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Changing Behaviors for Promoting Sustainable Outcomes in Agriculture and Nutrition

Part 1: Defining Social & Behavior Change Communication: What ARE we talking about and WHY?

Peggy Koniz-Booher
Start by acknowledging the many ways we have sliced…

...organized, packaged, defined, discussed, debated bundled & struggled in the past with what we are focused on here – SBCC - approaches & terminologies

- Information vs education vs communication
- Social change & behavior change communication (BCC)
- Interpersonal communication (IPC)
- Counseling or messaging
- Social marketing
- Advocacy
- Social mobilization
- Agricultural extension
- Diffusion of innovations
- Social media & new technologies
To clarify & set the stage...

We heard (yesterday) some growing consensus on the following:

- **SBCC is an integral element** in the adoption of high impact ag & nutrition practices focused on preventing undernutrition.
- **SBCC is a key and fundamental cross-cutting strategy** to address both stunting and anemia globally.
- There is interest in **knowing more**.
- There is need for sharing & **capacity building in SBCC**.

Photo Credit: WFP Guatemala: Elizabeth Sagastume
and that SBCC interventions 

...although widely acknowledged as essential, are among the most complex aspects of program design and implementation. Sustaining behaviors, over time, especially among large populations, is difficult.
We offer a working definition:

- **Ag & Nutrition SBCC** is a strategic package of behavior-centered interventions (activities, programs, and policies) aimed at supporting individuals, households, groups, and communities to adopt and sustain high impact ag & nutrition practices by:
  - **promoting specific individual and group behaviors** among mothers, fathers, caregivers, nutrition and health service providers, farmers, peer networks, and others
  - **shifting social attitudes, structures, and norms**
  - **creating enabling environments** that promote and provide support for social change & positive change in ag & nutrition behaviors...
  - and that above all … aim to **DO NO HARM**
Why investments in SBCC?

- High impact practices (e.g. MIYCN) are not adopted & sustained by a given population simply as a result of increasing knowledge or awareness.

- Many complex & contextual factors influence everyday decisions to actually consider, test (try), adopt and/or reject, and ultimately internalize and sustain a given behavior.

- Sustained change in behaviors is unlikely to be achieved through a single activity targeting a single subset of the population, introduced in a single period in time.
Why investments in SBCC?

• Many SBCC initiatives aimed at improving maternal nutrition or IYCF behaviors tend to emphasize only knowledge gaps.

• There is often little or no focus on addressing the underlying social & environmental barriers that very often shape & control these behaviors.

• Many SBCC initiatives focus only “messages” on a single target audience – usually the mother or caregiver.

Photo credit: PAHO
Everyone seems to agree that SBCC is complicated:

- The decisions and steps surrounding the adoption of behaviors are often non-linear. They involve multiple feedback loops across time.
- Many programs have documented improvements in child diets & child growth, yet it is really not clear if insufficient knowledge or poor attitudes or perceptions about MIYCN are truly the most important limiting factors.
- A recent Lancet review (Bhutta et al., 2008) suggests that some foundation of food & livelihood security must exist to adequately capture the benefits of SBCC.
- As compared to normative systems of beliefs & knowledge, environmental constraints on individuals’ actions may play equally important or even DOMINANT roles in determining behaviors.
To address this reality:

• SBCC must consider multiple levels or spheres of influence through formative research, barrier analysis & a combination of conventional (and non-conventional) communication techniques, and consider:
  – IPC/counseling
  – community-based mobilization activities
  – Support groups/outreach
  – mass media, social marketing, new medias (e.g. participatory video)

Photo credit: Adam Booher
To address this reality, cont:

In an increasingly complex world, strategic SBCC must extend well beyond traditional communication-centric approaches, by:

- linking and coordinating with advocacy for nutrition-sensitive policies, legislation, livelihoods programming, and
- investing in the overall quality of service delivery, with specific emphasis on capacity and systems strengthening across sectors - both public and private (e.g., agriculture, MCHN/FP, finance, etc.).
Agriculture may (-) affect MIYCN practices in several ways:

- **Agricultural labor** may take time away from child care, or force caregivers to feed children in work environments that do not support a nurturing interaction between mother & child.

- **High agricultural workloads, occupational health risks**, as well as exposure to toxins & disease through agricultural activities can negatively affect women's health & nutrition which may have important (-) consequences for breastfeeding & other child feeding behaviors.

- The implications of **changes to agricultural production systems & rural livelihoods on caregiving & MIYCN practices** have received less attention than the potential for ag to (+) influence nutrition by increasing food availability & household incomes.

- In designing future programs, minimally, we must link SBCC to the promotion of value chains and explicitly **DO NO HARM**.
To be relevant in today’s world:

- **SBCC must embrace emerging innovations in social media & other information/communication technologies (ICT).**
- **We must continue to explore** new and evolving multi-disciplinary solutions, including mobile technologies and network science.
To achieve lasting impact, SBCC must be grounded in:

- **Understanding the context by identifying:**
  - environmental, socio-cultural & political factors affecting the testing & adoption of key behaviors
  - major influencers (HH & community)
  - the barriers to adoption
  - The major triggers & enabling factors
SBCC grounded in, cont:

Consideration of relevant theories:
- the use of a combination of behavioral, social science & diffusion theories

Evidence of effective approaches:
- focus on evidence-based approaches that are proven to affect high impact behaviors and related social norms (through literature reviews and program evaluations),
- appeal to various stages of readiness for change
- address barriers and motivators of change, and
- build social norms for new behaviors
...and guided by the following principles:

- **Country owned** – designed and implemented collaboratively with local partners, embracing and complementing current SBCC efforts, building on existing resources, and engaging and building capacity of all levels and from multiple sectors.

- **Scalable** – focused on innovative, simple, cost-effective, high quality, and effective approaches that can be scaled through advocacy and efforts to promote social change, reaching more people in an equitable and sustainable way.

- **Multi-sectoral** – engaging partners across sectors with clear roles and efficient use of human and financial resources for a harmonized, coordinated effort to change nutrition-related social norms and behaviors.
Guiding principles, cont:

- **Community-directed** - acknowledging community members as full partners, to understand their responsibility and take charge of improving their health and nutrition.

- **Gender-equitable** - challenging gender inequities by promoting and supporting self-efficacy and empowerment, addressing power imbalances in gender relationships, & including both men and women in the design & implementation.

- **Linked to the ag value chains.**

Photo Credit: Adam Booher
Thanks for listening!

Photo credit: Adam Booher
Next…

- **Focus on** the specific experiences of the Collaborative Crop Research Program (CCPR) over the last decade in trying to influence nutrition outcomes through agriculture & nutrition interventions

- **Open up** the discussion to get some reactions & to draw on some of the wealth of experience sitting in the room (defining strategies, conducting formative research to identify key influencers, barriers & facilitators)

- **Think about** your own challenges/questions/issues around behavior change in your programming (cost, time, contradictions in goals & objectives)

- **Be prepared to share** what you are doing or what you think can be done to identify & understand the underlying factors (participatory research, TIPS, Designing for Behavior Change?)