HOW MIGHT WE

The design process hinges on addressing a WASH problem appropriately framed as a design challenge fit to the right context, scope and constraints in order to maximize impact. A well written "How Might We" question will contain the right amount of inspiration to promote a mindset of possibilities and generate as many solutions as possible.

This collaborative exercise is necessary at the beginning of the design process and should be revisited often, especially as understanding of the problem deepens.

OBJECTIVE

Use the "How Might We" tool to generate innovative solutions by framing a design challenge as aspirational questions that allow the opportunity for creative thinking.

WASH-HCD CONNECTION

Problems and challenges encountered in any WASH program can sometimes seem impossible to address. Restating them in an intentionally optimistic way using "How Might We" questions stimulates a much-needed creative problem-solving mindset and the positive change you wish for.

TIMING

Rapid: 20 minutes
In-depth: 2-3 hours

MATERIALS

- PENS OR PENCILS

STEPS

1. **Write down the big problem you are trying to solve, and then rephrase it as a design question.** Reviewing the project goals and insights gathered during research will help teams to select the challenges and design opportunities most relevant to your team.

   Rewrite the problem/goals, and insights as design questions that begin with "How Might We…" (HMW). Use the HMW statement to rephrase the design challenge in as many ways as possible.

   For example, if the big problem is: *Rural households do not have readily-accessible safe drinking water at home.*
   Then, a possible HMW question could be: *HMW give rural households access to safe drinking water at home?*

   Select the best five to ten HMWs and refine them using the subsequent steps.

   ***IMPORTANT: Writing a good design challenge is a difficult task. In addition to providing ample time for this activity, lean on your team. Before starting, appoint a facilitator to lead this collaborative effort and provide structure to the brainstorm.

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STEPS

2.   Consider the ultimate impact of the project

HMW questions should not include a specific solution. After you have created several HMW questions, rewrite them (if needed) so that they focus on impact, rather than offering a solution in the HMW statement.

For example: *"How might we convince people to buy an expensive water filter?"* is not a 'bad' question, but it already includes a solution in the statement (a water filter), and does not focus on the intended impact (access to safe drinking water). This limits possibilities for innovation.

However, restating this question as…

"How might we design a way to provide rural families with safe drinking water 24 hours a day?" results in a statement that is open-ended and does not include a solution. Instead, it focuses on the **intended impact** (24-hour access to safe drinking water), and allows project teams to brainstorm many possibilities!

3.   Evaluate the openness/broadness of your HMW questions

They should not be too broad or too narrow, but just right to allow teams to create solutions. You can also provide clarity by including context like where and for whom you are designing for. Also include other barriers that may be important to consider like geography, technology, time, etc.

For example:

How might we ensure everyone in the world has water? is of course a worthy goal to think about, but is too broad of a statement to allow a team to think about specific solutions they can test and pilot.

However the statement:

How might we design a way to provide rural families in the East Coast of Madagascar with safe drinking water in their homes 24 hours a day? is specific enough to give teams the opportunity to generate and test real ideas.

4.   Review your final design questions

At the end of your session, review the HMW questions for the right mix of impact, openness, context, and constraints.

HOW MIGHT WE – TEMPLATE

Insight # 1: _____

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How might we #1: _____

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Insight #2: _____

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How might we #2: _____

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Insight #3: _____

_____

How might we #3: _____

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