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A design-led approach to fostering well-being through 21st century skills programming

The 2016 State of the World's Children report calls for a fair world *for every child*. The evidence is clear: millions of children around the world are denied their rights and deprived of the essentials that they need to grow up healthy and strong – because of their place of birth or their family of origin; because of their race, ethnicity or gender; or because they live in poverty or with a disability.

However staggering and complex, the cycles of deprivation that are transmitted from one generation to the next are not unbreakable. The power of education to break cycles of deprivation and improve well-being is clear and evidenced--and yet, in many parts of the world, remains unrealized. This must change. The promotion of 'innovation' for achieving results has helped foster more effective ways to reach the hardest-to-reach children, families and communities. This trend can be observed clearly in the Education sector, which is a natural environment for devising and testing new and different ways of understanding and solving problems--critical skills for the 21st century, which is defined by uncertainty and complexity.

The narrative must shift from innovating *for* the world's most vulnerable to empowering these populations to cultivate the critical thinking, problem-solving, networking, and related "21st century skills"--including a "broader set of 'personal qualities'"--they need to survive and thrive in the face of uncertainty, driving innovation and positive social adaptation and change themselves. One approach with great potential to facilitate this shift is the practice of **human-centred design** (HCD), a creative approach to solving social issues and particularly wicked challenges with people at the center.

This paper frames a vision for how international development organizations, Governments, civil society, and communities themselves might leverage HCD to build more enriching and relevant ecosystems for learning that will help improve *well-being* and--where necessary--direct communities toward new and more sustainable *ways of being*.

A Case Study of Design-Led 21st Century Skills-Building in Myanmar

To examine the prospects and pitfalls of a design-led approach to building 21st century skills into informal and formal learning environments, this paper offers a case study on work underway in Myanmar, where national and subnational Ministry colleagues, local social innovation group Point B, and UNICEF are leveraging HCD to explore the following questions:

- *How might we better prepare adolescents in Myanmar to be "life-ready" citizens and workers in the 21st century?*
- *What skills will students need to build successful careers?*
- *And what skills will they need to be change agents in a changing world? .*

In examining this initiative, the paper will offer a typology for the curricular, pedagogical, and service delivery models through which educators, Governments, civil society, international development partners, and communities themselves can reboot education systems for the 21st century through a design-led approach. In

turn, it will make a case to donors and Governments interested in expanding the use of HCD as a strategy for development to focus their investments on the Education sector as an entry-point for broader development system change.