



U.S. Agency for International Development
Report to Congress
Report on the Use of Social and Behavior Change Communication

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) submits this report pursuant to Section 7019(e) of Division K of Public Law 117-328, the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2023, which incorporates by reference the requirements of House Report 117-401.

House Report 117-401: The Committee believes that better use of social and behavior change communication can improve results for foreign assistance programs. The Committee encourages greater integration of media and communication across global health and development programming, especially through locally relevant content and multimedia partnerships. The Committee directs the USAID Administrator to submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations, not later than 90 days after enactment of this Act, on the use of social and behavior change communications in recent programming and the best practices and evidence of effectiveness for integrating this approach for better health and development outcomes.

Introduction

USAID strongly believes that use of social and behavior change communication (SBCC) improves results for international development programs. A decade ago, USAID convened SBCC experts to explore how best to improve population-level health and development outcomes in developing countries. One conclusion was that mass media campaigns have the potential to reach a large audience at a relatively low cost, and as such, have an important role to play in SBCC to improve child survival in low-income and middle-income countries¹. USAID's recently established Behavioral and Social Science Working Group aims to increase the quantity and quality of behavior change programming in international development assistance programs through the sharing of evidence and best practices across the Agency.

Evolution of Behavior Change Programming at USAID

USAID has a long history in Social and Behavior Change programming, which has evolved over the last 40 years from basic health education or information, education and communication (IEC) through SBCC, to the current term Social and Behavior Change (SBC). SBC aims to affect key behaviors and social norms by addressing their individual, social, and structural factors. SBC is grounded in several disciplines, including strategic communication, marketing, psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, behavioral economics, and the behavioral sciences. Today, USAID supports SBC programs in the majority of countries in which it works, with SBCC, including mass media programming, being one of several strategies with evidence to

¹ Fox E , Obregón R . Population-level behavior change to enhance child survival and development in low- and middle-income countries. J Health Commun 2014;19 Suppl 1:3–9.doi:10.1080/10810730.2014.934937

recommend widespread implementation. International development programs frequently use SBCC as part of a package of interventions to influence behavior change. Communication-based behavior change interventions, such as mass media, are usually linked with other SBC approaches, such as structural interventions, including supportive policies and service delivery improvement for greater impact.

Evidence for SBC

Research clearly demonstrates that repeat exposure to messages is key to program impact—although the level of exposure required may vary based on audience, channel, and behavior of interest (e.g. vaccination, malaria care seeking for young children, voting rights or wild meat consumption)². High-quality formative research—both quantitative and qualitative—is critical to successful SBC programming as it highlights the barriers and motivators for key behaviors. Once formative research has been conducted, programs must consider how best to present findings to the local creative professionals responsible for developing a brand, and how to partner with local media outlets (e.g., TV, radio, social media). SBCC programming is most effective when developed with local writers, designers, actors, and artists so that it closely parallels the lived reality of target audiences.

USAID invests continuously in SBC evidence generation to inform programming in diverse contexts. For example, ongoing research related to anti-corruption programming aims to analyze social norms and behavioral approaches to combating corruption. Another example includes foundational research looking at use of SBC strategies to push for changes in norms and attitudes that are barriers to women's political participation and leadership.

Illustrative Examples of Using SBCC for Better Health and Development Outcomes

Multi media campaigns including social media

- **Global Health Security:** For Global Health Security, SBCC, including Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), is an essential component of field programs. In Uganda, during a 2022 Ebola virus outbreak, implementers shared information about Ebola with over seven million people through mass media, social media, community meetings, household visits, key influencers, boda-boda (motorbike) drivers, and religious, cultural, and traditional leaders. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a free, on-demand information service was accessed by over 2.5 million people to receive priority zoonotic disease messaging. Côte d'Ivoire utilized its rumor management system to systematically track and address 1,332 rumors and misinformation. Guinea reached over 350,000 persons through social media posts on prevention of Lassa fever, Avian influenza, brucellosis, Ebola, and COVID-19. Mali reached over 10 million people to promote safe behaviors for zoonotic diseases.
- **HIV/AIDS:** In Mozambique, the multi-pronged *Somos Iguais* campaign aims to normalize treatment with a particular focus on men 20 to 34 years old living with HIV who are much less likely to know their sero-status and be on treatment compared to women in the same age cohort. The channels used in this SBCC campaign include radio and TV spots, social media and male champions who serve as role models and coaches. Results to date from Phase 2 of the campaign which began in April 2022 are promising with significant increases in

² Murray J, Head R, Sarrassat S, *et al* Modelling the effect of a mass radio campaign on child mortality using facility utilization data and the Lives Saved Tool (LiST): findings from a cluster randomized trial in Burkina Faso *BMJ Global Health* 2018;3:e000808.

treatment initiation and re-engagement among men, the majority (71 percent) of whom report that the campaign somewhat or significantly influenced their decision to do so.

- **Malaria:** In Tanzania, using local mass media, as well as community-based and facility-based interpersonal communication, the President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI) supported a 21 percent increase in care-seeking by caregivers for children with a sick child (from 68 percent to 89 percent) over the five-year period of the intervention to address barriers to care seeking. In Uganda, caregivers exposed to the PMI-supported “Chase Malaria to Zero” campaign two or more times were more than twice as likely to seek care for children with a fever. The campaign included targeted radio and television programs, community road shows, and interactive print materials, including a personal risk assessment tool.
- **Multi-Sectoral Nutrition:** Mass media interventions complement individual and group counseling, helping shift social norms to support good nutrition. In Nepal, Mozambique, and Niger, USAID supports local radio programming on maternal and child nutrition, including a call-in component where people can ask nutrition questions to local experts. In Ethiopia, USAID broadcasts nutrition messages on education radio stations to adolescents, emphasizing learnings from health and nutrition clubs. Text messages to pregnant women, caregivers of young children, and frontline health workers reinforce nutrition programming in a number of countries, including Nepal and Ethiopia. In the Kyrgyz Republic, USAID hosted an Instagram live feed with a popular blogger on child feeding.
- **Voluntary Family Planning and Reproductive Health (FP/RH):** USAID supported the *Confiance Totale* radio campaign of public service announcements (PSAs) in Côte d’Ivoire, Togo, Burkina Faso and Niger. The campaign was evaluated in Côte d’Ivoire from May-September 2020 via mobile phone survey and in Togo in April 2022 using household survey methods. Among the targeted audience, results from these evaluations demonstrated a 45 percent exposure rate. Reported exposure to the PSAs in both countries was significantly associated with priority outcomes of interest, including having spoken with their partner about family planning (FP) in the past months, having communicated with a health care provider about FP in the last month and current FP use. In francophone Africa young people are producing videos that thank their parents, friends and others who helped them through reproductive health challenges. The USAID-supported *Merci Mon Héros* (MMH, “thank you, my hero” in French) campaign has been broadcast on TV and radio in at least nine countries and has enjoyed a broader reach through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other mobile platforms. According to a cross-sectional household survey conducted in Côte d’Ivoire, and results from a similar survey in Niger, those exposed to the campaign were more likely to report currently using an FP method and having spoken to someone about FP/RH compared to those who were not exposed.
- **Feed the Future:** Evidence and Action Towards Safe, Nutritious Food (EatSafe), is testing traditional market-based interventions that influence consumer behaviors to demand safer food. EatSafe has designed its SBCC interventions to increase the salience of food safety among target audiences, and impact their ability for behavior change. In Nigeria, like many low- and middle-income countries, radio is one of the most common mass media platforms used. EatSafe developed the Safe Food Radio Show: “*Sayen Nagari, Mayar da Kudi Gid*” in Hausa, which translates to “*Buying quality products is like taking your money back home with you*” in English. The show provides listeners with food safety best practices and advice on how to impact food safety standards in the market. In its first 12 weeks, millions tuned in,

and more than 300 people have called in with questions — highlighting not only broad interest, but also the show’s impact resulting from food safety SBCC interventions.

- **Environment and Biodiversity:** Beliefs in the spiritual power of wildlife products to bring good luck and protect from harm underlie demand for ivory and tiger products in Southeast Asia. In January 2023, USAID’s Reducing Demand for Wildlife, implemented a social media campaign in Thailand to counter these beliefs. The *No Ivory No Tiger Amulets* campaign showcased a Buddhist monk and a Buddhist nun discussing why the use of ivory, tiger and other wildlife products does not bring luck or happiness, and does not align with Buddhist scripture. The campaign was viewed 3.3 million times, and an online survey among 352 respondents revealed that 73 percent of those exposed to the campaign say they will definitely not buy ivory and tiger products in the future. In Thailand, USAID’s Reducing Demand for Wildlife recently concluded its “Only Elephants Wear Ivory Best” campaign, which significantly reduced demand for ivory products. Among 765 respondents polled in an online post-campaign survey revealed that 87 percent of those exposed to the campaign reported they have a reduced intention to purchase such products, compared to 77 percent among those not exposed to the campaign. The Facebook campaign ran from September 26 to November 20, 2022 and reached more than 1.1 million viewers.
- **Democracy, Human Rights and Governance:** Enhancing Social Norms and Communication to Improve Rule of Law activity in Colombia has a cross-cutting SBCC strategy that aims to create positive changes in citizens’ behaviors related to efficient and effective access to justice in Indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and other under-served communities. USAID achieves this through the design of communication campaigns, dissemination of news and successful experiences, local training and capacity building, and strategic partnerships with the media, communications collectives, counterparts, and civil society organizations. The activity also held a Behavioral Change Seminar with over 100 people, including justice officials and civil society organizations, on how to apply behavioral sciences and social norms methods and identified opportunities to apply them to increase citizen trust in the justice system.
- **Girls’ Education and Gender Equality.** Niger leads the world in girls who are married before the age of 18 (76 percent of girls marry before 18). *GirlEngage*, a USAID-supported program in Niger, uses girl-led communication campaigns to drive the messaging and delivery of SBCC content, providing space for adolescent girls to become change agents in their communities and establishing a foundation for long-term cultural shifts and the disintegration of harmful power structures. The project is also focused on tackling systemic issues, including access to quality education, fewer economic opportunities for women and girls, and the lack of or weak enforcement of laws that protect girls.

Private Sector Partnerships

- **COVID-19:** In Burma, USAID teamed with Grab, Myanmar’s leading ride-hailing company, to link users to the “Protect Together” campaign and disseminate messages about wearing masks and washing hands. Information was shared via the ride-hailing company’s mobile application. Approximately two million people downloaded the Grab application countrywide. “This partnership has contributed to the larger goal of Grab to keep our passengers and drivers safe,” said Cindy Toh, country head of Grab Myanmar. The campaign reached over five million people since launching in June 2022. Also, thanks to a partnership with Airtel Nigeria, a leading mobile phone service provider, USAID is making COVID-19 prevention information available across the country with “Press 1” for

Prevention. Starting in March 2022, Airtel has reached one million subscribers daily with reminders and alerts via text and interactive voice messages about pandemic safety. This activity, along with an on-demand interactive voice response service, 3–2–1, where subscribers could access information about COVID-19, had a reach of over 1.2 million people, with 308,516 callers. Airtel is also providing access to the government’s COVID-19 information website to all of its customers even if they do not pay for data plans. In FY 2022, Airtel’s estimated cost share contribution in one year in Nigeria was \$473,300.

- **Maternal, Child Health (MCH):** The *Albishirin Ku!* (AK!) radio drama show and accompanying radio spots broadcast in partnership with media houses in northern Nigeria. *Albishirin Ku*, which means “Glad Tidings” in Hausa, is a common greeting when bringing good news. The AK! radio show focuses on a broad array of integrated health topics including family planning, maternal and child health, nutrition and malaria. The show has been extremely popular from the start, with recall levels ranging between 70 percent to 90 percent among respondents to a bi-annual omnibus survey. In FY 2022, the AK! drama aired 9,839 times and AK! spots aired 21,795 times. Compared to the baseline in 2019, the mid-line survey conducted in 2021 found notable and uniformly positive increases for seven health behaviors among women including voluntary family planning use (9 percent to 15 percent), 4+ antenatal care visits (23 percent to 27 percent), exclusive breastfeeding (20 to 27 percent) and other MCH related health behaviors.

Interpersonal communication and community engagement

- **Nutrition:** Interpersonal communication, an important accompaniment to mass media, allows community health workers and caregivers to engage in individualized dialogue on the specific nutritional needs for each child’s age and developmental stage. USAID maintains a publicly available image bank for infant and young child feeding, providing drawings of nutrition behaviors in different global contexts that are used by local governments and partners to develop materials, such as counseling cards or handouts, that enhance interpersonal communication. In many countries, including Mozambique, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, USAID funds peer support groups for nutrition, where trained facilitators lead weekly groups through discussions on nutrition topics, sharing key messages on child feeding and development while also providing individualized counseling.
- **Education:** USAID’s *Tusome Pamoja* (Let’s Read Together) activity in Tanzania supported partnerships and communication between parents and teachers so that children’s formal education could be supplemented by out-of-school literacy and learning. The program was able to create awareness about the importance of reading at home and was complemented by the provision of books to families and training for parents on book reading with children. This holistic approach helped change the behaviors of parents and fostered their involvement in childrens’ out-of-school early learning and literacy skills.
- **Humanitarian Assistance:** USAID’s project, PRO-WASH, developed an SBC tool called *Make Me A Change Agent* to strengthen the capacity of promoter and extension agents leading WASH, Agriculture, and Livelihoods Activities to engage with communities on behavior change and adoption of new techniques and practices. Through its water and sanitation (WASH) programming, partners promote SBC tools such as integrated WASH and COVID-messaging, mass media activities, community engagement activities such as community led total sanitation, storytelling to improve water supply functionality, and development of

barrier measures to promote community access.