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Advancing Social and Behavior Change Measurement in Family Planning

Breakthrough RESEARCH

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Advancing Social and Behavior Change Measurement in Family Planning
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/br-legacy-area-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.1 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.1 The measurement of SBC interventions and SBC implementation science approaches can lead to important 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.

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Over the past six years, **Breakthrough Research** generated evidence to support better measurement of SBC and its application in improving family planning program design and outcome monitoring.

### SBC Indicator Matrix

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**Cost-effectiveness**
- Sustainable: The long-term benefits of SBC interventions are compared to the costs incurred.
- Gender: The impact on women and girls is evaluated.
- Cost-benefit ratio: The ratio of the benefits to the costs of SBC interventions.

**Sustainable effectiveness**
- Gender: The long-term health and social benefits for women and girls are assessed.
- Cost-benefit ratio: The ratio of the benefits to the costs of SBC interventions.

**Gender**
- Cost-benefit ratio: The ratio of the benefits to the costs of SBC interventions.

**Cost-benefit ratio**
- Measurement: The extent to which SBC interventions are cost-effective.
- Cost-impact: The extent to which SBC interventions have a positive impact on health outcomes.

**Measurement**
- Sustainability: The extent to which SBC interventions have a sustainable impact.

**Cost-impact**
- Sustainability: The extent to which SBC interventions have a sustainable impact.

**Sustainability**
- Gender: The long-term health and social benefits for women and girls are assessed.
- Cost-benefit ratio: The ratio of the benefits to the costs of SBC interventions.

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**Strengthening Social and Behavior Change Monitoring and Evaluation for Family Planning**

When SBC programs are implemented, evaluation—measuring behaviors relevant for SBC, such as attitudes and norms, and often not systematically applied to monitor and evaluate program performance, finding funding and support for social and programmatic investments, and plans of theory change—is critical to evaluating whether programs have achieved their goals. Global family planning programs, such as FHI 360’s Disaggregates Partnership, focus on regular measurement and reporting systems to ensure the latest data are available to support decisions and improve family planning programs. Yet, even core indicators, with a few exceptions, are not consistently and systemically updated and serve decision-makers as such as availability of adequate cost-effectiveness monitoring and evaluation tools.

Breakthrough’s work is intended to fill the gap in SBC measurement and evaluation tools, as indicators are well-documented in the field. The Breakthrough Evidence Review (BER) was designed to identify gaps in the evidence base and to guide the development of a set of evidence-based indicators to support SBC measurement and evaluation. This approach is intended to help the field make better use of existing data and information on SBC investments, technical approaches, and indicators in four West African countries to better understand the family planning measurement landscape in the region and to inform the development of SBC indicators to fill some of the identified gaps (Table 9 in the report), mapping aimed to identify strengths and gaps in current approaches to SBC measurement by mapping existing indicators being used at the national, community, facility, and client level. The mapping is an important step in identifying gaps in the current measurement landscape, which is a critical first step in strengthening SBC measurement and evaluation tools, and is intended to help researchers, implementers, and policymakers strengthen SBC measurement and evaluation practices.
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 integrated 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 in both 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 ensuring that programs are designed, implemented, and evaluated using a theory of change. This guide reflects the theory of change that should guide development of the M&E plan. The guide is a step-by-step manual to help family planning program planners develop a robust, theory-driven evaluation plan that results tested over time and across program comparators. Users will be guided through six steps shown on this page: select and use a theory of change, develop an SBC program using a behavioral theory, evaluate SBC impact, report findings, and communicate the results to stakeholders.

**Step 1: Select a Behavioral Theory of Change**

Behavior change theory should be incorporated into SBC program’s theory of change. The guide is a step-by-step manual to help family planning programs design a theory-driven evaluation plan that results tested over time and across program comparators.

**Step 2: Evaluate SBC Impact**

Evaluate SBC impact through the use of evidence-based indicators and M&E planning. The guide is a step-by-step manual to help family planning programs design a theory-driven evaluation plan that results tested over time and across program comparators.

**Step 3: Communicate Evaluation Findings**

Communicate evaluation findings to relevant stakeholders to support evidence-based decision making. The guide is a step-by-step manual to help family planning programs design a theory-driven evaluation plan that results tested over time and across program comparators.

**Step 6: Use a Behavior Theory of Change**

Tools you can use: Implementation, Theory of Change, M&E planning programs. The guide is a step-by-step manual to help family planning programs design a theory-driven evaluation plan that results tested over time and across program comparators.
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.

This first course on Monitoring and Evaluating Social and Behavior Change Approaches is designed for program managers and midlevel professionals who are not trained in measurement and need to understand the incentives for using a theory-based approach to designing programs and the measurement processes involved. This course aims to support SBC programs by exploring how programs can develop a robust theory-driven M&E plan that provides measurable and meaningful indicators. The course also aims to support program evaluators through the use of a M&E plan developed to reflect the change pathways in the defined theory of change for the program. A M&E plan will be an SBC program’s most important tool for understanding how programs are working and how to improve their performance. A M&E plan for an SBC program is a roadmap for success that will be reviewed and updated periodically. A M&E plan for an SBC program will help to ensure that data will be used efficiently to improve the program and report on results in a timely manner.

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 for M&E officers to help them understand how to capture and use SBC exposure data to inform, monitor, and evaluate SBC program performance. Determining the extent to which target audiences are exposed to SBC approaches requires specific methods that are unique to the chosen approach. For example, household surveys could be used to assess exposure to a mass media campaign while social media monitoring can be used to assess exposure to internet-based campaigns. Exposure measures can be used to assess respondents' awareness, sentiment, and comprehension of a campaign message. In addition, more detailed methods and measures should be tailored to address the level of detail needed to meet the needs of SBC programs and campaigns. Exposure measures can be used to inform SBC programs and campaigns about the extent of exposure to program or campaign messages over time. The course provides an overview of SBC program or campaign exposure measures and provides examples of SBC programs and campaigns that are informing implementation and other tactics for future programs or campaigns. The course will provide an overview 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 examples for how exposure data can be used to inform SBC programs.

Expanding the tools in the research and evaluation toolbox to better understand how SBC approaches can strengthen family planning programs will depend on both existing and new methods that can help program planners and managers understand how to best measure the effectiveness of these programs. Applications of these methodologies that are not new but may be "new" to SBC approaches in the family planning field can yield innovative insights. In this section, we highlight Breakthrough RESEARCH’s applications of three of those methodologies: most significant change, audience segmentation, and social listening.
While complexity aware methods are not new, as SBC programs expand to create a more nuanced understanding of the individual and contextual drivers of behavior. Webinar presenters explored how segmentation approaches are applied to current SBC programs across various health areas and highlighted the need for integrated communication, tailoring messages to resonate with each audience subgroup. More recent applications of audience segmentation for family planning have focused on segmentation by demographic characteristics.

Breakthrough RESEARCH dug deeper into segmentation approaches. The application of this methodology went beyond using demographics for segmentation to inform integrated family planning and maternal health programs in Niger. Breakthrough RESEARCH applied audience segmentation using behavioral determinant approaches. Understanding the specific behavioral determinants and barriers to health-seeking for reproductive health services outcomes by creating and disseminating content that highlights intergenerational communication in West Africa. To help break down taboos around talking about sexual and reproductive health issues and family planning access and use.

Breakthrough RESEARCH applied the MSC methodology to a mixed media campaign that addresses intergenerational communication in West Africa. To help break down taboos around talking about sexual and reproductive health issues and family planning access and use.

**State-of-the-Art Evidence**

**Family Planning and Reproductive Health Outcomes**

Changes are of greatest significance. While complexity aware methods are not new, as SBC programs expand to create a more nuanced understanding of the individual and contextual drivers of behavior. Webinar presenters explored how segmentation approaches are applied to current SBC programs across various health areas and highlighted the need for integrated communication, tailoring messages to resonate with each audience subgroup. More recent applications of audience segmentation for family planning have focused on segmentation by demographic characteristics.

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Using Social Listening and Social Media Monitoring for SBC Programs

Social media use is increasing globally, increasingly people use social media to express themselves and engage in conversations about their own and their health. Social media monitoring emerged as a way to track engagement and reactions to shared messages across social media platforms, including audiences reached and conversation sentiment. Social media and engage in conversations about their own and their health. Social media monitoring emerged as a way to track engagements and reactions to shared messages across social media platforms, including audiences reached and conversation sentiment (feelings and attitudes about a particular topic that are expressed on social media). In more recent years, social media monitoring and social listening—or the process of tracking the number of mentions and conversation content related to a topic, program, or brand on social media—have been applied in other contexts to better understand campaigns, including in public health and family planning/sexual and reproductive health campaigns. SBC programs and family planning programs that incorporate SBC approaches can leverage social listening to gather insights related to people’s health-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Insights generated through social listening and social media monitoring can be used together with other M&E techniques to produce data-rich learning environments for program design and adaptation.

Breakthrough RESEARCH has developed several tools that family planning programs can use to gather information about target audiences’ health-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. How to leverage social listening to inform SBC programs and service delivery programs and communities of practice offer practical guidance on how to use social listening and social monitoring as tools to inform SBC programs, with applied examples and lessons learned from Francophone West Africa.

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 behaviors in their results frameworks, using a behavioral theory of change to guide their M&E efforts, and going 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 monitor and evaluate these 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.

This call to action is critical for FP2030 commitment makers, and the effort of our new regional FP2030 hubs will be to support commitment makers by transferring this knowledge, great tools, and briefs to family planning decision-makers and programmers to measure whether programming has been successful and whether the outcomes are supporting changes in social norms, attitudes, behavior, and increased agency.

—Jason Bremner
FP2030