# Lesson Plan: Designing an SBC Strategy

Achievement-based learning objectives

By the end of this task, participants will have:

* *Reviewed what sort of information needs to be in a project’s social and behavior change strategy document at the time of proposal development;*
* *learn how SBC strategies are typically designed before and during projects;*
* *review an SBC strategy template;*
* *review an example of an SBC strategy; and*
* *review a list of questions that may need to be answered through additional formative research to refine a draft SBC strategy*

# Developing a Social and Behavior Change Strategy

Let’s talk now about a priority skill that you need to have in order to be a better designer of agriculture projects: Creating an SBC Strategy document. An SBC strategy is the guiding document that ensures that project resources maximize the capability, motivation, and opportunity of priority groups to take up the priority nutrition-sensitive agriculture practices identified in the process so far. Often an SBC strategy document is drafted before project funds are available, such as during preparation of a proposal, and then refined during project start-up. These elements of the plan can be decided upon by project staff and stakeholders who are involved in the proposal and project development using simple, low-cost and low-intensity formative research methods, such as focus groups and priority informant interviews. An SBC strategy document outlines specific project activities to promote the uptake of improved practices (or to promote cessation of certain practices [e.g., burning fields]). This strategy should be planned, implemented, monitored, improved, and integrated with other project activities.

Common activities that help facilitate social and behavior change include:

* creation of practice promotion (behavior change) curricula (e.g., training manuals, flipcharts, radio scripts, talking points);
* group formation (e.g., of co-ops, farmer field school groups, small-scale buyer groups);
* activities for relationship and trust building between different actors in agriculture market systems;
* training of staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries;
* increasing access to agricultural inputs and financial services;
* external “nudges” that make it easier to adopt certain practices;
* provision of incentives;
* advocacy activities; and
* a set of multi-channel communication activities.

It should be apparent from this list that there is not a hard and fast line between SBC activities and other project activities. Many of the things done in a project can facilitate adoption of nutrition-sensitive agriculture practices, but it is best to not only think of SBC activities as the ones that focus on *communication*. Remember that changing behavior often requires more than just communication.

Often an SBC strategy is designed via a series of workshops, facilitated by one or more SBC experts (e.g., staff or consultants), with project staff, partners, and other stakeholders such as community members or value chain actors. Participants think through how to modify existing activities and/or add communication and non-communication SBC activities to increase priority group capability, motivation, and opportunity to adopt and maintain priority practices. It is important to validate the strategy with priority partners and stakeholders, but sometimes it may require some advocacy, education, and persuasion to convince stakeholders to try different approaches and activities even if they are evidence-based.

If economic, structural, or physical/geographic barriers are identified, non-communication activities may be needed to increase uptake of behaviors. Examples of non-communication activities include:

* financial or other incentives like conditional transfers or inputs;
* risk mitigation measures like crop insurance;
* extending the reach and equity of the provision of goods and services; and
* supporting community-based mechanisms to enforce existing policies protecting smallholders and women producers.

Both communication and non-communication activities should make the practice being promoted as easy and desirable as possible for the priority group. Much of behavior is habitual, so activities may need to help priority groups disrupt current habits and establish new ones. Social support, perceived and actual, is often priority to trying new things, and maintaining them over time, regardless of individual benefits.

The first part of the SBC strategy document which can be completed before a project begins will answer broader questions about the project’s approach to SBC in general, including:

1. ***What sort of secondary data review, context assessment, and/or formative research was conducted to develop this draft SBC strategy?***
2. ***Who are the intended priority groups (“target groups”) for your project?***
3. ***What are the priority practices that you will promote? (You may want to refer to other sections of the proposal for this.)***
4. ***Who are the presumed positive and negative influencers among market system actors (including institutions)? Think about the socio-ecological model as you identify positive and negative influencers.***
5. ***What are some of the presumed barriers and enablers that may prevent or encourage adoption and maintenance of the priority practices promoted in the project (that will be confirmed later through formative research)?***
6. ***What are the messages and communication channels that the project staff plan to use to increase the priority groups’ motivation, capability, and opportunity to adopt and maintain the priority practices? Where, when, and how often, will communications be distributed, broadcast, or used?***
7. ***What are the (intensive, equitable and interactive) non-communication activities and services (including subsidies and incentives) that the project staff plan to use to increase the priority groups’ motivation, capability, and opportunity to adopt and maintain the priority practices?***
8. ***How do project staff plan to reach the presumed influencing groups and institutions?***
9. ***Which media and materials should the project use for communications and other SBC activities?***
10. ***Who do you intend the messengers to be? Which groups of people (e.g., staff, volunteer peer educators, firm employees) will be used to promote the practices and communicate the priority messages?***
11. ***What sort of focused formative research will be conducted after project start-up and on what priority practices? What will be the goals of that formative research? In what ways might the formative research results alter your plan?***

# A SBC Strategy Document Outline and Blank Template

Let’s go through a SBC Strategy document outline, and then see a blank SBC Strategy template.

**Draft SBC Strategy Outline**

| ***SBC Strategy Element*** | ***Comment*** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. ***Initial formative research conducted:*** | Describe the types of formative research that were conducted initially to develop the draft SBC strategy. |
| 1. ***Priority practices promoted:*** | List the priority practices (“priority behaviors”) that you will promote. |
| 1. ***Priority groups for practice:*** | Describe the priority groups (“target groups”) for your project. Consider including information in terms of their demographic features, their daily routines, and things that most group members want. |
| 1. ***Estimated baseline adoption:*** | Mention the estimated proportion of people in your priority group that has currently adopted the practice. |
| 1. ***Presumed Influencers:*** | Describe the presumed influencers of your priority groups (including institutions) based on who the people that your priority groups talk to and respect the most. |
| 1. ***Presumed constraints (barriers) of priority practices:*** | Describe the presumed constraints (barriers) that may prevent adoption of the priority practices promoted in the project. *(These hypotheses should be confirmed later through focused formative research.)* |
| 1. ***Presumed facilitators (enablers) of priority practices:*** | Describe the presumed facilitators (enablers) that may encourage adoption of the priority practices promoted in the project. *(These hypotheses should be confirmed later through focused formative research.)* |
| 1. ***Non-communication activities and services to reach priority groups and influencers (including incentives and subsidies):*** | Describe the non-communication activities that you plan to use to confront each constraint and use each facilitator for the priority groups and influencer groups. *(These initial plans should be modified after focused formative research is conducted.)* |
| 1. ***Communication channels (including messengers), communication activities and messages to reach priority groups and influencers:*** | Describe the communication channels, messages, and the intensive, equitable and interactive activities that you plan to use to increase the priority groups’ motivation, capability, and opportunity to adopt and maintain the priority practices. Mention where, when, and how often, communications will be distributed, broadcast, or used. Describe how the project staff plan to reach the influencer groups and institutions. *(These initial plans should be modified after focused formative research is conducted.)* |
| 1. ***Media and materials used:*** | Describe the media and materials the project staff will use for communications and other SBC activities. |

***Social & Behavior Change Strategy Template***

1. ***Description of completed formative research:***

***Table of Promoted Practices***

| ***Element*** | ***Practice #1*** | ***Practice #2*** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. ***Priority practices promoted*** |  |  |
| 1. ***Priority groups for practices*** |  |  |
| 1. ***Estimated baseline adoption (current practices)*** |  |  |
| 1. ***Presumed Influencing groups (positive and negative)*** |  |  |
| 1. ***Presumed barriers to practices*** |  |  |
| 1. ***Presumed enablers of practices*** |  |  |

***Note: This table will be revised above after focused formative research has been done.***

1. ***Non-communication activities and services to reach priority groups and influencers (including incentives and subsidies):***
2. ***Communication channels (including messengers) and communication activities to reach priority groups and influencers:***
3. ***Media and materials used:***
4. ***Planned focused formative research:***

# An SBC Strategy Example

Let’s now look at an example of a **completed SBC Strategy document**, including the table of promoted practices for two practices.

***Social & Behavior Change Strategy (Example): Agrizimbo / Zimgreen Project***

1. ***Initial formative research conducted initially:***

In order to inform this SBC strategy, we conducted three focus group discussions with male farmers and three with female farmers (separately). We also conducted two focus groups of small-scale buyers. Following that, we conducted priority informant interviews with irrigation committee members, women’s group members, facilitators of savings groups, government extension workers, Agrizimbo staff, and local community leaders.

***Table of Promoted Practices***

| ***Element*** | ***Practice #1*** | ***Practice #2*** | ***Practice #3*** | ***Practice #4*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. ***Priority practices promoted*** | Adopt and maintain drip irrigation on the majority of land planted with bananas | Plant and sell or consume orange-fleshed sweet potato. |  |  |
| 1. ***Priority Groups for Practice*** | Smallholder banana farmers | Current growers of white-fleshed sweet potato. |  |  |
| 1. ***Estimated baseline adoption:*** | Given data from the region, we estimate that <15% of farmers are currently using drip irrigation on the majority of land planted with bananas. | Given data from the region, we estimate that about 10% of farmers are currently planting and selling OFSP, and <5% of families are consuming OFSP. |  |  |
| 1. ***Presumed Influencers (positive and negative)*** | * Agrizimbo extensionists (+) * leaders of savings groups (+) * small-scale buyers (+) * fathers, fathers-in-law and other older farmers who had used drop irrigation many years ago (-) * existing irrigation committee members (-); and * members of women’s groups (-) | * Agrizimbo extensionists (+) * small-scale buyers (+) * health facility staff and CHWs (+) * leaders of savings groups (+) * Older farmers who grow sweet potato (-) |  |  |
| 1. ***Presumed priority constraints to practice*** | * Some farmers presume that drip irrigation equipment clogs easily and is difficult to maintain. * Some farmers feel that irrigation committee members will block their access to more water. * Some women believe that they will not be given equitable access to the technology or a part in decision making. | * Some farmers are influenced by older farmers who don’t believe switching varieties is worth the risk. * Many farmers do not believe there will be a market for OFSP. |  |  |
| 1. ***Presumed priority facilitators of practice*** | * Some farmers have heard positive reports on drip irrigation from savings groups leaders. * Small-scale buyers are eager for more farmers to adopt the technology so they will have access to more “seconds.” * Larger-scale buyers for a grocery chain in the capital city are looking to buy more nutritious products for their customers. | * Health facility staff and CHWs have been encouraging parents to give children more (and for them to consume more) vitamin A rich foods but complain of access. * Small-scale buyers are eager for more farmers to adopt the technology so they will have access to more “seconds.” * Savings groups leaders have seen markets for OFSP in other districts expand rapidly. |  |  |

***Note: This table will be revised above after focused formative research has been done.***

1. ***Non-communication activities and services to reach priority groups and influencers (including incentives and subsidies):***

Some non-communication will be designed based on the results of focused formative research conducted during the first three months of the project, as well. In addition to the main messages promoting each practice, we will use other non-communication activities to introduce different actors to each other and to create a more conducive environment to the adoption of the promoted practices. Some of the non-communication activities are designed to take advantage of the facilitators and to confront (or work-around) some of the constraints identified, as well. For example, for **promotion of OFSP, non-communication activities include the following:**

1. Facilitate meetings between savings group leaders other savings groups leaders have not heard as much about OFSP in order to build social capital and trust, and to facilitate information exchange.
2. Introduce Agrizimbo extensionists and Farmer Field School leaders to health facility staff and CHWs so that health workers can more easily and with confidence refer parents to the extensionists and FFS leaders when they show interest in giving their children more vitamin A rich foods.

For promotion of **drip irrigation, non-communication activities include the following**:

1. Zimgreen will facilitate meetings between savings group leaders who can give positive testimonials to the benefits of using drip irrigation with other savings groups leaders have not heard as much about the new technology in order to build social capital and trust, and to facilitate information exchange. Four meetings will be held with savings group leaders over the first year of the project.
2. Agrizimbo extensionists will conduct demonstrations of the new vs. older drip irrigation technology (using parts of the technology which are portable) with older farmers. We will host these meetings through a series of four meetings at local bars and traditional corn beer stands where older men often play pool and talk, reaching 30 such venues per district.
3. Zimgreen will assure that at least half of all Agrizimbo extensionists are women, providing the firm with additional funds to hire new extensionists for the first two years of the project (to facilitate the adjustment). Extensionists will keep records on sales of the drip irrigation equipment in order to justify to Agrizimbo the benefit of using female extensionists to reach out to more female farmers.
4. Zimgreen will work directly with – and provide funds to – selected Irrigation Committees for 20 water pumps per district in exchange for access. For example, in exchange for the use of a capped borehole that is not in use (due to a lack of funds to buy pumps), we will pay for a pump under the condition that the majority of the new water generated would go to a new group of producers using the latest drip irrigation technology. Zimgreen will also subsidize the cost of both the drip irrigation equipment and OFSP inputs in the first three years of the project.
5. ***Communication channels (including messengers) and communication activities to reach priority groups and influencers:***

Some messages will be designed based on the results of focused formative research conducted during the first three months of the project. In addition to the base messages promoting each practice (e.g., “plant orange-fleshed sweet potato”), and information on how to grow OFSP, we will use messages designed to take advantage of the facilitators and to confront (or work-around) some of the constraints identified. For example, for **promotion of OFSP**, we will:

1. Reach current white-fleshed sweet potato farmers through Agrizimbo extensionists (working through Farmer Field Schools), other input suppliers, and small-scale buyers to relate the nutrition benefits of OF vs. WF sweet potato, information on the markets currently available for selling OFSP, current prices being offered, and current prices being offered by small-scale buyers for “seconds.” Agrizimbo extensionists will use community-developed videos for the messages that will not change regularly, and weekly SMS messaging to these groups – and weekly short radio announcements – on prices and markets. All FFSs will be visited at least once a quarter during the first two years of the project. We plan to reach 80% of all input supplies and small-scale buyers in the project region at least six times a year.
2. Use savings group leaders to give positive testimonials on the benefits of growing OFSP with other savings groups leaders have not heard as much about OFSP. Provide flipcharts to the savings groups leaders that will help them to promote OFSP based on the benefits of doing so (both nutritionally and financially), information on where to get inputs for OFSP, and information on how to grow it effectively. Information on current markets and prices (and encouragement to share the information with their groups) will be provided to savings group leaders through SMS messaging twice a month.
3. Reach fathers, fathers-in-law and other older farmers through churches, mosques, and other religious clubs that they often attend in order to discuss with them the risks and rewards of growing OFSP vs. WFSP.

For promotion of **drip irrigation**:

1. Four meetings will be held with savings group leaders over the first year of the project. Flipcharts will be provided to the savings groups leaders along with training that will help them to promote drip irrigation and to share information on how, where, and at what cost to get the equipment and options for financing it. This will include picture stories on return-on-investment based on farmers use of drip irrigation in other districts and regions.
2. Female firm extensionists will visit all women’s groups at least twice during the first six months of the project to explain the benefits of the technology to the women in the groups, including the ROI, and how they can be engaged in decision making regarding the rollout of the drip irrigation technology.
3. ***Media and materials used:***

Training curricula, flipcharts, videos, radio and SMS message scripts, and price and market announcement templates on the promoted practices will be developed for use by Agrizimbo extensionists with women’s group leaders; savings group leaders; Farmer Field School leaders, small-scale buyers; fathers, fathers-in-law, and older farmers; and irrigation committee members. Flipcharts and reminder stickers will also be developed for use by women’s group leaders, savings group leaders, and Farmer Field Schools leaders with the members of their groups.

The curricula, videos, and flipcharts developed will be used to discuss (1) advantages of each practice, (2) where to find inputs, (3) “how to” information on each practice, (4) benefits from adopting and maintaining each practice, (5) tips on ways to make the practice easier, (6) relative effectiveness of alternatives, (7) potential risks and rewards of using each practice and how to mitigate risks, (8) potential risks of *not* adopting the practice, (9) susceptibility to problems which the practice helps mitigate (e.g., crop loss due to drought, Vitamin A deficiency), (10) the fit of the practice with existing cultural and religious norms, and (11) ways to avoid or work around potential negative attributes of each practice. Information will be framed in such a way as to take maximum advantage of social norms (e.g., giving examples of successful farmers and well-liked people who use the practice, and using information on how common the practice is in other high-producing districts), and integrating in information from formative research.

1. ***Planned focused formative research:***

In order better understand constraints and facilitators of the priority practices and confirm who the most important influencers are for each promoted practice, we plan to carry out a Barrier Analysis study on all four of the priority practices mentioned. In order to identify which of three technologies for preparing fields is most acceptable in this context (ripper tine, plow, and no till), we will conduct Trials of Improved Practices. We also plan to create seasonal calendars for the different crops produced in the area in order to schedule our intervention plans according to the timing of production and other value chain functions, and in a way that puts the lowest workload on pregnant and lactating women and makes their profitable participation in these value chains as convenient as possible.

***An initial SBC Strategy document, for example, which is developed as part of a project proposal, should always be revisited after project start-up, and modified based on more focused formative research studies.***  These studies are usually best done after project funds have been released since they often require more labor, time, and costs. (Formative research studies can be done during proposal development [e.g., using private funds], but many organizations chose to wait for project funding since conducing more extensive FR on a project that never gets funded can be wasteful.)

The main questions that you will be answering through formative research after project start-up include:

1. ***What are the priority constraints and facilitators for each of the priority practices promoted in the project? (In the behavior change literature, these are often discussed as “determinants” of the behavior.)***
2. ***Who are the confirmed priority (target) groups?***
3. ***What is the baseline level of adoption of the practice? (e.g., from KPC survey)***
4. ***Who are the confirmed influencers on each of the priority practices? What is their relationship to the priority group? What are their incentives to suppress or facilitate change?***
5. ***In what ways might the promoted practices be altered or changed to be more conducive to adoption by the priority groups? What alternative practices could be promoted that would achieve the same outcome?***
6. ***In what ways do you need to adjust the timing of each promoted practice to better facilitate adoption?***
7. ***In what ways do you need to adjust activities based on gender considerations?***