RESTRICTED BY
AUDIENCE**

As we continue to delegate access to dozens of reports to hundreds of users, we needed a solution to restrict the data that was shared without having to explain to users how to apply a set of filters and/or create saved searches. We created a solution allowing the data source to be restricted to a group of users identified through an audience. This feature has proven to be very useful, especially as audiences provide a few filtering options that were not available via the reports interface.

NOTE: in addition to the above developments, dozens of additional features were introduced in 2017 to fix usability issues and support learners and administrators or support the translation of the site in French.

③ SUPPORT

The workload associated with user support and troubleshooting tasks increased compared to 2016. It is equivalent to a full-time job, shared among the team members.

**3.1
END USER
SUPPORT**

We received an average of 20 requests for support per work day. Due to workload and some turnover during the year, we have not always managed to answer to all requests within 1 work day (our informal target).

We continue to receive a few support requests via the Service Manager IT ticketing system. Overall, it is harder to handle those request than via the Agora mailbox (sometimes difficult to identify who had the issue when the ticket is created by someone else, difficulties to return a ticket to the IT team when the issue is not Agora related, learners missing ticket updates) so we have now encouraged all learners to get email agora@unicef.org whether they are staff members, consultants or external users.

IN 2017, THE NUMBER OF REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT INCREASED FOR THE FOLLOWING:

Mandatory courses have been an important source of requests for support. These courses use old plugins and technology that are not working well with modern devices. While some courses have been partially updated (e.g. the basic and advanced security in the field). More work is needed to ensure that staff members do not struggle with those mandatory learning activities.

The Windows 10 upgrade started to cause challenges at the end of 2017 (and continued in 2018). The Offline player was missing from the installation in spite of various requests and reminders and the new image appears to cause issues with the Flash player on a significant number of machine. On the upside, Chrome is now available on most computers so we can instruct users to use it as their preferred browser with Agora.

Custom reports are needed by an increasing number of offices and content owner (i.e. units overseeing the implementation of specific technical courses). While we are able to delegate access to reports, each custom report takes time to build and we then often need to provide a short training to users. It is expected that this

**3.2
SECONDARY
ADMINISTRATORS
SUPPORT**

With the continued decentralization of the learning function, it became increasingly important to provide support and guidance to learning specialists and learning focal points in various divisions and offices. Different levels of administrative rights are provided based on the needs of colleagues. This provides a great level of autonomy for teams working on projects through Agora. The Agora Team is available to troubleshoot or assist with technical requests.

**3.3
SYSTEM TESTING
AND BUG FIXING**

As no major software upgrade was performed in 2016, the testing and bug fixing workload was reduced as compared to 2015. Its primary focus was on the release of the new Development Planning solution and subsequent improvements and fixes. The second biggest area remained the integration with other systems to obtain staff members' and/or consultants' details. A contract signed at the end of 2016 will lead in 2017 to receipt of better information on temporary staff members and consultants, smoother change of status between external user, temporary staff, consultant and staff member, and easier connection to Agora from other internal systems without the need to re-identify as a UNICEF staff member.

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INVESTING IN COMMUNICATION FOR LEARNING

There are hundreds of learning activities on Agora, and thousands more via other channels. But what are these opportunities worth if they are not reaching the relevant staff members and partners ?

A good communication plan, and the use of adapted tools and channels is essential to the success of any learning initiative. This is why the Agora project team developed the "Learning communication toolkit", building on lessons learnt and templates. The tool is available to learning all staff and partners delivering learning activities. It received a warm welcome.

The Agora team also reached out to users through its monthly newsletter, and targeted campaign for example informing all learners who completed a course about immunization that new courses on the subject has been launched. We were also more proactive in publishing news about learning opportunities in relevant Yammer groups.

Outreach is important, but as nowadays we all receive more information than we can digest, we also focus on ensuring that learners can find information when they need it.

The learning communication toolkit provides guidance and templates to support the roll-out of learning initiatives were non-UNICEF staff.
Access the toolkit at:
bit.ly/learningkit

We improved cross-references between Agora and other UNICEF portals and initiated developments which will allow seamless navigations between internal sites, without having to login to Agora. We used the feedback from our learners to revamp the platform´s search engine and catalogue (see story on page 25). These last developments will allow us to build personalized learning recommendations in 2018.

OUR COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS AND CHANNELS:

Social media:

Yammer group "Learning in UNICEF" (1000+ subscribers)

Facebook page (1000+ followers)

Twitter account (500+ followers)

On Agora:

Agora announcements page

Agora Champions Channel

Audience-based home page slider

Via email:

Automated email reminders & updates for courses

Targeted email communications

Monthly newsletter (internal and external versions)

Global Broadcast Messages

Specific products:

Agora Annual Report

Custom webinars

Posters / brochures for courses

Quick guides

User manuals

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

LKE page on UNICEF public site

5　GENERAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT

5.1
NEW PROCUREMENT
PROCESS

After 4 years of use of the LTAS with the vendor "Catalyst IT", it was planned that a new RFP needed to be launched in 2017. The new process took considerable time and effort. The work started in January, and the ToRs were ready by end of May but following changes in teams and processes in both ICTD and the Supply Division a new business case had to be created an approved before the publishing of the RFP which occurred in September. As of December 2017, the selection process was still a few weeks from being completed, a short extension of the LTAS with Catalyst was processed.

5.2
PROJECT TEAM

As of December 2017, the Agora Team is composed of one fixed-term position (P3), one temporary position (P2), and two consultant positions.

Turn over and mandatory breaks of service caused important stress on the team´s ability to respond to all requests.

The initiative continues to develop and many offices and divisions are requesting support to development online and blended learning initiatives. The draft Learning Strategy also highlights the importance of Agora and makes recommendations that imply additional work for the team.

To reduce risks, attract the right talent and provide adequate support, **it will be essential to stabilize the team with the creation of additional fixed term positions**.

5.3
EXPLORING A
PARTNERSHIP
WITH THE UN
SECRETARIAT

The Agora platform was presented to various other UN agencies and NGO partners. The UN Secretariat expressed a strong interest in collaborating with UNICEF on the implementation of Agora as their primary learning management system.

We reviewed the possible benefits and inconveniences of various collaboration approaches and we agreed to further explore the feasibility of the implementation of a joint platform (rather than a copy of Agora, which is what MSF and the Humanitarian Leadership Academy did). The UN Secretariat services various other agencies including OCHA, OHCHR, UNODC and DPKO.

The UN Secretariat made good progress to gather all necessary approvals and we have good hope to see this partnership become a reality in 2018. Such collaboration is likely to be demanding for UNICEF at the beginning, but it should rapidly lead to valuable synergies and cost sharing.

▲▲▲ LOOKING FORWARD

ABEL HENRY
Learning & Development Specialist
Manager of Agora

Learning and Knowledge
Exchange unit in DRP

In 2018, **we will continue to innovate with Agora to support new learning approaches and increased mobility.** We will also continue to ensure that Agora effectively supports all learning actors in UNICEF. A new UNICEF Learning Strategy should help us move forward with these goals.

Modernized learning technologies and practices

We will **enhance support of mobile learning** with the development of a mobile app and with experimentation with various mobile learning content development solutions. We will **update and upgrade legacy courses**, to progressively remove all content requiring Flash-player. The use of videos will also be key to offer more engaging and more mobile friendly content.

In conjunction with a major platform upgrade, we will **create a modern theme for Agora and introduce personalized dashboards,** with learning recommendations, news, compliance indicators, quick access to recent courses and channels. We will also **improve our reporting solution** to ensure that is it well integrated with other UNICEF platforms such as the new intranet.

An inclusive learning platform

Accessibility will be a priority with platform improvements and new content development standards based on Universal Design principles that will benefit all learners.

We will roll-out **solutions to effectively onboard all staff and consultants**, leveraging new integrations with the Page-Up Onboarding and the Azure AD platforms.

We will work on **strategic partnerships with UN agencies to use Agora as a common learning platform.** This could lead to substantial synergies that will benefit both the partner organizations and learners.

We will introduce additional ways to **incorporate the users voice in the elaboration of the Agora development roadmap** and the governance of the project.

In the end, Agora is your platform. If you have suggestions for improvements or needs that are not properly addressed, please do reach out!

ABEL HENRY

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you any questions related to this report or how Agora can support your work, please email us at **agora@unicef.org** or reach out directly to:

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WHERE WILL AGORA TAKE YOU?

CONNECT NOW AND FIND OUT MORE AT AGORA.UNICEF.ORG

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