



# Consultation Capsule

## A summary of the one-day consultation “Investing in SBCC – An Imperative”

India International Centre, New Delhi, May 2, 2018

New Concept Centre for Development Communication (NCCDC) in collaboration with FHI 360, Pathfinder International, Population Foundation of India (PFI), Sambodhi and UNICEF organised a consultation on “Investing in SBCC – An Imperative” in New Delhi on May 2, 2018. As many as 75 representatives from 40 organisations participated in the consultation.

Key stakeholders from government departments, donor partners, civil society organisations (CSOs), practitioner organisations and academia actively participated in the discussions.

### Recommendations emerging from the consultation



#### Policy Level Issues

Create a National Communication Task Force across sectors focused on communication in development.

Create a National Communication Resource Centre to act as an umbrella to the numerous existing resource centres.

Create a smaller core group for study and utilisation of new technologies, artificial intelligence and blockchain technology.



#### Strategy

Envisage SBCC programmes as a multi-stakeholder initiative.

Strengthen the demand generation component in SBCC strategies.

Identify and address institutional bottlenecks so that they do not hinder scale-up of innovative models and best practices.



#### Budgeting and Planning

Incorporate SBCC as a separate budgeted component, like Monitoring and Evaluation, in project proposals.

Examine Expenditure Finance Committee format, which can include guidelines on assessing communications expenditure in SBCC.



#### Research

Critically revisit and improve SBCC research methodologies.

Research ways to incorporate cost-effective evidence-based and data-based monitoring methods.

Invest in understanding the science of communication and in innovative, cost-effective ways to identify and reach out to target audiences.



#### Implementation

Build partnerships of shared values that complement and utilise the strengths of partners.

Build an SBCC Alliance – a networked community and e-resource group.

At the centre of the deliberations were three broad questions that periodically rack donor agencies, CSOs and other stakeholders who have been using Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) in their programmes for over three decades.

### Where should SBCC investments be made? Are there specific issues and stages in projects where such investments are critical?

Participants had no doubt about the need for additional investments towards SBCC in existing programmes. However, they agreed there cannot be a pre-determined allocation formula, since this is determined by the programme context and the relative importance of its goals and objectives.

Participants pointed out that even with low allocations for SBCC, many state programmes report underutilisation of allocated funds. They recommended recruiting the right people for planning and programme implementation, who understand SBCC and utilise available funds and resources effectively. They felt SBCC funds must be directed towards greater community engagement and mobilisation and not just for printing.



*“Such events are valuable for the SBCC community. UNICEF is keen on supporting and convening an SBCC alliance. We are building such an alliance. In order to ensure sustainable change through SBCC, systems must be strengthened. No doubt it is time consuming and a lengthy process. If we methodically and regularly support SBCC capacity building at the state level, it will ensure sustained change.”*

Siddhartha Shrestha  
C4D Chief, UNICEF ICO



Given the host of communication approaches at the disposal of programme managers, they must calculate the Return on Investment. Then the most impactful and cost-effective methods can be properly chosen and scaled up. Similarly, estimating indicators such as the per capita cost of SBCC delivery, is indispensable for each programme as it provides a solid backing for SBCC.



*“Considering the funds, time and hard work that goes into SBCC, we must see effective outcomes. The result should not just be about creating communication materials, but whether money or time is being optimised and are adequate. For that to happen, we should be able to measure. Hence, a Return on Investment works not just for the corporate world, but for all of us in the development sector.”*

Rajat Ray  
Sr. Advocacy and Communication Officer  
UNFPA, India



*“We need to appreciate problems of the government sector to procure, partner and take SBCC forward in government programmes. While the intentions are right, field level implementation must be examined. SBCC practitioners must be constant learners. Finding the right people, right funds and agencies to do SBCC is an important task, but it is not so simple.”*

Dr. Pallavi Jain Govil, IAS  
Commissioner Health, Government of Madhya Pradesh



*“We need to invest in SBCC across all sectors. However, we also need to see why there is under-utilisation of existing budgets, since that impacts the next round of allocation. We need to track allocations and expenditures and see where we are spending and for which outcomes.”*

Rania Elesawi  
C4D Specialist, UNICEF ICO

### What should be the principles for SBCC planning? Can guidelines be framed to ensure better developmental outcomes?

Participants advised development of an all-round communication strategy with clear goals. It is crucial to complement and utilise strengths of partners and other stakeholders. They asked practitioners to engage with policy makers and learn to ‘speak their language’. They counselled against re-inventing the wheel and urged practical and effective utilisation of available resources and funds.

Speakers urged practitioners to develop flexible operational plans to incorporate feedback loops using information from the field to make mid-course corrections. They recommended situating the communications strategy, plans and messages in the local context, values, beliefs and language. It is also critical to target all age groups to bring about lasting behaviour change. Diversifying communication channels and developing newer, effective types of communication methods is also key to effective SBCC planning.



*“The greatest challenge in effecting development with successful outcomes is compelling communication that leads to change in behaviour of target groups. Often a number of well-drafted policies and programmes lose out at the implementation stage, due to ineffective communication. There are plenty of resources available. Let us not reinvent the wheel. Let us work together and use resources effectively.”*

Firoza Mehrotra, IAS  
Strategy Advisor, HomeNet South Asia

Speakers exhorted practitioners to understand social norms, since it is imperative for sustainable change. They asked them to rely on the good offices of local leaders, influencers and nurture partnerships with Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies to effect change.



*“We need partners for creative work, for outreach through government, media and so on. All of us do similar work. Partnership implies shared values, resource exchanges, joint programming and transactional relationships. The challenges include gaps in communication, not investing enough to learn about the partners and mismatch in timeframes.”*

Sona Sharma  
Director, Programmes, PFI



*“Given the programmatic and epidemiological contextual shift in primary health care, it is crucial to recognise the changing nature of demands from communication. So far, there has been discussion on RCH, now there is a move towards health promotion and it is going to be much harder, given the impact of changing lifestyles. SBCC strategies have to be radically different to meet these challenges in terms of training, media and materials.”*

Dr. Rajani Ved  
Executive Director, NHRSC



*“Investment in SBCC is not simply an imperative, but a development imperative. Recognise that investing in SBCC will be the defining difference to achieve social development outcomes. Can we think of a common SBCC hub, maybe for three well-linked programme strands such as NHM, WCD Poshan Abhiyaan and SBM?”*

Deepika Srivastava, Senior Consultant, Social Sector  
NITI Aayog and Economic Advisory Council  
to the Prime Minister



*“The impact – both long term and short term, begins with asking “Why?” and “What do I hope to see?”, as part of the programme.”*

Dr. Saravanamurthy  
Research and Strategic Information Specialist  
FHI 360, Project LINKAGES



*“We must seriously examine how we can ensure proper SBCC budget allocation in planning and programming. Good partnerships are key for effective implementation. SBCC cannot be done without partners and without a decent budget.”*

Kavita Ayyagari, Project Director  
Pathfinder International, India Office



*“We are creating programmes, doing things and experimenting. We need to aggregate and share what we have. Yes, an SBCC alliance must be created! We must strengthen capacities of SBCC units in government and techniques to evaluate and review materials. It is crucial to incorporate ideas from diverse fields in behavioural sciences to design, and we must experiment with new methods”.*

Dr. Neela Saldanha, Director  
Centre for Social and Behaviour Change  
Ashoka University



*“While public health programmes have changed and incorporated science, technology and management, the science of communication is yet to be effectively utilised. We need to simplify SBCC, develop simple monitoring tools and have a routine system of monitoring for social and behaviour change.”*

Dr. Ajay Kherra, WHO Consultant  
Former Deputy Commissioner (Child Health)



*“Research is an important glue, binding theory and practice together. A mixed methods approach within the most significant change technique is effective. The dialogic story-based technique gives voice to people. To achieve outcomes, participation in research and voice in the research process is important.”*

Dr. Archana Kumar  
Associate Professor, Lady Irwin College

## Capacity building for whom? How and when should one invest for building capacities?

Speakers pointed out that investing in capacity building cannot be a one-time activity. It is critical for long-term programmes, when behaviour changes must be imbibed and practised, even after close of any project. It is crucial to develop relevant skills, regularly across all levels from front-line workers to senior managers.

Users must develop clear insights into learning processes and behavioural sciences and rely on participatory methods. They must innovate to help improve capacity building processes. The consultation also highlighted how the issue of water will need serious attention in the coming years and the need for SBCC on water-related development issues.



*“We have discussed SBCC compliance and the importance of not neglecting planning for research and a dedicated budget for SBCC in research. However, we also need to recruit the right people who understand SBCC and are part of planning and programme implementation.”*

Rachana Sharma  
C4D Specialist, UNICEF ICO



*“Given the stark reality of depleting fresh water sources and manifold increase in demand for water across India, can we provide 100 per cent household connections by 2030? While demand is growing, we have been depleting available water sources or contaminating and polluting them. There is a compelling need to define an SBCC strategy and create a robust plan that helps conserve water and ensures sustainable demand and equitable distribution of fresh water.”*

Arumugam Kalimuthu  
Programme Director, WASH Institute



## Keep the dialogue going

The deliberations on the need to invest in SBCC opened up different dimensions and issues that need to be debated further. Given that many issues bedevil programme planning and implementation, the solution can only be honed and made practical with further discussions on different aspects covered at the consultation.

Hence, there is a need for all of us to collaborate and add value to the larger SBCC community. We request everyone to keep the dialogue going, so that, as others join we can learn together and develop the body of knowledge further.

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