Advancing Social and Behavior Change Measurement in Family Planning

Breakthrough RESEARCH

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Advancing Social and Behavior Change Measurement in Family Planning

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Breakthrough RESEARCH is USAID’s flagship social and behavior change (SBC) research and evaluation project to drive the generation, packaging, and use of innovative SBC research to inform programming. A six-year project (2017–2023), Breakthrough RESEARCH was led by the Population Council in collaboration with our consortium partners: Tulane University, Avenir Health, Population Reference Bureau, Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University, and ideas42. Our approach was to foster collaboration and shared learning, ensure SBC programs are based in ‘what works’, elevate the impact of evidence-based SBC programs, and put evidence into practice. Breakthrough RESEARCH did this by assessing the evidence, identifying priority research questions, designing and implementing research studies to fill evidence gaps and strengthen programs, and synthesizing and packaging evidence for use.

Within the breadth of our research portfolio, Breakthrough RESEARCH had four main project legacy areas: provider behavior change (PBC); integrated SBC; advancing SBC measurement; and costing and cost-effectiveness of SBC. For each of these legacy areas, Breakthrough RESEARCH curated a legacy resource highlighting the state-of-the-art evidence and the tools and guidance produced by the project over the past six years to advance evidence-based SBC programming.

This legacy resource highlights evidence, insights, and learnings from Breakthrough RESEARCH’s work to advance SBC measurement and evaluation and fill critical evidence gaps. This document is a compilation of selected resources that do not represent the full breadth of Breakthrough RESEARCH work. This document links to the available resources for more in-depth learning and understanding, including all relevant citations of the existing evidence base. For more information on Breakthrough RESEARCH’s work on SBC measurement, visit https://breakthroughactionandresearch.org/sbc-innovation-measurement/.

A growing body of evidence suggests that SBC interventions improve family planning/reproductive health outcomes, such as directly increasing contraceptive uptake or increasing contraceptive use through pathways that address intermediate determinants such as attitudes around family planning, yet barriers still exist to SBC inclusion in investments.

Some SBC interventions are more effective than others, and the estimated effectiveness of SBC interventions varies depending on the measures we use to assess them. The measurement of SBC interventions and SBC implementation science approaches can help in addressing questions around scale-up and program replication.

SBC approaches can support family planning programs and the standardized measurement of these approaches guided by a defined theory of change is critical to understanding their effectiveness and contributing to their success.

Inside this legacy resource:

- Explore key measurement insights from Breakthrough RESEARCH
- Learn about state-of-the-art measurement evidence Breakthrough RESEARCH has generated
- Discover tools you can use to strengthen measurement of SBC interventions and SBC approaches in family planning programs
- Find calls to action to continue to advance evidence-based SBC measurement

Breakthrough RESEARCH conducted 53 research studies over the past 6 years!

Breakthrough RESEARCH worked in 19 countries!
Research and Learning Agendas

Breakthrough RESEARCH’s most important contributions to the FP field have been the development of comprehensive research and learning agendas and the implementation of periodic Review Agendas. One of Breakthrough RESEARCH’s core priorities is to invest in learning that accelerates progress toward the goals of the FP2030 Global Family Planning Scorecard.

The 2016 Review Agenda focused on strengthening SBC measurement and evaluation. This focused analysis resulted in two key recommendations: (1) develop an evidence-based framework to guide the measurement of SBC outcomes; and (2) conduct assessments of the costs, benefits, and feasibility of strengthening SBC measurement and evaluation.

The 2017 Review Agenda was the first to be explicitly developed around strengthening SBC measurement, and addressed the need for more comprehensive and systematic measurement of SBC outcomes. In 2018, the Review Agenda focused on strengthening SBC evaluation, and called for research that would support the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework for SBC.

To support these recommendations, Breakthrough RESEARCH generated evidence to support better measurement of SBC and its application in improving family planning program design and outcome monitoring.

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How to Use a Theory of Change to Monitor and Evaluate SBC Programs

Behavior change theory explains the determinants that make it easier or harder to change health-seeking behaviors. Behavior change theory should be incorporated into an SBC program's theory of change to illustrate how or why a desired change is expected to occur and provide guidance on how to measure behavioral determinants that influence program goals and objectives. These behavioral determinants should be addressed both in SBC programming and measured in SBC evaluations. Breakthrough RESEARCH developed a “How-To” guide for using a theory of change that can support family planning program planners and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff in their efforts to design and implement SBC programs. This guide is intended to illustrate how or why a desired change is expected to occur and provide guidance on how to measure the factors contributing to behavioral outcomes. The guide is a step-by-step manual to help family planning program planners design guided theory-driven evaluation evidence-based implementation tools used to track results over time and at program completion. Users will be guided through each step shown on this page and select an analysis pathway based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to illustrate how or why a desired change is expected to occur. Twelve recommended SBC indicators for family planning are outlined in the guides, including this page in the potential behavioral change theory to monitor and evaluate SBC programs, with details and example applications along the way.

**Theory of Planned Behavior**

[Diagram: Theory of Planned Behavior]

**SIX STEPS TO SELECT AND USE A BEHAVIORAL THEORY OF CHANGE**

1. **Select a Behavioral Theory**
   - Understand the key behaviors and associated indicators for the theory of change.
   - Identify the target audience.
   - Determine the objective.

2. **Define the Theory of Change**
   - Define the implementation strategy and key actions.
   - Define the measurable outcomes.
   - Define the behavior change goals.

3. **Map the Behavior Change**
   - Map the behavior change for the target audience.
   - Map the behavior change for the program.
   - Map the behavior change for the intervention.

4. **Select Indicators**
   - Select indicators for the target audience.
   - Select indicators for the program.
   - Select indicators for the intervention.

5. **Develop a Theory-Driven Evaluation Plan**
   - Develop a theory-driven evaluation plan.
   - Develop a theory-driven evaluation framework.
   - Develop a theory-driven evaluation design.

6. **Implement the Evaluation Plan**
   - Implement the evaluation plan.
   - Implement the evaluation framework.
   - Implement the evaluation design.

**Twelve Recommended SBC Indicators for Family Planning**

1. **Exposure to SBC programming**
   - Number of people reached with SBC intervention activities.

2. **Target audience reached**
   - Number of people reached with SBC intervention activities.

3. **Behavioral indicators**
   - Number of people reached with SBC intervention activities.

4. **Behavioral outcomes**
   - Percentage of non-users intending to use a modern FP method.

5. **Intention & behavioral outcomes**
   - Percentage of modern FP users intending to use a modern FP method.

6. **Intention & behavioral outcomes**
   - Percentage of target audience intending to use a modern FP method.

7. **Intermediate outcomes**
   - Percentage of target audience currently using a modern FP method.

8. **Intention & behavioral outcomes**
   - Percentage of target audience currently using a modern FP method.

9. **Intention & behavioral outcomes**
   - Percentage of target audience currently using a modern FP method.

10. **Intention & behavioral outcomes**
    - Percentage of target audience currently using a modern FP method.

11. **Intention & behavioral outcomes**
    - Percentage of target audience currently using a modern FP method.

12. **Intention & behavioral outcomes**
    - Percentage of target audience currently using a modern FP method.

**Additional Information**

SBC Measurement Learning Courses

Recognizing the need for support and tools to help program planners and managers to develop robust theory-driven M&E plans, Breakthrough RESEARCH has developed two learning courses of special interest for the family planning community. Each module of each course includes instructional videos with resources for easy reference.

The first course on Monitoring and Evaluating Social and Behavior Change Approaches is designed for program managers and midlevel professionals who are not trained as researchers but need to understand the rationale for using a theory-based approach to designing programs and the measurement processes involved. This course aims to support SBC programs by explaining how programs can develop a robust theory-driven M&E plan that provides evidence to strengthen implementation. The course also aims to support program evaluators through the use of a M&E plan developed to affect the change pathway in the defined theory of change for the program. A M&E plan for an SBC program outlines a rationale to measure progress and results following the change pathway. To do this, they are collected and monitored, and plans for how data will be used and results will be communicated. A M&E plan for an SBC program helps ensure that data will be used efficiently to improve the program and report on results in a user-friendly way.

The second course, Measuring Social and Behavior Change Program or Campaign Exposure, aims to support SBC programs that apply different approaches, such as mass media and interpersonal communication, to reach target audiences. This course is designed to help programs develop tools to evaluate how the extent to which target audiences are exposed to SBC programs and campaigns. To do this, the course takes a more comprehensive approach to measuring exposure to SBC programs and campaigns. Exposure measures can be used to assess respondents' awareness, sentiment, and comprehension to a campaign message. In addition, exposure measures should be tailored to address measurement challenges such as selective attention and social desirability bias. Understanding levels of exposure to SBC programs and campaigns is useful to inform implementation and determine budgets for future programs or campaigns. The course provides examples of SBC program or campaign exposure measures including measurement challenges and how to minimize error. Examples of questions and data sources are provided along with recommendations for how exposure data can be used to inform SBC programs.
Breakthrough ACTION applied the MSC methodology to a mixed media campaign that addresses intergenerational communication in Côte d'Ivoire. This story highlights the importance of involving different stakeholders, such as parents, youth, and teachers—and the application involving different audiences, such as parents, youth, and teachers—and the application of audience segmentation using behavioral determinant factors to develop tailored SBC approaches that are tailored to the target audience.

**HIGHLIGHTED SUMMARIES OF MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORIES**

**Côte d’Ivoire—Adult female**

Since coming the campaign, I’ve gained the courage to talk to my children about topics related to sexuality, which was very difficult for me to do before. Communication with my children improved and the confidence is there! This self-confidence led her to spread knowledge from the MMH campaign to her family and friends in her neighborhood.

**Malick, 25 years old**

Before the campaign, Malick used to beat his daughter when she returned from her outings, making their relationship difficult. He attended an event encouraging positive parent-child communication and became interested in learning more about the role of adult allies, or “heroes,” that support youth to navigate sexual and reproductive health challenges. Malick recently decided to stop beating her daughter and now helps her with her homework and encourages her to communicate with her children and to stop beating her daughter. Malick and his daughter have a more relaxed and peaceful relationship.

**Niger—Adult male**

Salissou, 25 years old, is convinced that he has mastered the objective of the “Merci Mon Héros” campaign, which is to improve intergenerational communication affecting family planning. Salissou will now help peers and young girls who are facing the difficulties of their first menstruation period to explain how to manage when parents sometimes are unable to help. According to him, parents cannot leave the tables and therefore it is up to him, the new generation, to do it.

**Niger—Young adult female**

Before, Ali was afraid to go to the doctor for sexual health concerns. Now, thanks to the campaign, regardless of whether the doctor is a woman or a man, he’s not afraid, because he knows that between the doctor and the patient, there is always trust.

Breakthrough ACTION and Breakthrough RESEARCH applied the MSC methodology to a mixed media campaign that addresses intergenerational communication in Côte d'Ivoire. This story highlights the importance of involving different stakeholders, such as parents, youth, and teachers—and the application of audience segmentation using behavioral determinant factors to develop tailored SBC approaches that are tailored to the target audience.
Using Social Listening and Social Media Monitoring for SBC Programs

Social media is increasingly being recognized as a powerful tool for understanding public opinion and behavior. Social listening, the process of tracking mentions and conversations related to a topic, program, or brand, can provide valuable insights for SBC programs. By monitoring social media, SBC programs can gather real-time data on public sentiment and engagement, which can inform program design and adaptation.

Breakthrough RESEARCH has developed several tools that family planning programs can use to gather information about target audiences’ knowledge and attitudes, exposure, and responses to SBC interventions. These tools can help programs measure the effectiveness of their strategies and make informed decisions about future actions.

### Future SBC Approaches

Future SBC approaches to strengthen family planning programs should commit to standardized, robust measurement to enable effectiveness evaluations that support continued investments in evidence-based SBC programs.

- **SBC PROGRAMS:** SBC programs can help fill the gaps in measurement by ensuring inclusion of standardized indicators of behavioral determinants and behavioral outcomes in their results frameworks. They should consider using a behavioral theory of change to guide their M&E efforts and go beyond a focus on output-level indicators.

- **SERVICE DELIVERY PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE:** Voluntary family planning efforts and programs that incorporate SBC approaches should commit to monitoring and evaluating their SBC efforts using established measurement tools, such as the Twelve Recommended SBC Indicators for Family Planning.

- **SBC RESEARCHERS:** Researchers should continue to use existing SBC indicators and measurement tools and encourage the inclusion of modules that collect behavioral determinant data in surveys, including large-scale surveys, and build the capacity of implementers and policymakers to use behavioral determinant data.

- **DONORS:** Donors should commit to investing in robust evaluation and standardized measurement of behavioral determinants and exposure to SBC approaches in family planning programs as a way to address global data equity issues and data gaps, so that scaled programs are informed by the evidence they need.