

Social and Behavior Change Communication

Achieving Sustainable Health Impact



Achieving behavior change can mean the difference between health and illness, wanted and unwanted pregnancies, even life and death, but motivating change requires special expertise. Abt Associates has a track record in Social and Behavior Change Communication—from building demand for zinc and oral rehydration salts to prevent diarrhea in children in Ghana, to boosting family planning rates in Jordan.

What is Social and Behavior Change Communication?

Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) is a complicated, multi-faceted, interactive process that draws on research, theory, and practical experience to provide actionable health information to key audiences, thereby motivating them to reduce their health risks, seek appropriate health products and services, and act as advocates to others while changing social norms in the community at-large.

Making Strategy a Reality

For more than 20 years, Abt has implemented successful, compelling SBCC strategies worldwide to achieve measurable, sustained improvements in health. We have developed tools for building SBCC capacity including the *mBCC Field Guide* and both an instructor-led and e-Learning SBCC course. At the core of our success are our talented professionals—experts in anthropology, behavioral economics, marketing, and public health—who combine their expertise and creativity to design and implement effective needs-based, culturally-sensitive SBCC programs.

SBCC involves a thorough understanding of the barriers to change and knowledge of the levers to push to promote healthier behaviors. It requires social marketing and communication expertise and experience in building and maintaining public-private partnerships, taking advantage of the contributions each sector can make to achieve lasting public health impact.



Photo by Abdelrazzaq Awad, J-CAP Activity

Services

- Advocacy
- Capacity Building and Provider Training
- Community Mobilization
- Formative and Evaluative Research
- Interpersonal Communication
- Mobile Phone-based Strategies
- Program Monitoring and Evaluation
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Social, Digital, and Traditional Media
- Social Marketing
- Technical Assistance

Areas of Expertise

- Avian and Pandemic Influenza
- Emerging Infectious Diseases
- Health Systems Strengthening
- HIV/AIDS
- Malaria
- Maternal and Child Health
- Non-communicable Diseases
- Reproductive Health and Family Planning
- Tuberculosis

Selected Projects Featuring Behavior Change Communication

Jordan Communication, Advocacy and Policy (J-CAP) Activity

J-CAP applies a mix of SBCC, enabling environment, capacity-building, demand generation, and innovative research tactics to develop and implement effective strategies to address longstanding barriers to family planning in Jordan. All J-CAP interventions emphasize the integration of female empowerment and male engagement, youth involvement, and reaching Syrian refugees living outside the camps. J-CAP works closely with the Ministry of Health, Higher Population Council, and local partners from national institutions and civil society, while simultaneously engaging communities through multi-channel campaigns to amplify their voices.

Zambia Integrated Systems Strengthening Project (ZISSP)

ZISSP strengthened government systems and capacity for health planning, management, and delivery of quality, high-impact health services across national, provincial, and district levels of the health system. The Zambian Ministry of Health and Ministry of Community Development Mother and Child Health utilized a number of national-level Technical Working Groups (TWGs), including one on BCC, to provide a forum for coordination and collaboration. A BCC TWG member noted that, “ZISSP worked very closely with the MOH and the different partners to develop training materials for the BCC TWG. The purpose was to have standard BCC training material to build capacity of the health promotion staff, the community members, and all stakeholders involved in health promotion work.”

Vietnam Avian and Pandemic Influenza Initiative

Vietnam is a country of 86 million people who raise 226 million chickens annually. Poultry can sometimes carry zoonotic diseases which are infectious to humans. Working with provincial counterparts over three years, the Abt-led Avian and Pandemic Influenza Initiative established BCC expert teams in eight provinces who analyzed communication challenges, and then designed BCC strategies and materials using channels such as small group discussions, community events, and TV ads. The Vietnam Farmer’s Union adopted the print materials to train extension workers helping farmers to improve agricultural practices, reduce risk behaviors and eliminate disease transmission.

Africa Indoor Residual Spraying (AIRS) Mali—mHealth Pilot to Prevent Malaria

In Mali, residents have traditionally been alerted about impending indoor residual spraying campaigns primarily through door-to-door visits by community mobilizers who inform them when spray operators will be coming and what they need to do to prepare. The AIRS Mali Project piloted a mobile mass-messaging service in three villages of the Koulikoro District (selecting four comparison villages) to prepare homes for the spray campaign without reliance on community mobilizers. Pilot households received text and voice messages before, during, and after the campaign. The campaign found that mobile messages were effective in increasing the number of households reached, but community mobilizers were a better channel for preparing households. Working with both channels results in more households being well-prepared.

Strengthening Health Outcomes through the Private Sector (SHOPS) Ghana

One in five children under age five suffers from diarrhea in Ghana. To remedy this problem, SHOPS worked with Ghana’s Pharmacy Council to train over-the-counter medicine sellers (OTCMS) in treatment of diarrhea with zinc and oral rehydration salts (ORS). To reinforce key messages from the training, SHOPS implemented a text message campaign with a select number of OTCMS. An evaluation found that SMS participants were statistically significantly (by at least 6%) more likely to report prescribing ORS and zinc. Results revealed a know-do gap in reported versus actual treatment practices of OTCMS. A qualitative study was conducted to explore reasons for this gap, finding insufficient depth of knowledge and a power dynamic favouring customer requests as key contributors.

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Abt Associates is a mission-driven, global leader in research and program implementation in the fields of health, social and environmental policy, and international development. Known for its rigorous approach to solving complex challenges, Abt Associates is regularly ranked as one of the top 20 global research firms and one of the top 40 international development innovators. The company has multiple offices in the U.S. and program offices in more than 40 countries.

