Using Human-Centered Design to Co-Create Policies with Survivors of Violence:

A FIELD GUIDE

PROTECTION
COLLABORATIVE

Welcome

Hi! You are probably wondering, "what is this field guide useful for?"

This is a short guide to help governments and other organizations involve survivors of violence (be it trafficking, gender-based violence, etc.) in the policymaking process using Human-Centered Design (HCD). While policymaking is a complex process, including those a policy impacts most doesn't have to be. We will walk you through a step-by-step process to develop impactful policies with survivors.

So, what is Human-Centered Design?

HCD is an approach to problem-solving built on empathy and iteration that highly values the lived experience of customers (in this case, survivors of violence).

HCD is a process, mindset, and methodology rather than a type of design (e.g. fashion design, interior design). Thus, you can apply HCD to any problem, whether it be related to government policies or the layout of a building.

We follow a four-phase Human-Centered Design process: **Frame, Discover, Design, Deliver and Measure.**

In the **Frame** phase, you understand the context in which you are trying to solve a problem through desk research (e.g., literature review, case studies) and defining the scope of your policy.

In the **Discover** phase, you define the core problem and identify the needs of survivors.

Then, in the **Design** phase, you brainstorm and build prototypes of policies and programs, co-designing them with survivors.

Finally, in the **Deliver** and **Measure** phase, you will launch your refined policy or program and measure its impact to see how you might continue to improve it.

What's a prototype?

A prototype is a preliminary, functional version of a solution meant for validation and co-design with survivors and stakeholders before it is released in the real world. In this case, prototypes would be ideas for programs the policy would mandate and the process by which you design the policy and programs with survivors and other key stakeholders.

HCD phases

- **FRAME:** Hypothesize the problem(s) to be solved.

- **DISCOVER:** Develop deep empathy for customers and employees.

- **DESIGN:** Build, test, and refine potential solutions quickly and at a low cost.

- **DELIVER & MEASURE:** Set the vision for your solutions grow and launch your MVP; then, scale solutions and measure how they work in the real world.
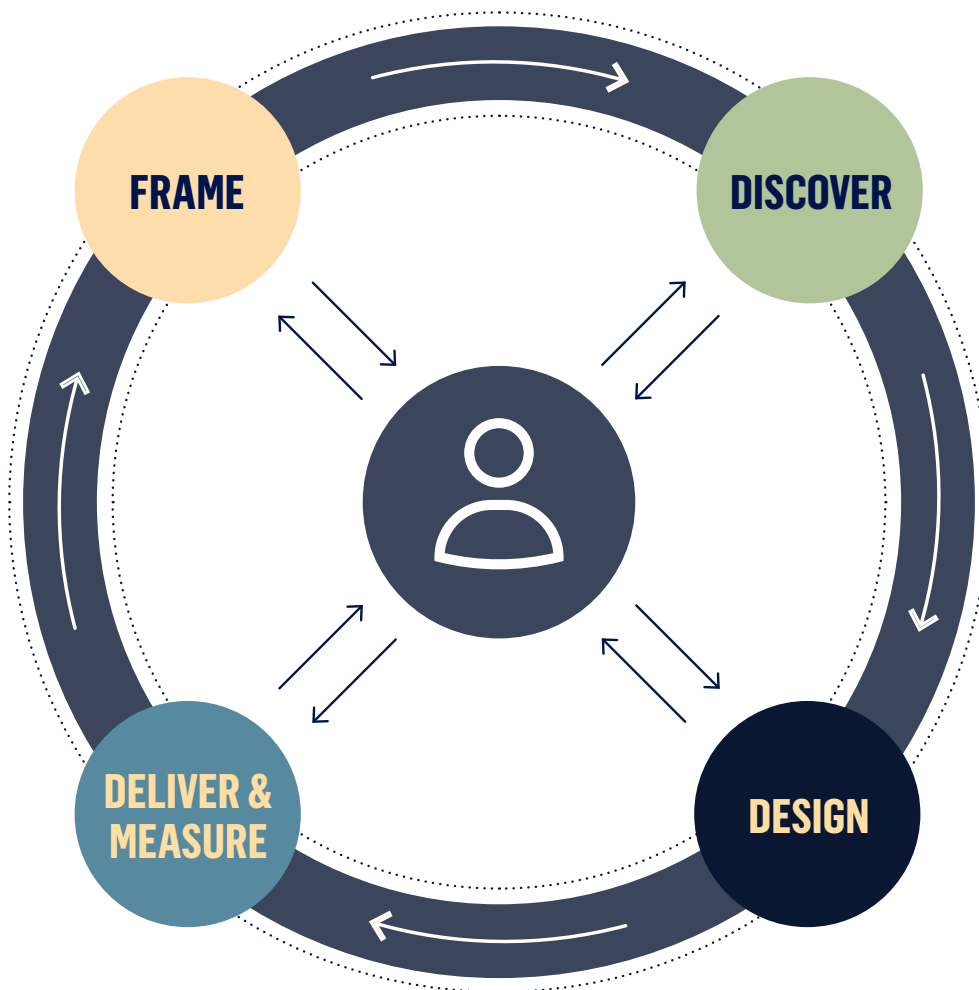
How does the integration of Human-Centered Design (HCD) and policymaking empower survivors?

While traditional policy development manifests the concept of "participation" as allowing citizens to vote on issues pre-defined by the government, HCD advocates for citizens as co-creators who are directly involved in every step of policy development and implementation (Bradwell & Marr, 2017).

In other words, traditional approaches to policymaking do not provide all stakeholders with an equal opportunity to influence the process. HCD challenges the top-down approach of policymaking by asking policymakers to bring those with lived experience on a policy issue into the process as early as possible. Adopting the idea of co-design in policy development can also foster greater cooperation and trust between governments and citizens, and generate more innovative ideas (Blomkamp, 2018). Moreover, this approach empowers survivors by showing them that their voices matter, not only through words, but through the act of directly involving them in the pursuit of justice.

HCD offers governments a clear, step-by-step framework for policy development that provides a holistic image of the core issues at hand through hearing the lived experiences of survivors. This necessitates inclusion of survivors on the policymaking team, creating more opportunities to gain a nuanced understanding of survivor experiences. We hope that this guide will spur governments and organizations of various kinds to create invigorating programs, policies, services, and products through co-designing with survivors of violence.

Traditional Policymaking vs. HCD Policymaking

Government   Survivors

Traditional policymaking does not involve survivors at every step in the policy development and implementation process as team members.

HCD policymaking actively engages survivors at every step in the policy development and implementation process.

DEFINE PROBLEM

FRAME

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AGENDA SETTING

DISCOVER

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FORMULATE POLICY

DESIGN

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IMPLEMENT

DELIVER

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MEASURE

MEASURE
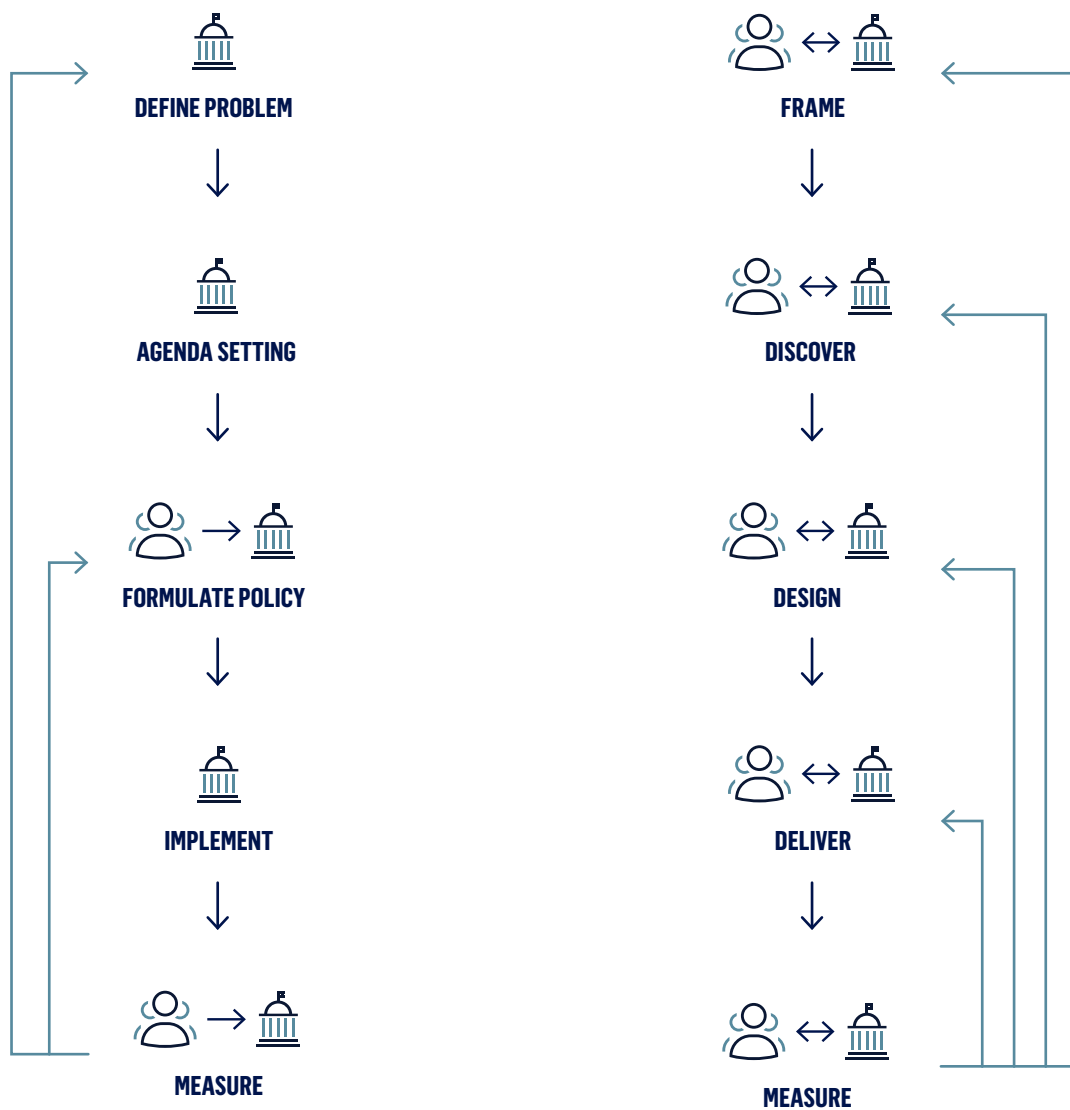
Why HCD? What does HCD offer that other approaches don't?

Throughout the HCD process, you will look at your policy through three lenses:

- **Desirable:** How well does a solution serve survivor needs?

- **Feasible:** Do we have the resources to follow through?

- **Strategic:** Will the solution help us reach our overall goal as an organization, agency, coalition, etc.? (IDEO, 2015).[1]

The process usually starts with a focus on desirability to best understand survivor points of view, which is often the perspective that is least understood and shifts the most over time (Rios Partners, 2022).

DESIRABLE
it meets a customer need.

SUCCESSFUL SOLUTIONS

FEASIBLE
You have the people, processes, tools, and technology to execute a solution.

STRATEGIC
It aligns with your purpose and desired impact.

The Three Lenses of HCD.

Failing to use any of these lenses to develop a policy comes at the expense of the organization/agency and/or survivors.

For example, if your organization is focused on economic empowerment, you would likely not focus efforts on an investigations policy and program. You would leave that to the proper agency, even if you had the people, processes and tools to do it.

Or, if your team's idea is feasible (e.g., provide mentorship for survivors on economic wellbeing), but it was not designed with survivors, you would implement with the risk that your program is not relevant.

Finally, if your ideas are strategic[2] (e.g., mandating economic empowerment initiatives across your agency(ies)) and it meets survivor needs, but you did not account for the resources needed to implement the policy and accompanying programs, the solution will fail.

Ways HCD can improve policymaking phase-by-phase

1 FRAME

NON-HCD APPROACH

Action: Policymakers rely on internal expertise to identify challenges that survivors face.

Outcome: Problem is identified quickly, but gaps may exist due to lack of survivor expertise.

HCD APPROACH

Action: The government completes a thorough recruitment process for survivor representation on the team. The team defines a problem together.

Outcome: The team enters the *Discover* phase steered by survivors. They ask relevant questions increasing the likelihood that the policy is relevant to survivors.

2 DISCOVER

NON-HCD APPROACH

Action: Policymakers may not conduct enough customer interviews, focus groups, etc. with survivors due to time constraints.

Outcome: There is a disconnect between the needs of survivors and policy direction/goals. Policymakers miss critical insights that only come from in-depth conversations and relationship building with survivors.

HCD APPROACH

Action: Empathy-driven techniques do not make assumptions about people's backgrounds. The *Discover* phase is not merely about "insight collection" but unlocking a deeper level of human connection.

Outcome: The team builds deep connections and trust with survivors. Survivors can engage more because they feel safe and respected.

DESIGN | 3

NON-HCD APPROACH

Action: Policies are not made and tested with survivors in an iterative manner.

Outcome: Issues are only brought to attention when policies are mandated. Thus, resources are expended inefficiently.

HCD APPROACH

Action: Policies are made and tested with survivors in an iterative manner.

Outcome: Since issues are identified through multiple rounds of policy testing and improvement, the final solution accounts for potential challenges.

DELIVER & MEASURE | 4

NON-HCD APPROACH

Action: Policies are implemented without consulting survivors on how they engage with services in the real world.

Outcome: Policies may be implemented in a way that is inefficient and confusing for survivors despite being easy to execute from an administrative perspective.

HCD APPROACH

Action: Survivors help plan the policy implementation process by providing insight into the way survivors can or cannot engage with services in the real world.

Outcome: Policies are implemented in a way that makes accessing services or receiving the benefits of solutions easy and effective for survivors.

HCD is not only about the process. It is also about the mindset you adopt while doing it.

In this section, you will walk through attitudes and mindsets to adopt during the HCD process.

Empathy first

Empathizing with survivors is crucial in every step of the HCD process. Empathy means putting yourself in the shoes of others and not making assumptions about people's backgrounds or experiences. Putting ourselves in the shoes of others helps us to consider the nuances of a situation and go beyond technical considerations of what can achieve effective outcomes. Holding onto your assumptions about the experiences and needs of survivors can negatively impact policy outcomes and make implementing effective programs and solutions difficult. **For example, if policymakers implement an online service that they assume is "easily accessible" without consulting survivors, they could miss critical information.** In this case, due to unstable internet access, survivors would prefer a service available in person through a community center. By empathizing with survivors first, you can consider their human experience more holistically beyond their interaction with a policy or service.

Once you adopt empathy as a mindset, you must externalize it through actions. There are many ways to empathize with survivors. For example, asking thoughtful questions, being a good listener, and incorporating survivors' feedback into a service are all ways to empathize. Throughout this guide, you will learn how to empathize with survivors during each HCD phase in more detail.

Design with

In alignment with empathy, HCD takes a participatory approach to design and includes survivors as co-designers and co-leaders. Survivors are experts on their own needs and provide invaluable insights during the HCD process. They will be a guiding light to help you understand solutions that will meet survivor and community needs.

Identify root causes

Holding onto preconceived notions or jumping to a solution too quickly limits how far you "dig" into the root cause of a problem. When a problem is identified, continue to ask "why?" to uncover its roots. It may be easier to find a quick fix to the symptom rather than the root cause. However, tackling the root issue can improve the way you address the problem you are trying to solve.

How to identify solutions to Root Causes: An Example

Framing your Problem
The team lacks survey data from survivors despite sending out a survey with promised compensation.

Tempting solution to treat "symptoms"
Incentivize participants with gift cards and other prizes for taking the survey. This approach shows a lack of empathy as participants were not consulted about what could help them complete the survey.

Identifying the root cause
The team lacks data from participants despite sending out a survey.

The team receives feedback that one-third of participants struggle to access steady internet connection.

The medium of the surveys relied on is not compatible with many participants.

Solution to root cause
Participants should be able to complete the survey on paper.[3]

Rapid iteration

In HCD, you will go through multiple quick rounds of brainstorming and prototyping before landing on a solution that most effectively functions at the intersection of the Three Lenses of HCD. This is called rapid iteration. For example, rapid iteration of ideas (brainstorming ideas to help solve a problem quickly) helps us to use our time efficiently by considering a wide range of ideas at once. Rapid iteration of prototypes (taking solutions you developed and seeking feedback quickly) allows us to test at lower costs with each prototype and quickly get back on our feet with multiple options if something does not work. The opposite outcome is losing a significant amount of time, money, and energy that was invested in one solution with little validation from survivors. It is better to test, iterate, and catch errors quickly than to discover that you made a long sequence of mistakes due to not pursuing feedback as quickly as possible.

Through hands-on collaboration with survivors in every step of the policymaking process, governments can test solutions much more quickly and efficiently in the real world than when relying solely on their own knowledge to create policies.

Anyone can do HCD

HCD is an approach to problem-solving that emphasizes the importance of empathy and the lived experience expertise of survivors. Don't let the word "design" trick you into thinking that HCD is a specialized design discipline like graphic design or architecture that requires niche training for you to become an "expert." Think of HCD as a mindset or set of tools that will help you leverage your current subject matter expertise.

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> **I was able to contribute my thoughts and want the policy to be passed. I hope this kind of activity will be expanded and that the government will respond to our grievances [as leaders] and that there will be immediate action.**

Survivor Leader and Policymaker

Notes

PROTECTION COLLABORATIVE