OCTOBER 2019 – FEBRUARY 2020

Case Study: EthioCheck Lab

Developing Fact-Checking strategies with Human Centered Design — insights of an approach in Ethiopia
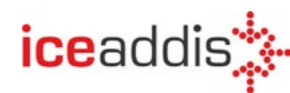
DW Akademie

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Case Study: EthioCheck Lab

Developing Fact-Checking strategies with Human Centered Design — insights of an approach in Ethiopia

Katrin Proschek, Julius Endert

Contents

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Mikias Sebsibe who works as Project Manager for DW Akademie in Ethiopia

EthioCheck Lab — Initial Workshops

DW Akademie initiated a human-centered design (HCD) process as a starting point for a media development project in Ethiopia. The aim was to develop a better understanding and assess the current situation regarding misinformation and disinformation. The process with journalists and media experts from Ethiopia was conducted between October 2019 and February 2020 in Addis Ababa in order to find an accepted and feasible way to support fact-checking in Ethiopia.

How to use this document: This case study shows the process of gaining insights into the "context of use" for fact-checkers and the main results of the ideation on fact-checking initiatives within the very diverse Ethiopian context.

Goal of the HCD approach: To find an accepted and feasible way to launch a fact-checking initiative in Ethiopia.

Method: A LeanUX (lean user experience) approach based on HCD and design thinking tools was applied. It combines the HCD context of use analysis with design thinking ideation methods in a series of workshops in order to identify important contextual factors in Ethiopia and generate ideas about how to best support fact-checkers in Ethiopia.

Opportunity: Ongoing reforms in Ethiopia have led to an opening up of the media landscape.

Challenges: Increased access to all manner of information and the spread of mis- and disinformation, coupled with low media literacy, is contributing to the escalation of conflicts throughout the country.

Design Thinking

Design Thinking is a set of methods to explore context specific challenges by focusing on finding creative solutions for real problems of people.

HCD - Human-Centred Design

Human-Centered Design (HCD) is a creative approach to problem solving that develops solutions by involving the human perspective in all steps of the problem-solving process. It helps to make systems more usable by early integration of occupational science, ergonomics and usability knowledge in product developments. It takes place in observing the problem within context (context of use), brainstorming, conceptualizing, developing and implementing the solution.

Lean UX

LeanUX is a way to combine methods of different tactics in order to effectively use few resources and reach maximum impact.

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Introduction:
A Human-Centered Approach
to Fact-Checking in Ethiopia

Ethiopia's media landscape is opening up as a result of ongoing political reforms in the country. These reforms have allowed more media houses to pop up, both online and offline. Ethiopian citizens now also have greater opportunity to participate in political discourse via the internet, especially on social media platforms. There is generally less fear of persecution and suspicion of dissenting voices. Currently, only about 18 percent of citizens nationwide have internet access. But as the number of internet connections continues to grow, it is to be expected that more people will become active users.

However, this new freedom has also enabled mis- and disinformation to spread, particularly online. Given the low level of media literacy, mis- and disinformation are contributing to conflicts in parts of the country. The latest outbreaks of violence in 2020 and the resulting internet shutdown are evidence of how sensitive the situation still is.

Risk-sensitive approach as a guiding principle

Conflicts between certain groups of Ethiopia's population were taken into consideration when designing the project strategy in order to prepare for potential tensions between workshop participants. Facilitators and trainers needed to have options at the ready so they could react sensitively and supportively to the participants' group communication. After all, part of their task was to create a level of mutual understanding among the participating groups; otherwise the collaborative work needed for the development of independent and neutral ideas for fact-checking approaches would not be possible.

Currently, there is little consolidated effort in Ethiopia to develop systematic fact-checking mechanisms to counter the negative effects of mis- and disinformation on society. Reception of news and information is strongly influenced by state-affiliated media, as well as political and cultural factors. It is therefore very important to gain insight into the context facing fact-checkers in Ethiopia, and develop ideas for fact-checking initiatives suitable for the particularities of the Ethiopian context.

In October 2019, Deutsche Welle Akademie (DW Akademie) initiated a media development research project aimed at understanding and assessing the current situation regarding misinformation and disinformation in Ethiopia. The goal of the project was to analyze context-specific factors for fact-checking together with experts and journalists based in Ethiopia, and to develop a strategy to support fact-checking in Ethiopia.

Some factors, such as the newness of the topic of fact-checking and the limited timeframe for the research, presented challenges. The diverse regional contexts in the country also required smart management to focus the user research, and at the same time consider all essential aspects and players.

> " The situation in Ethiopia is really worrisome. The mainstream media doesn't have the resources, the capacity or the skills to respond to disinformation or fake news.

Abel Wabella, Blogger and Fact-Checker, Ethiopia

A partner from Addis Ababa with experience in HCD projects, iceaddis, worked in close cooperation with DW Akademie to make sure all relevant factors were considered. Code for Africa (Code4Africa), an organization with years of experience working on fact-checking initiatives in several African countries, was consulted for insights on the regional perspective. Code4Africa is also a long-time partner of DW Akademie, especially in projects in Kenya.

> " Fact-Checking is a new concept in Ethiopia and exchanging ideas from different perspectives was very important.

Tsion Aklilu, freelance writer

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Generative Models and Tools — Workshop Methodology

As a framework, HCD provides a set of methods and tools to do context research and design products or systems in a participatory manner. This is essential when developing projects with local partners and ensures that cultural and political contexts are considered. Design thinking is a human-centered approach with a focus on the development of creative ideas through teamwork.

Due to limited time and resources, a LeanUX[1] (Lean User Experience) approach was selected. It is a philosophy originating from agile working environments combining HCD methods of context of use analysis with ideation methods of design thinking. The project covered the period from October 2019 to February 2020 and included extensive research as well as two five-day workshops in Addis Ababa. The first workshop focused on an approach to identify important contextual factors in Ethiopia and the second workshop used these results to generate ideas about how to support fact-checkers in Ethiopia.

2.1 Project Approach 1: Human-Centered Design (HCD)

Four key activities characterize the HCD approach: context of use analysis, specification of user requirements, production of design solutions and evaluation of these design solutions. HCD is dedicated to developing a product or a service for, and with, actual users.

Context of Use Analysis — Learn from the users you are designing for

How information is collected during context of use analysis depends on the accessibility of sources and human resources and the time available. To be effective, context of use analysis needs to include the actual actors experts from the country or region — in this case, people who are already active fact-checkers, journalists, media experts and other civil society experts. Involving experts provides valuable sources of knowledge about the context of use, the tasks future products will support, and how likely users are to work with future products, systems or services.

User involvement should be active, whether by acting as a source of relevant data or evaluating already known solutions for their context. The people who are involved should have skills, characteristics and experience that reflect the range of users for whom the systems or services are being designed. The nature and frequency of this involvement can vary throughout design and development, depending on the type of project. The effectiveness of user involvement increases as the interaction between the developers and the users increases. For context of use analysis in the EthioCheck Lab process, a user research workshop of five days was held, where Ethiopian based experts contributed their knowledge. Methodologies used in this workshop and its results are described in chapter 3.
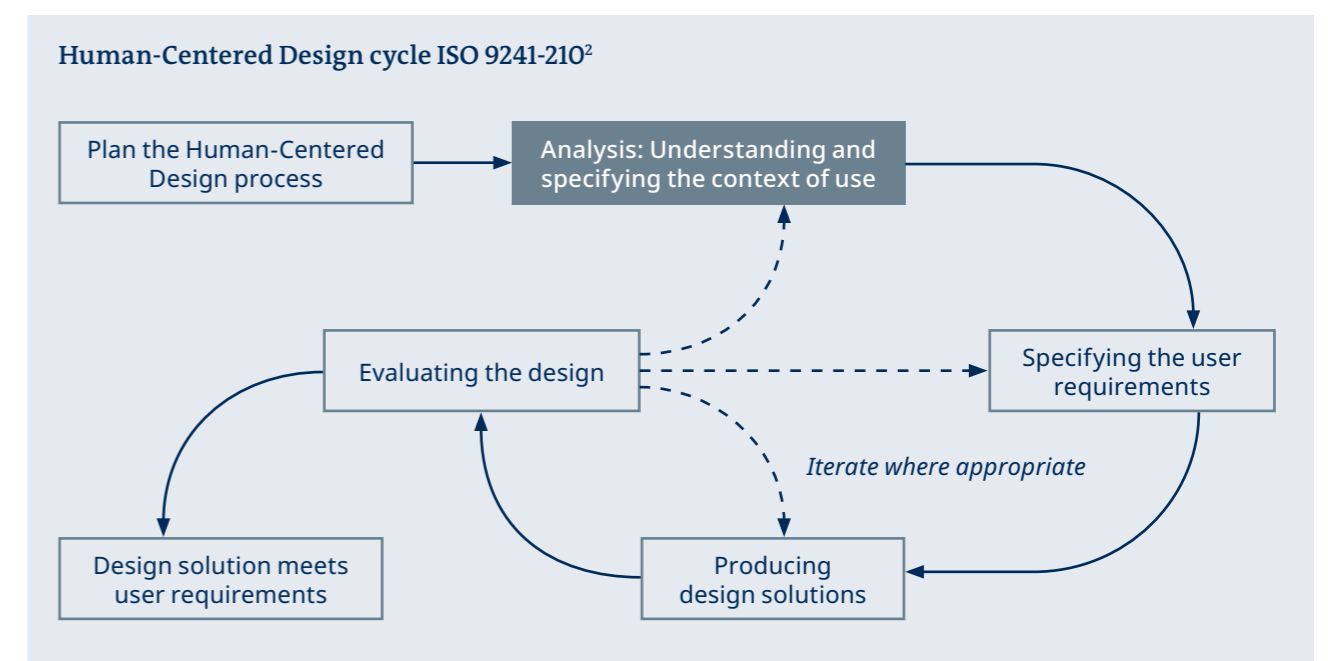
Human-Centered Design cycle ISO 9241-210[2]

Figure 1   *Source: DIN ISO 9241-210 (adapted by Katrin Proschek)*

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[1] Gothelf, 2013
[2] Technical Committee ISO/TC 159, 2019

The five steps of Design Thinking
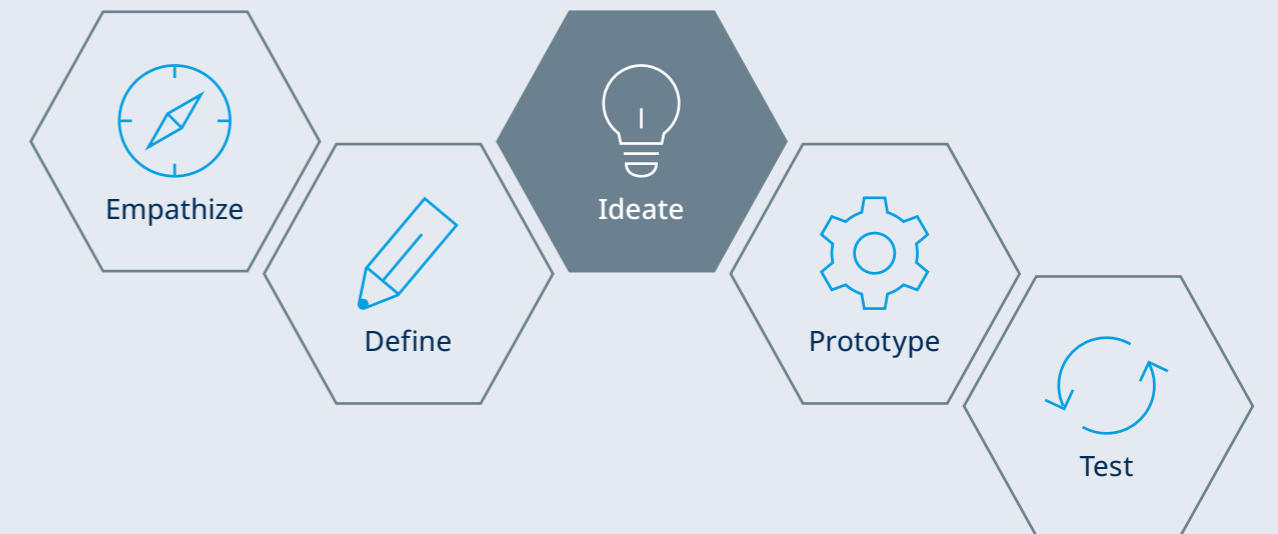
Figure 2 *Source: d.school Executive Education, Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University (adapted by Katrin Proschek)*

2.2 Project Approach 2: Design Thinking

Design thinking describes an approach for HCD with a heavy focus on the development of creative ideas through teamwork.

It can be described as a 5-step process:

– **Step 1: Empathize — Research your users' needs**
– **Step 2: Define — State your users' needs and problems**
  These first two steps are very related to the HCD cycles for analyzing and specifying steps
– **Step 3: Ideate — Challenge assumptions and create ideas based on design thinking**
– **Step 4: Prototype — Start to create solutions**
– **Step 5: Test — Try your solutions out**
  These last steps are related to the HCD cycles for prototyping and evaluation

In Ethiopia, systemic fact-checking has not yet been established. Therefore, it was very important for the EthioCheck Lab process not only to analyze the context of use, but to create ideas together with experts based in Ethiopia for future solutions and services that can support fact-checking in Ethiopia.

Step 3 of design thinking (challenge assumptions and create ideas) formed a methodological base for this ideation process. The workshop challenged assumptions by formulating "How might we …?" questions. Based on these challenges, the participants developed ideas about how to address them.

Lensa Kebede from iceaddis

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Process and Findings: Solutions from User-Driven Collaboration

Context of use Analysis for EthioCheck Lab — Methodological strategy of workshop 1

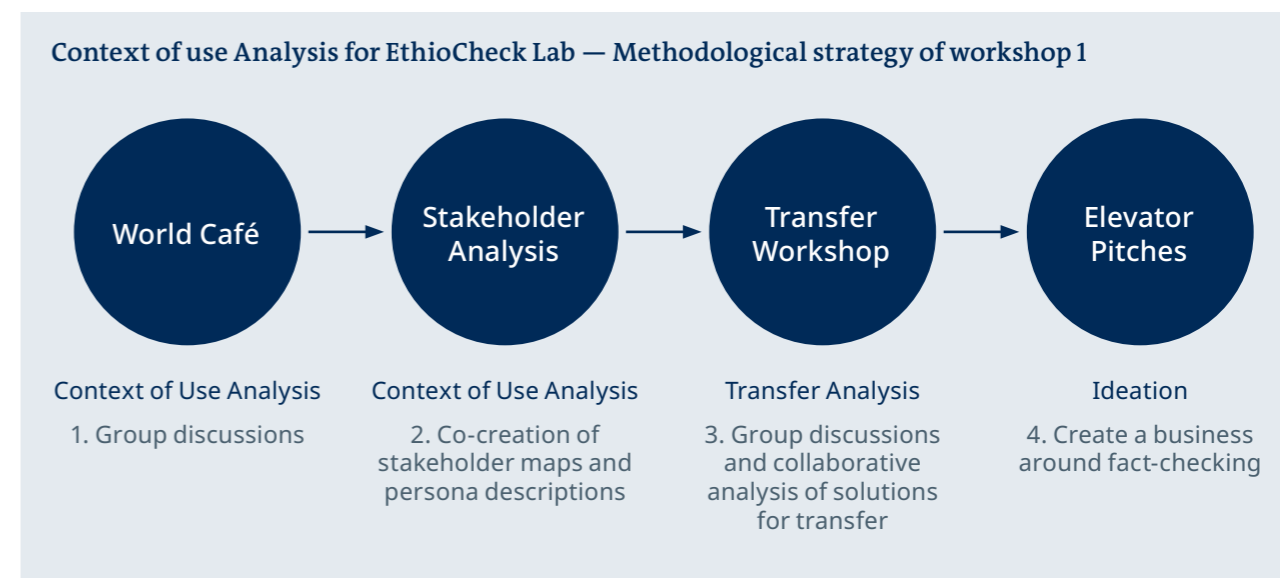| World Café	Stakeholder Analysis	Transfer Workshop	Elevator Pitches
Context of Use Analysis	Context of Use Analysis	Transfer Analysis	Ideation
1. Group discussions	2. Co-creation of stakeholder maps and persona descriptions	3. Group discussions and collaborative analysis of solutions for transfer	4. Create a business around fact-checking

Figure 3 *Source: d.school Executive Education, Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University (adapted by Katrin Proschek)*

The methodological approach for the EthioCheck Lab was a combination of context of use analysis plus a first ideation phase, followed by a problem-solving ideation and prototyping phase. Given this approach, the whole process was structured and realized in two workshops. The findings and results were evaluated and documented between and after the workshops.

3.1 Workshop 1 — Context of Use Analysis

In December 2019, a five-day HCD workshop with 20 participants from the media sector, civil society, IT-tech enterprises and teaching institutions was held in Addis Ababa. This workshop followed a four-step strategy: two steps to analyze the fact-checking context, one step to consider whether known solutions from other contexts could be transferred to Ethiopia, and a first ideation on how fact-checking in Ethiopia could be realized.

3.1.1 Structure of Workshop

– **World Café:** Collect the participants' knowledge and opinions about mis- and disinformation in order to identify major topics and issues (3.1.1)
– **Stakeholder Analysis:** Identify all persons and institutions that are involved or have an interest in mis- and disinformation in Ethiopia to understand their structures and connections (3.1.2)
– **Transfer Studies:** Learn about solutions already at work in other country contexts and discuss how these solutions could work in Ethiopia (3.1.3)
– **Ideation 1:** Explore participants' initial ideas for fact-checking products and let them introduce their ideas in a short pitch presentation (3.1.4)

3.1.2 Context of Use Analysis

Step 1: Group Discussions in World Café Format

Why and how: Collecting the knowledge and opinion of participants about mis- and disinformation in order to identify major topics and issues was the first step. To make sure everybody could contribute to each topic, different topics were discussed at four tables. Each participant also contributed to all the topics in a group discussion.

The four table topics were:

– Identify and describe examples of assumed or proven mis- or disinformation in Ethiopia.
– What are the known or assumed sources of mis- or disinformation? How well do participants understand the definitions? Are there terms in local languages for mis-and disinformation?
– What is the impact of mis- or disinformation on Ethiopian society, and why is it so important to give people tools for fact-checking?
– What are the needs of journalists and what were the outcomes of mis- or disinformation?

World Café discussion table
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3.1.3 Context of Use Analysis

Step 2: Stakeholder and User Mapping

Why: The design of products, systems and services should take into account the people who will use them, as well as other stakeholder groups, including those who could be affected (directly or indirectly) by their use. Therefore, all relevant user and stakeholder groups should be identified. Constructing systems based on an inappropriate or incomplete understanding of user needs is one of the major sources of failure.

At the start of the project, it was not clear who the key stakeholders that should be included in future fact-checking projects in Ethiopia were. We faced the challenge of analyzing already established activities as well as not-yet-discovered potential stakeholders.

How: The task was to identify all persons and institutions who are involved or have an interest in mis- and disinformation in Ethiopia. Participants worked in four groups to create stakeholder mappings and visualizations of stakeholders in order to categorize them and understand their structures and connections. Participants were asked to also consider government, media providers, private sector and civil society. This was a very fruitful process because each group developed an individual focus during their discussions and the results gave valuable insights about stakeholders relevant to fact-checking in Ethiopia. The following figure shows stakeholder map fragments created by participants that describe groups interested in fact-checking.

Summary of Group Discussions

First of all, it was important for the participants to verify that the terms being used in the process were clearly understood in the same way. Ethiopia is a country with a great diversity of languages. A key insight here was the challenge in describing the difference between "misinformation" and "disinformation" in the different languages spoken.

Participants initially conflated misinformation and disinformation with "fake news". Participants widely agreed on the definition of disinformation. Some suggested strong formulations, such as: "Disinformation is any inaccurate information that takes someone into a grave." Concerning misinformation, there was a debate about whether false information can be disseminated for a positive outcome. For example, there's a saying in Amharic that lying is acceptable if it's done to arbitrate between foes.

Mainstream media was generally perceived as being less engaged in spreading disinformation. However, in reality, some mainstream outlets are influenced by their ownership struc-

ture and are engaged in the spread of disinformation. Participants also saw mainstream media houses as doing very little when it comes to fact-checking, either by verifying or debunking mis- and disinformation. Participants observed that the mainstream media can also be influenced by social media activists. Another factor mentioned was that misinformation can be spread in the context of government public relations.

There was an agreement that some influencers are a source of mis- or disinformation. Their motives range from politics, ethnicity or personal gains such as fame or money via social media.

The following needs were identified:

– Reliable information from government officials and other sources
– Fact-checking, digital skillsets
– Legal reinforcement on accountability/policy
– Legal protection for media practitioners
– Educational content to upgrade skills
– Open Data and automated fact-checking tools
– Financial support

Stakeholder mapping in groups
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Figure 4   *Source: Examples of stakeholder mappings created by participants (adapted by Katrin Proschek)*

Figure 5   *Source: Katrin Proschek*

3.1.4 Summary of Stakeholder Analysis and Group Discussions

Those who produce content on mainstream, social and other media were identified as a group with a strong interest in fact-checking. Therefore, one group mentioned journalists and writers as an important stakeholder group and gave examples of people in this group who are especially interested in fact-checking.

Another group investigated actual or possible fact-checking providers, as well as who could support those fact-checkers.

An issue that became obvious was the very urgent need to support a very small group of individual journalists who are presently active in fact-checking on a regular basis.

This realization helped the group to focus on mapping stakeholders who are already involved in fact-checking in Ethiopian society.

One group put a special focus on who is presently using fact-checking services, or who might do so in the near future.

The participants' stakeholder mappings provided valuable variations, for example, different perceptions of how stakeholders are connected and what role they have. Many stakeholder mappings also showed where individual persons fulfill a certain role or represent a group (e.g. as disseminators of mis- or disinformation).

We analyzed all participant mappings and identified four user or stakeholder groups:

– Content creators
– Content disseminators
– Content recipients
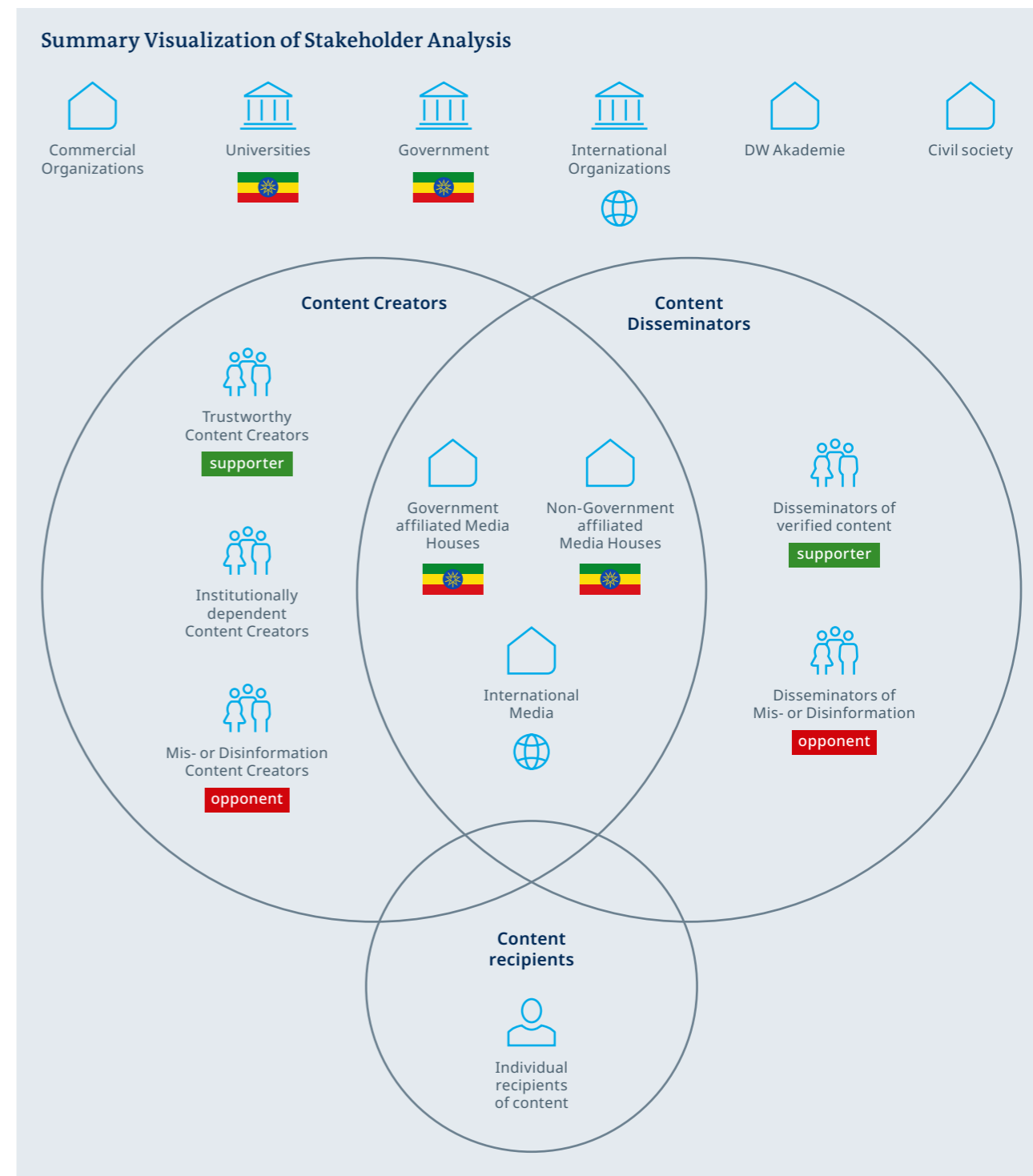– Institutional stakeholders

Participants in a warm-up exercise

A participant in a discussion with the trainer

Katrin Proschek, trainer and HCD facilitator

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Due to time limitations it was impossible to continue working on all the user and stakeholder groups, so a decision was made to focus further ideation and prototyping on trustworthy content creators who could also be potential fact-checkers.

It is very important to bear in mind that audiences in Ethiopia are diverse in many aspects. More research about a future community of fact-checkers is necessary to explore all their needs.

The following tables summarize the conclusions, especially for the focal **user group: fact-checkers or community of fact-checkers** (the tasks were identified by participants of the HCD process).

Goals and Tasks of Fact-Checking

Fact-checkers:
– Verify and publish verified content
– Contact a network of sources to fact-check information
– Fact-check their own content before publishing
– Fact-check information published by others in order to respond/react
– Proactively share information with their audiences to gain their trust
– Cooperate with others in fact-checking

CONCLUSIONS
– Fact-checkers need knowledge, skills and experience in sharing
– They need access to fast internet and other means of communication and incentives to do their work
– Collaboration among fact-checkers could increase the quality of fact-checking in Ethiopia and strengthen their reputations

Sources of Mis- and Disinformation

Mis- and disinformation in Ethiopia has multiple sources and characteristics:
– A wide variety of sources — including government sources, political actors and public figures — were identified by participants. They include:
  – Mainstream media (government or private)
  – Individuals with a political agenda
  – Anonymous people/pages on social media
  – Activists on social media
  – Media companies
  – Some Ethiopians in the diaspora, especially those based in the US

CONCLUSIONS
– Numerous actors, most with political motives, are engaged in mis- and disinformation in Ethiopia.
– Mainstream media outlets are not doing much to counter the spread of mis- and disinformation. An Ethiopian fact-checking community has to develop a strategy to build the public's trust in their work while remaining unbiased.
– An Ethiopian fact-checking community has to be politically sensitive and have the expertise needed to maintain neutral analysis of news.

Preferred Channels

Social media platforms are the main channels for fact-checking:
– Facebook and Telegram are the preferred channels used for fact-checking activities.

CONCLUSIONS
– Fact-checkers are almost exclusively operating on social media. Regions and populations with little or no internet access are thus excluded.
– Using mainstream media outlets in the future is key to verifying and disseminating fact-checked content. Leading media outlets should work to strengthen fact-checking skills among journalists. Awareness needs to be raised among media managers and owners of media companies.

Ethiopian context, Culture and Languages

Recent Developments and Situation
– Ongoing political reforms in Ethiopia have led to an opening up of the media landscape. Ethiopians have increased access to information.
– The upcoming elections could particularly motivate some actors to spread mis- and disinformation.
– In Ethiopia, there has been no consolidated effort to develop systematic fact-checking mechanisms.
– Demand for fact-checked content is high among the population.

CONCLUSIONS
– This current situation is the initial motivation for DWA to start supporting fact-checking work in Ethiopia now.

Specifics of Languages and Use of Terms
– There are no exact terms to distinguish between mis- and disinformation in Ethiopian languages.
– የሀሰት መረጃ (yehaset mereja)
– የተሳሳተ መረጃ (yetesasate mereja)
– ጽለም — Tigrigna (Tseleme)
– Oduu Sobaa (Afaan Oromoo)
– Qaldid (Somali)
– The first two words are in Amharic, they literally translate as false information.
– Participants couldn't find terms that distinguish between mis- and disinformation.
– The Tigrigna word has a somewhat negative connotation that comes close to the definition of disinformation.
– The Afan Oromo and Somali word translates as false information or fake news.

CONCLUSIONS
– This might be a challenge when explaining and promoting the importance of fact-checking and its goals in local languages.

Cultural Diversity
– Regional, cultural and educational diversity in Ethiopia brings the risk that activities working in one (regional) context could fail in another (regional) context.
– Ethiopia has a multi-ethnic population speaking almost 80 different languages.
– It also has a long history of regional and inter-ethnic conflicts.

CONCLUSIONS
– First steps should concentrate on supporting and building a fact-checking community that is based in Addis Ababa, but participation of actors from other regions should be encouraged from the beginning in order to bring the regional perspective and expertise into the community.
– Dissemination of fact-checking into the different regions and contexts should always be guided by partners with regional expertise.

Professional Environment
– Media houses are not very active in fact-checking and invest limited to no resources in verifying information. Investing in building capacities in media houses is key.
– Conflict-related events, particularly in remote regions, require manual investigation (contacting sources etc.) in order to verify information. This is time consuming and potentially dangerous (example mentioned: abduction of Dembi Dolo University students in January 2020).

CONCLUSIONS
– Journalists do fact-checking without financial and structural support.
– Fact-checking is not just a purely office- or computer-based job in Ethiopia.
– Resources for communication and travelling will be needed as well as a network that can provide regional coverage for information research and verification.

Media Literacy
– The impact of mis- and disinformation is strongly connected to low Media and Information Literacy.
– "Most people believe whatever they see on Facebook" (Elias Meseret).

CONCLUSIONS
– In the long term, Media and Information Literacy (MIL) activities should accompany fact-checking initiatives.
– Fact-checking itself can be a factor to foster MIL. Therefore, fact-checking activities should be communicated to the public in a transparent and understandable way.
– Fact-checked content should be disseminated in a strategic and effective way.

Active Fact-Checkers and Fact-Checking related initiatives

– Developed, systematic fact-checking is not yet existent in Ethiopia.
– Fact-checking is only done by a few individuals in Ethiopia. People who regularly do fact-checking in Ethiopia are either "lone fighters" or groups with an interest in fostering awareness of mis- and disinformation, i.e. universities.
– The journalist Elias Meseret publishes his activities on a Facebook page and on Twitter, where he has some 130,000 followers. He recently initiated a WhatsApp group with 11 other journalists to share tasks on fact-checking and he also contributes to the Telegram group TIKVAH (1.1 mill. followers, October 2020).

CONCLUSIONS
– The user research showed a rising awareness of the need for fact-checking, but even large media houses do not provide sufficient resources for fact-checking to their journalists.
– In addition to media houses, the "lone fighters" or student groups need to be supported in their efforts.

3.1.5 Context of Use Analysis

Step 3: Transfer Analysis

Why: Fact-checking is a familiar process in many countries. Therefore, the participants strongly wished to learn about solutions already being used effectively in other countries and discuss how such solutions could work in Ethiopia.

How: Two existing solutions were introduced to the participants, followed by a discussion about if and how these solutions could be transferred to the Ethiopian context. Participants worked in groups to analyze the solutions and identify factors for implementation in the Ethiopian context.

FactCheck Mongolia (Solution 1), an approach supported by DW Akademie, was introduced by Julius Endert. FactCheck Mongolia is a verification platform for journalists, run on the collaborative platform Truly Media.

PesaCheck (Solution 2) was introduced by Eric Mugendi, who formerly worked at PesaCheck, an organization affiliated with Code for Africa that operates in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and other African countries. It runs on the collaborative tool Meedan.

For the group analysis on how these solutions could be transferred to the Ethiopian context, a template was provided to document the results in a structured manner.

The main tasks for the Transfer Analysis were:

1. Identify how the context in Ethiopia is different and identify what has to be done to make a solution like this work.
2. Identify the most important stakeholders of your tool by taking them from the stakeholder map from Day One of the workshop.
3. Transfer the most important identified stakeholders to the "Important Stakeholders" section of the transfer grid.
4. Fill in the other three sections during the group discussion:
   – Materials and work: Describe everything that is needed to create the product/service in the new context. (Materials, human resources, etc.)
   – Differences of transfer area: Describe specific features of the topic that will be different due to the new local context. (Other language/different traffic infrastructure, etc.)
   – Challenges: Describe anticipated obstacles in the new local context or challenges to necessary adaptations.

" Our biggest challenge is how manual the process of fact-checking is.

Eric Mugendi, fact-checker, Kenya

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Fact-checking experts Julius Endert (DW Akademie) and Eric Mugendi (formerly PesaCheck)

Transfer Grid — Fill in to analyze what is needed for transfer of a solution to Ethiopian context

Material and work	Differences of transfer area
Challenges	Important Stakeholders

Figure 6   *Source: Katrin Proschek*

Results Summary of Transfer Analysis

Materials and Work (transcriptions of participants' worksheets)

Describe everything needed to create the product/service in the new context — materials, human resources, etc.

FACTCHECK MONGOLIA

– A fact-checking association
– Collaborative fact-checking between different media houses led by an independent organization of qualified fact-checkers via a collaboration tool
– Find independent people that are experts in journalism, technology and legal procedures, who are able to put out open data for the public
– Resources needed to achieve this: Workspace/office, internet, finance, legal protection, knowledge base, network and connection to media houses and digital tools

PESACHECK

– Current on-going legal reforms in media, including access to information laws as well as amendments to Civil Societies and Charities Law
– Lack of similar activities in the country means there is ample opportunity for interest and potential success (no concerns about a saturated landscape)
– Liberalization of the telecom sector as well as privatization of Ethio Telecom, the state-owned telecom provider
– Great public interest in the area. It is highly sought after
– There is less concern when it comes to the availability of data in government offices. It is just not accessible

Differences of Transfer Area (transcriptions of participants' worksheets)

Describe specific features of the topic that will be different due to the new Ethiopian context — other language, different traffic infrastructure, etc.

FACTCHECK MONGOLIA

– Geographical area
– Demographic diversity
– Population size
– Ethnic and language diversity
– Public literacy
– Internet penetration level
– High GDP difference
– Historical background
– Different government system
– Country relationship

PESACHECK

– Lack of strong civil society
– Low internet penetration
– Low newspaper circulation. Also concentrated in the capital Addis
– Low literacy rate (adult literacy about 40%)
– Limited social media usage (about 6 million Facebook users in a population of 100+ million)
– Low level of media literacy
– Challenges to information access (access is very difficult despite a law that guarantees citizens' right to it)

Challenges (transcriptions of participants' worksheets)

Describe anticipated obstacles in the new local context or challenges to necessary adaptations.

FACTCHECK MONGOLIA

– Acceptance by the authorities
– Access to finances
– Lack of common ground
– No existing policy to promote fact-checking organizations
– Biases of various interest groups

PESACHECK

– Political will and commitment yet to be tested
– Access to finances to carry out project
– Polarized political environment
– Language barriers because of diversity
– Lack of adequate digital database
– No international payment system online
– Internet shutdown a possibility

Important Stakeholders (transcriptions of participants' worksheets)

Describe everything needed to create the product/service in the new context — materials, human resources, etc.

FACTCHECK MONGOLIA

– Media houses (GOV, regional, federal, private etc.)
– Social media
– Government
– Political parties
– Regional organizations
– Educational sector
– Activists
– Influential individuals and establishments
– Foreign actors

PESACHECK

– Government bodies (e.g. attorney general, Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority, National Intelligence Security Services, Information Network Security Agency)
– Ethio Telecom
– Ethiopian Media Council
– Central Statistics Agency
– Journalist associations
– Media organizations (public and commercial)
– Local civil society organizations
– Social media influencers/politicians
– Economic and financial associations
– International and local organizations such as DWA, C4D, CARD InterNews, BBC Media Action etc.)

Zelalem Gizachew pitching a solution idea

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3.1.6 Context of Use Analysis

Step 4: Initiate Ideation

Why: The intention of this step was to explore initial ideas for fact-checking products/brands and introduce them in a short pitch presentation. This gave the participants an opportunity to change their focus from analysis of the current situation to a creative process of developing visions for the future together. For the facilitators, it is a very good step to explore how much the participants' ideas match their own.

How/"The elevator pitch": The instructions for the participants were: "Imagine you are in an elevator with a possible sponsor and the time you have until you reach your floor is all you have to convince them of your idea for a fact-checking solution in Ethiopia. Please prepare for this elevator pitch with your group and describe your idea in three minutes."

Results Summary of Initial Ideation

All four ideas were dedicated to creating a collaborative approach for fact-checkers. All of the ideas involved a website, the use of fact-checking tools and a physical office. The most frequently mentioned risks were security for fact-checkers and financial sustainability. Another important point was training and capacity building for journalists and fact-checkers.

The group who created the **"Habesha Check"** idea, for example, described it as "an organization dedicated to training [people in] media literacy skills by working with schools and universities". **Habesha Check** would work with media houses and regional media as well as central and regional government organizations. It was important for the group to point out that this would only work with stable political and financial conditions.

The **Ethio-Check** idea described a working fact-checking company dedicated to verifying and publishing information. **Ethio-Check** should be free for the public and offer paid fact-checking services for institutions and government.
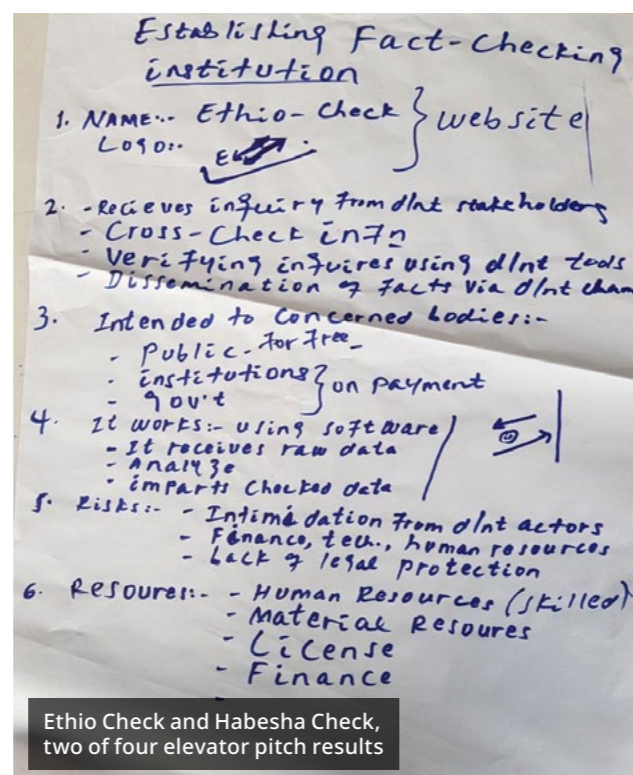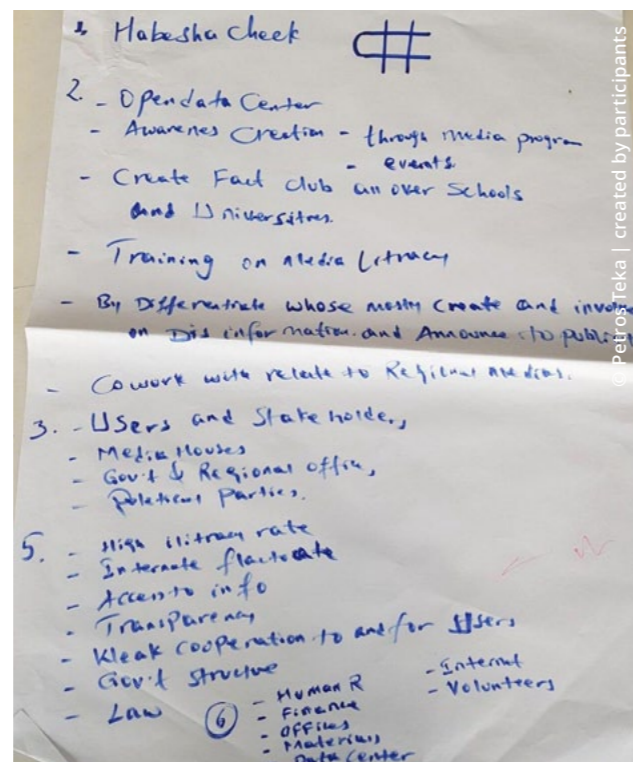
Ethio Check and Habesha Check, two of four elevator pitch results

3.1.7 Conclusion of first workshop

Identification of Fact-Checker Needs

At the end of the first workshop, the DW Akademie team agreed that they were facing a complex service design challenge. Many aspects of fact-checking in Ethiopia were still uncovered. There was a strong need to collaborate with experienced early adaptors and support the initiators with a protected environment to build their capacities. There was also consensus on the need for an Ethiopian partner to take the lead in the implementation. DW Akademie and other partners or donors could take the role to support an emerging organization that is accepted by key players in the Ethiopian media landscape.

In their elevator pitches, participants clearly demonstrated their awareness that a fact-checking community or company does not only have the task of checking and verifying information. It was time to dig deeper and identify design challenges for ideation. To do this, fact-checking user needs were identified in order to summarize the most important results in a readable and understandable format.

A user need (UN) is: "A prerequisite identified as necessary for a user, or a user group, to achieve a goal, implied or stated within a specific context of use".[1]

It's important to keep user needs independent from any proposed solution. They represent the gaps between what should be and what is. They are the basis to identify the key challenges and help to phrase them as challenges for design thinking processes. After product ideas are identified, they help to derive and structure user requirements for those solutions.

User Needs

FACT-CHECKERS IN ETHIOPIA NEED ...

... expertise and practical knowledge on how to do fact-checking.	UN 01
... political support/protection of press freedom and independent journalism.	UN 02
... institutional support to provide resources and security.	UN 03
... opportunities to support each other in fact-checking, to share information and to develop strategies to fight mis- and disinformation.	UN 04
... access to information sources that allow them to verify information.	UN 05
... protection from mis- and disinformation/hate speech from others about them.	UN 06
... digital solutions that help them in the process of fact-checking. (fact-checking and collaboration with each other)	UN 07

Ideation and Prototyping for EthioCheck Lab — Methodological Strategy of Workshop 2

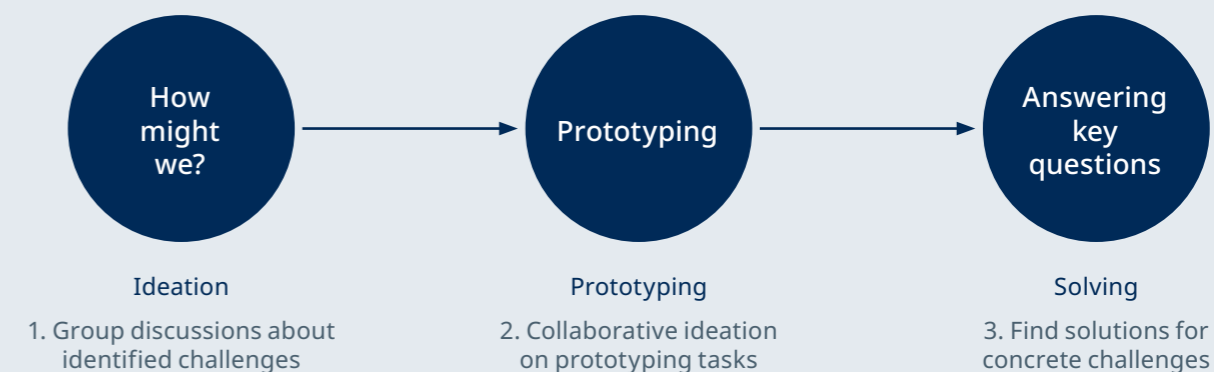| How might we?	Prototyping	Answering key questions
Ideation	Prototyping	Solving
1. Group discussions about identified challenges	2. Collaborative ideation on prototyping tasks	3. Find solutions for concrete challenges

Figure 7   *Source: d.school Executive Education, Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University (adapted by Katrin Proschek)*

3.2 Workshop 2 — Ideation and Problem Solving

In February 2020, a follow-up workshop using adapted methodologies from design thinking practice was held in Addis Ababa. This workshop followed a three-step strategy: one step to discuss key questions about potential solutions in the context of fact-checking, one step to collaboratively prototype the discussed options and finally, one step to conceptualize the implementation strategy for use in Ethiopia

3.2.1 Structure of Workshop

– **Ideation 2:** Identify and answer core questions based on the results of the first workshop (3.2.2)
– **Prototyping:** Find concrete products and strategies via a facilitated co-creation process (3.2.3)
– Problem Solving: Discuss strategic questions about needs, requirements and partners for anticipated implementation (3.2.4.)

3.2.2 Ideation and Problem Solving

Step 1: How might we …?

Why: In the first step of ideation, major challenges have to be identified and solutions for these challenges have to be discussed.

How: In most design thinking processes, all participants work together to identify challenges. But our limited timeframe did

not allow for this. Therefore, based on the results of the previous workshop—especially the user needs and the resulting insights about the local environment from the context of use analysis—the EthioCheck Lab team identified core questions the participants should discuss in preparation for a deeper ideation process. Each of the questions was discussed in groups together with one DW Akademie expert at each table, and the results were documented by using a brainstorming canvas template.
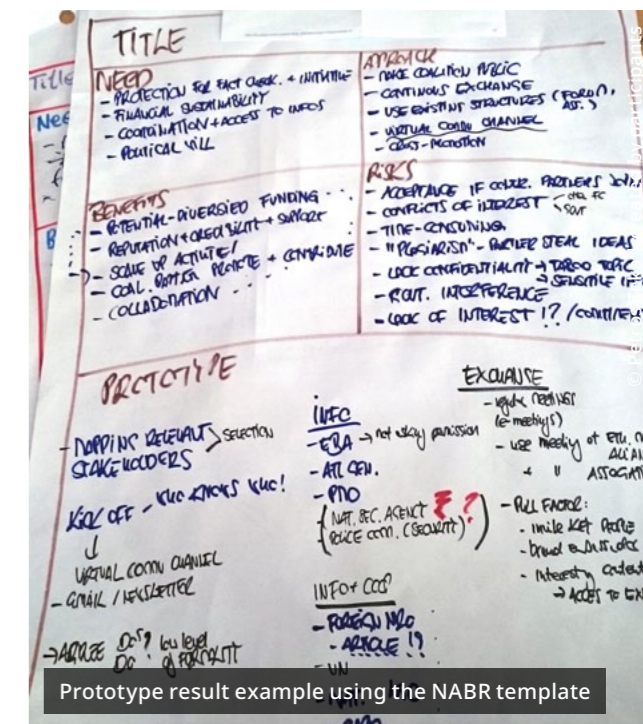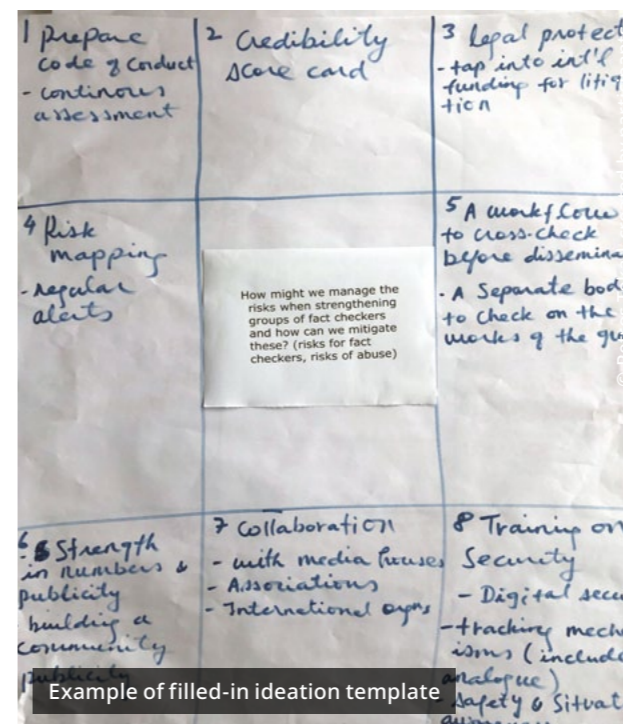
Key questions to prepare the co-creation process:

– How might we incentivize continuous collaboration of fact-checkers (material and non-material, common goals, ownership, etc.)?
– How might we promote collaborative tools for fact-checking (visibility, trust acceptance)?
– How might we recruit and select testers for collaborative fact-checking?
– How might we provide training (in terms of formats and channels) for journalists and other content creators on fact-checking and verification?
– How might we define target groups for capacity building for fact-checking?
– How might we build acceptance and trust for collaborative fact-checking among the public?
– How might we facilitate collaboration of fact-checkers with collaborative tools?
– How might we manage the risks when strengthening groups of fact-checkers and how can we mitigate these (risks for fact-checkers, risks of abuse of fact-checking)?
– How might we disseminate verified content (which channels)?
– How might we integrate different groups for collaboration (journalists and FC)?
– How might we link up fact-checkers with journalists/media houses?

Participant drawing ideas in the ideation phase

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Results summary of the "How might we …?" discussions

Key ideas from participants:

– Incentives for fact-checkers to encourage continuous collaboration should be done in two ways. Of course, financial support is important, but participants see an equally strong benefit in creating a supportive community for them, a network of fact-checkers where they receive capacity building, job opportunities, safety and recognition for their work. Another important factor is to establish regional institutions and enable regional fact-checkers to participate. Encouraging a positive attitude among fact-checkers so that they have a supportive attitude rather than a competitive one will be important for successful collaboration.

– To promote collaborative tools for fact-checking, a transparent selection process for fact-checking participants is important. Tools should be customized for the Ethiopian context, allowing diversity and easy access. A campaign, including a launch event, TV, radio and social media advertisements, can kick off the process of finding participants and making the initiative known to the public. Collaboration with other Ethiopian based or international associations will help to build a reputation.

– Fact-checkers for participation in the project can be found among journalists, bloggers and social media activists. Other important groups for recruitment are university communities. In addition, recruiting members of big media houses and other organizations — private as well as government owned — is important.

– To create trust for collaborative fact-checking among the public, one key feature will be a platform to report mis- and disinformation to the fact-checking network. To encourage trust, the fact-checking network should be branded and promoted as an independent fact-checking institution that is financially non-partisan, independent and run by diverse teams who produce verification reports in all major languages.

– To facilitate the collaboration of fact-checkers via collaborative tools, it is important to create a collaborative environment (hubs, software, social media group) where fact-checkers can share information. To enable participation and collaboration, fact-checkers should receive iterative and continuous training on fact-checking tools.

– To minimize risks for fact-checkers, they should agree on a code of conduct for their work. This code of conduct should undergo continuous assessment. Workflows to mass check (verify) fact-checking information will strengthen the position of fact-checkers. One idea was to establish a separate body to check the fact-checkers' work.

– The fact-checking network should introduce ongoing risk mapping and put out regular alerts about possible risks of fact-checking. Fact-checkers should be trained to develop safety and situation awareness, as well as skills in digital security. The organization employing the fact-checkers should be legally accountable for them and, for instance, offer legal defense for the fact-checkers or provide health insurance for any harm to which they might be exposed.

– Verified content should be disseminated in several languages and through all possible channels: traditional print media, TV, and radio, as well as internet-based platforms and social media.

Discussing "How might we… ? questions" with participants

Example of filled-in ideation template

Prototype result example using the NABR template

3.2.3 Ideation and Problem Solving

Step 2: Collaborative Prototyping

Why: To provoke participants to create more concrete products and strategies, the facilitator team transformed the results of the "How might we …?" discussions into six prototyping tasks: To provoke participants to create more concrete products and strategies, the facilitator team transformed the results of the "How might we …?" discussions into six prototyping tasks:

– Develop a scouting and selection approach for DWA to find candidates for collaborative fact-checking. With whom should DWA cooperate during this process?
– Create a collaborative work environment for a community of fact-checkers (common goals and rules, code of conduct, communication channels).
– Build a trusted label/brand for collaborative fact-checking in Ethiopia.
– Develop a launch campaign for collaborative fact-checking.
– Develop a set of services for public engagement in fact-checking to build acceptance and trust.
– Form a coalition to advocate fact-checking in Ethiopia involving national and international stakeholders.

This step is quite unusual. Prototypes are normally created based on the "How might we …?" questions. But in this case, there's a high degree of complexity to the solutions needed. What's required is a service design — a smart combination of organization solutions, human-to-human services and technical solutions — rather than one product solution. The six tasks identified above represent components of a possible service design for fact-checking.

How: To help participants describe the prototypes, the NABC model[1] (Need, Approach, Benefits, Competition) was used as a basis. But because competition was not a major concern for building a fact-checking community, the Competition section was replaced with Prototype/Visualization, where participants could write down their thoughts about the major challenges for product development. The template developed for this process was: Need, Approach, Benefits, Risks and Prototype/Visualization (NABR).

Results Summary of Collaborative Prototyping

The outcome of this prototyping describes important components and factors for the implementation of solutions. The following example is the description of how to create a collaborative work environment of fact-checkers.

[1] Carlson & Wilmot, 2006

Create a collaborative Work Environment for a Community of Fact-Checkers
(transcriptions of participants' worksheets)

NEEDS

– Common goal
– To develop credibility
– Access to multiple information sources
– Access to multiple domain experts
– Automation
– Communication (robust)
– Financial support

BENEFITS

– Fertile environment to do fact-checking
– Refinement of information
– Increase the accuracy of the fact-checking process
– Increase the integrity of the fact-checking process
– Bring the fact-checkers to the spotlight
– Cut costs by sharing resources
– Protection (community)

PROTOTYPE

Set up a known internal digital product/platform
for a group of fact-checkers.
This platform should include:
– Communication tool
– Knowledge base
– Web and mobile alert
– Offline access and Unstructured Supplementary
  Service Data (USSD) support
– Tough cyber guard security
– User-friendly design
– Multilingual versions

APPROACH

– Associations
– Code of conduct
– Common digital platforms
– Legal format
– Subscription fee

RISKS

– Unexpected shutdown
– Conflict of roles
– Compromised internal trust
– Digital vulnerabilities

3.2.4 Ideation and Problem Solving

Step 3: Answering Key Questions for a First Service Design

Why: After prototyping single components of fact-checking services, it was time to develop a vision of a service design. The idea was that the service design should incorporate all the findings of the context analysis process conducted by the participants, and combine it with expert knowledge and results from a parallel ideation process on how DW Akademie could actually support fact-checking work in the Ethiopian context.

How: Two types of methodological approaches were followed.

Approach 1

The international and regional experts would do a brainstorm for a service design that could work in Ethiopia on the basis of all the previous findings and ideas. The service design is then presented to workshop participants for discussion and feedback.

Through this process, a service design titled "Open FactCheck Lab" was developed. The FactCheck Lab "is an open physical space, set up in conjunction with an Ethiopian implementation partner. This design foresees the step-by-step creation of a fact-checking community by recruiting, then training and testing fact-checking environments. It aims to provide a physical as well as virtual space with a website for fact-checkers. The first phase of this vision is providing a learning space for fact-checkers and building a trusted fact-checking community. In the second phase, the space could also function as an incubator of professional fact-checking projects."

Following the presentation, key questions were developed and discussed among the participants.

Four important questions were discussed, each of them in parallel groups:

Question 1: What are the requirements, responsibilities and duties for an implementation partner?
Question 2: How do we recruit and incentivize participants and testers?
Question 3: How will we test collaborative tools?
Question 4: What does the website look like?

Participants were asked to include answers and recommendations in terms of the:

– Purpose
– Target group
– Languages
– Risks
– Prototype of the website interface

Results Summary

Below are the key results of the discussions among participants working in two groups:

– A partner based in the country should be responsible for the coordination, organization and implementation.
– Specific activities of the local partner include providing the working space, recruiting participants and public relations. The partner should be capable of handling finance and administration issues.
– A set of recruitment criteria should be developed and announced through open calls using traditional and online media.
– Ideas of what a website could look like, especially after going public with fact-checking services were developed in two groups (fig.15). Both groups understood and designed the website as a portal targeting the public to promote fact-checking activities.
– Incentives for participants included: access to working space including online; training and networking opportunities; publicity and acknowledgments (certificates); financial support (e.g. stipends, micro grants); and access to fact-checking tools (e.g. subscription).

Brainstorming result for an Open FC Lab service design
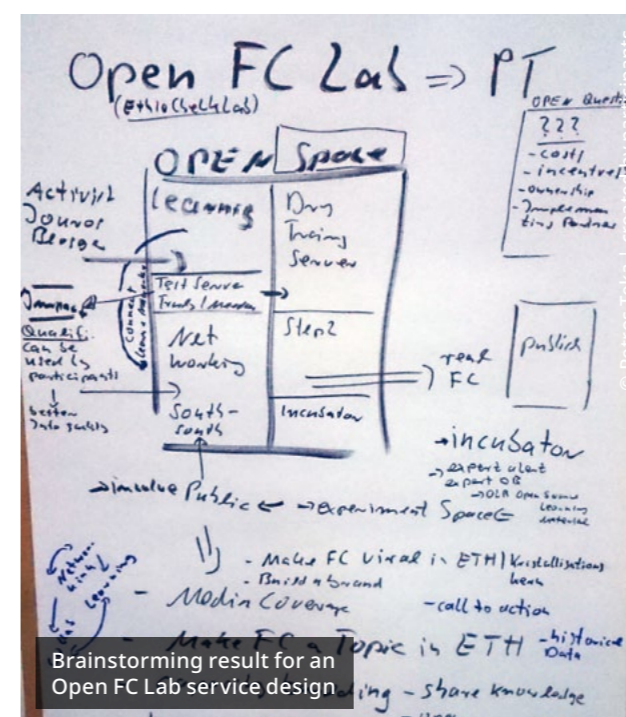
> " People fall for false information because they like to believe in it.
>
> Eric Mugendi, fact-checker, Kenya

Participants listen to Eric Mugendi's presentation

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Approach 2

The parallel ideation process followed the approach of reaching out to key media and civil society actors who were not able to attend the two workshops. This approach not only allowed the team to gain more feedback on ideas developed during the workshops, but also resulted in the development of new service designs. The discussion with an Ethiopian media think tank, Mersa Media Institute, yielded a service design dubbed "EthioCheck Lab".

EthioCheck Lab shifted the focus of intervention from individual fact-checkers to media houses. The vision is to establish and support structures within already existing media houses. The idea was informed by previous findings that media houses are currently not doing much in the way of verification. The objective of this vision is to set up fact-checking desks in selected media houses in a structured and sustainable way.

Key questions discussed

Question 1: What are the requirements, responsibilities and duties of implementing partners?
Question 2: How do we go about selecting the media houses?
Question 3: What kind of organizational support can be provided?
Question 4: How can we test collaboration among the media houses?

Results Summary

Below are the core outcomes from exchanges with media actors on the key questions listed above:

– An Ethiopian partner organization with deep understanding of the media landscape in Ethiopia is critical to take the lead in implementing the project. Its role is more focused on providing local expertise in the development of strategies, project management and administration of funds (than, i.e., providing resources such as a working space)
– Selection criteria that take into account the media context of Ethiopia should be developed jointly between the Ethiopian partner and DW Akademie. Securing buy-in from each media house is critical for the success of the project.
– The selected media houses should be willing to invest some resources (human as well as material resources) in the project. For example, they could provide space for training on their premises, which would also guarantee attendance.
– Apart from skills training on fact-checking, organizational development support could be provided in the form of a south-to-south exchange with Code for Africa, which has experience in setting up fact-checking desks in other African media houses.
– Experiences gained in selected media houses should be documented and analyzed to assess options for scaling up.

3.2.5 Ideation and Problem Solving

Recommendations for Next Steps to Implement EthioCheck Lab Based on User Needs

Based on the user needs and the prototype solutions created in the design thinking process, DW Akademie and the facilitator team identified some initial ideas for steps that could be taken to support fact-checking in Ethiopia.

– Find a partner organization/institution in Ethiopia that wants to cooperate in the area of fact-checking. Support this partner with finances, expertise and continuous exchange. (related User Needs UN 02, 03, 05)
– Cooperate with already active fact-checkers as multipliers, co-trainers and local experts. (related User Need UN 04)
– Find a group of early adaptors who want to do fact-checking as part of their professional work. (related User Need UN 04)
– Capacity building — conduct fact-checking trainings for media houses, early adaptors and train local trainers in order to continue fact-checking training, also in local languages. (related User Need UN 01)
– Encourage and finance south-south partnerships between fact-checking organizations in Ethiopia and neighboring countries such as Kenya. (related User Need UN 04)
– Test digital tools for collaborative fact-checking, train partners to use them and set up a test platform where future fact-checkers can exercise collaborative fact-checking in a protected environment. (related User Needs UN 01, 06, 07)
– Support the implementing partner with funds, expertise and continuous exchange over the coming years. (related User Needs UN 04, 03, 05, 06)

4

Observations and Conclusions from a DW Akademie perspective

> **"** Digital media plays a role in disseminating misinformation and hate speech. That's why we need to find digital solutions.

Maeruf Fetu, Project Lead @Ewnet.et

At the start of the project, it was clear that fact-checking in Ethiopia is only currently being done by a few individuals and/or small groups. This was an enormous challenge for the HCD approach, with its reliance on a comprehensive description of context of use. Additionally, the timeframe for the project was very tight and did not allow for a longer user research phase with more time-consuming methods such as interviews or observations.

How we made it work

Collaboration with Ethiopian and regional partners:
For the process, it was extremely valuable that we were able to combine Ethiopian expertise with contributions from international and regional experts.

The Ethiopian partner **iceaddis** had a very well-established network and identified and invited qualified workshop participants in a very short time. In addition, iceaddis had previous experience in HDC projects and was able to co-facilitate the workshops. This was of great value, particularly because they could efficiently interpret important instructions into Amharic and translate valuable results back into English. The team could always rely on iceaddis' advice to interact with participants appropriately, given the Ethiopian cultural context. This helped to avoid misunderstandings among everyone involved.

Regional East-African domain expertise was brought in with the help of Eric Mugendi, who formerly worked at PesaCheck and contributed experience from his work to link fact-checking knowledge with real life examples in the neighboring country of Kenya. This was very relevant for the Ethiopian participants as well as for the international experts from DW Akademie.

Iterative change management to improve the process:
It was very helpful to start and continuously feed the workshops with well-defined and standardized methods. But after each workshop day, it was necessary to analyze the day's results with the team, in order to decide what would be the best next step. This was an unusually intense process. The facilitator team maintained close collaborative exchange and showed a lot of flexibility, mutual understanding and expertise in selecting and adapting their approach for the next day.

Learnings from the project team

One major conclusion is that the HCD process has to be flexible in methodology, iterative, and co-driven by partners based in the country, particularly when dealing with a topic that is as new and untested as fact-checking in Ethiopia. It requires a deep mutual understanding of the project goals and processes.

In a future project, we would allow more time for the facilitators to reach such an understanding and agree on important strategic approaches before working with the participants. We also recommend planning collaborative pre-workshop research activities, such as interviews with previously identified stakeholders and observations of the as-is processes. This not only provides valuable knowledge for the workshop, but also gives the team an opportunity to become acquainted with each other.

It was also important to recognize that the issue of fact-checking cannot be treated in isolation from existing conflicts in a country. Conflict sensitivity is very important in the selection of participants, in the design of the workshop and in the discussion of the topic. Possible solutions should be reviewed to see if they meet the requirements of conflict sensitivity.

It was helpful to work with a consulting HCD professional, who brought in the expertise to suggest alternatives for next steps and explain their advantages and disadvantages to support smart team decisions. The downside was that these explanations were sometimes very time consuming, in particular because they required the team members to acquire HCD or design thinking skills, and then be able to quickly apply them to: a) reflect on the past day's progress and b) simultaneously draw conclusions for the upcoming workshop's strategies. Additionally, individual team members' roles as facilitators had to sometimes be redefined.

For future projects, we recommend at least one additional preparation day for the team to get know to each other, explore individual abilities to contribute to facilitation and agree on a mutual facilitation strategy, especially with regard to change management. We also strongly recommend planning enough time for the daily team reviews, in order to avoid stress.

The benefit of human-centered approaches is considerable. Developing for, and with, users minimizes the risk of creating "bad" products and helps create a valuable mindset of iterative improvement among the co-creators. This, in turn, will help develop products that are more sustainable and maintainable.

Yosef Alemayehu from iceaddis facilitating group work

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