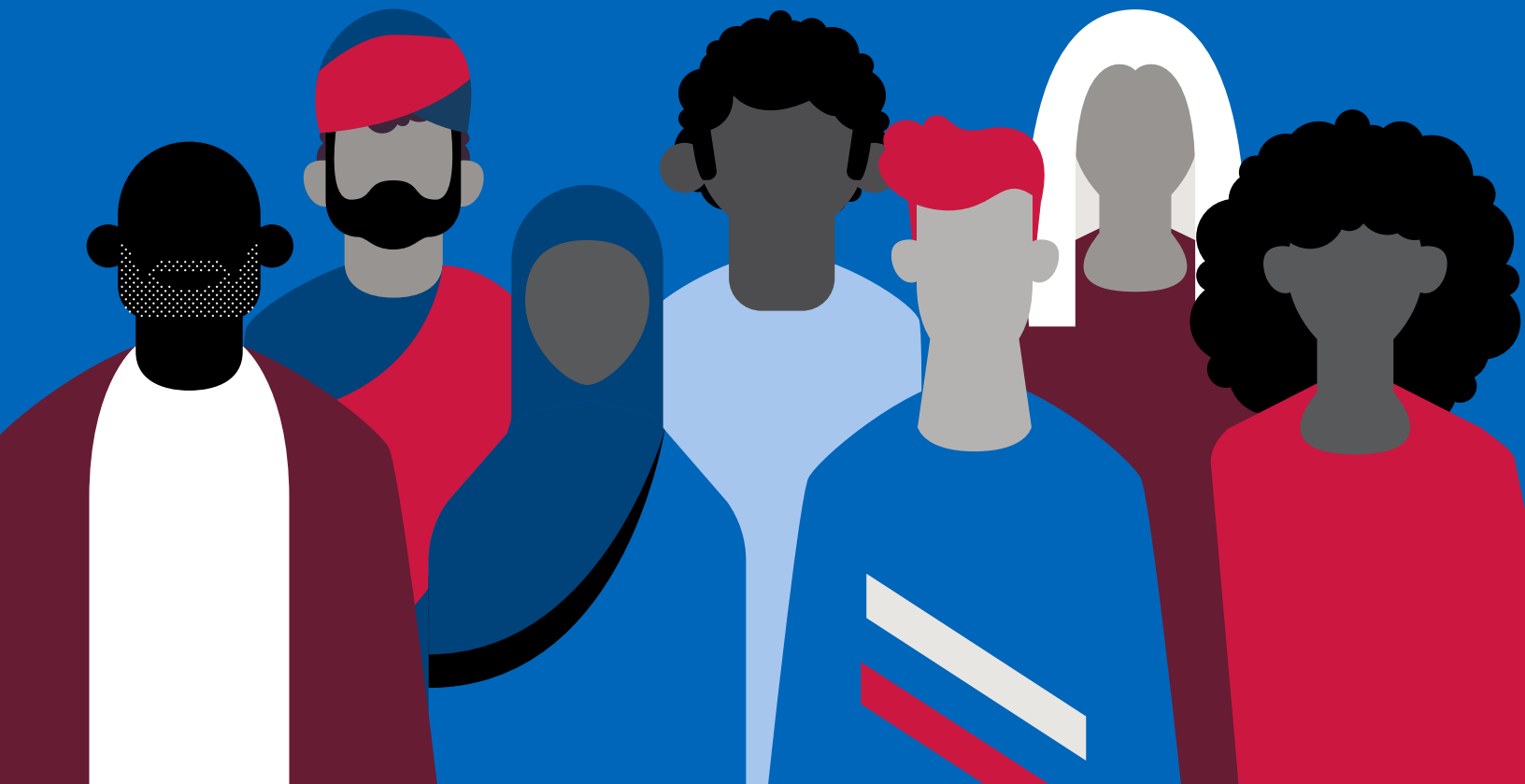![USAID - FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE]

Social and Behavior Change for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance:

PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE

This guide aims to give people interested in understanding and applying social and behavior change (SBC) strategies to democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) programming a clear and concise understanding of the theory and practice of SBC.

For those who wish to learn more, this guide contains links to additional resources, and you can reach out to the DRG Center's Evidence and Learning Team at **ddi.drg.elmaillist@usaid.gov** for more information.
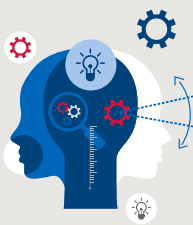
In this practitioner's guide, we introduce SBC for DRG in three stages:

Evidence:
How to use a SBC approach to understand the problem.

Application:
How to use the SBC evidence to develop effective programs.

Learning:
How to build learning and evaluation into SBC programs.

See the companion worksheet for exercises and tools to incorporate an SBC lens in your work.

Introduction to SBC for DRG

What is [Social and Behavior Change](#) (SBC) and why is it important for DRG?

SBC is the use of insights from behavioral sciences (like psychology, behavioral economics, and communications) to understand and encourage behavior change.
In practice, SBC is…

STRATEGIC in reducing barriers and utilizing key opportunities to enable behavior change.

BEHAVIORAL in identifying and focusing on specific behaviors to change.

COMPREHENSIVE in addressing individual, social, and structural barriers and opportunities.

Application Zone: Structural, Social, and Individual Factors

Problem: Women are under-represented in powerful political positions.
Behaviors: Male politicians enable and empower women's access to political leadership positions and women run for political leadership positions.

Structural, social, and individual barriers:

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS come from the laws, policies, and the economic, political, and physical infrastructure.

SOCIAL BARRIERS come from familial, social, and identity-linked norms and expectations.

INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS come from personal beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and psychological and physical capacity.

Using a SBC lens: A SBC lens looks at structural, social, and individual factors to identify barriers and opportunities for women's access to political leadership positions. **Structurally**, laws may not protect or promote women's access to political leadership. **Socially**, norms equating masculinity with power and femininity with subordination may prevent women from advancing. **Individually**, women may not have the knowledge or experience needed to compete effectively.

Applying SBC-informed strategies: For example, **structurally**, develop explicit policies to promote women's inclusion, such as gender quotas. **Socially**, guide male political leaders to recognize the impact of their unequal power and privilege on themselves and those around them to motivate norm and behavior change. **Individually**, provide training opportunities to enable women's full participation.

Why is taking an SBC approach so important? In our complex lives there are structural, social, and individual behavioral drivers which lead to many difficult decisions. The key barriers and opportunities driving behavior are often not obvious. To **encourage behavior change**, we investigate the WHAT and the WHY of behaviors to find the most effective HOW for change.

Cognitive biases. Research in psychology has uncovered **many cognitive shortcuts** we use in our decision-making. For example, the availability heuristic describes how we judge information that we can more easily recall as being more important for our decision-making. This means that a case of a corrupt woman politician may stick out in someone's mind because it is less common, and that person may use the easy availability of that information to decide against supporting other women politicians. An SBC approach uses what we know about cognitive bias to understand DRG problems and apply interventions.

SBC for our Complex World

Some choices seem obvious or rational, but people have complex needs, values, and societies.

COMPLEX NEEDS: Sometimes people don't have the energy for difficult choices. People are more likely to make a choice they like when they have **6 options instead of 24**.

COMPLEX VALUES: Sometimes choices are based on balancing competing values. Indigenous farmers may choose to neither abandon lower-yield traditional varieties nor to reject modern agriculture, but rather to balance both by **maintaining traditional crops and increasing yield through modern techniques**.

COMPLEX SOCIETIES: The people and society around us can affect our decisions. For example, a message that being corrupt is out of the ordinary reduces **how common corruption seems and corrupt behavior**.

People as the agents of change: For SBC to be effective, the people and communities we work with should be the agents of change. The goal of SBC is to understand the drivers of behavior, and make behavior change easier. SBC should be about enabling, not coercing.

Evidence:
How to use a SBC approach to understand the problem

Tips for effective SBC evidence and programming.

Start early: Maximize the benefits of a SBC approach by including the SBC lens at the start.

Be behavioral and comprehensive: Identify specific target behaviors early so that you can gather comprehensive evidence about the barriers and opportunities for that behavior. Without being specific, it can be very hard to be comprehensive.

Question your assumptions: Our assumptions about why behavior happens can sometimes prevent us from understanding the true drivers. Be careful not to assume that cognitive biases or ignorance is the best explanation for people's behavior. A critical lens will help achieve DRG goals. *Never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by ignorance; and never attribute to another person's ignorance that which can be adequately explained by your own.*

Here is a three-step process for gathering SBC evidence to inform the beginning of the activity design process

Step 1. Identify the Problem

Start with the broad problem, and from there identify behaviors causing that problem before arriving at programming.

Start broad: What is the general problem? Democratic backsliding? Information disorder? Human rights violations? Poor governance?

Get specific: What desired thing is not happening or undesired thing is happening? Are civil society organizations closing? Are politicians spreading misinformation? Is trust in government falling?

Step 2. Identify the Behavior

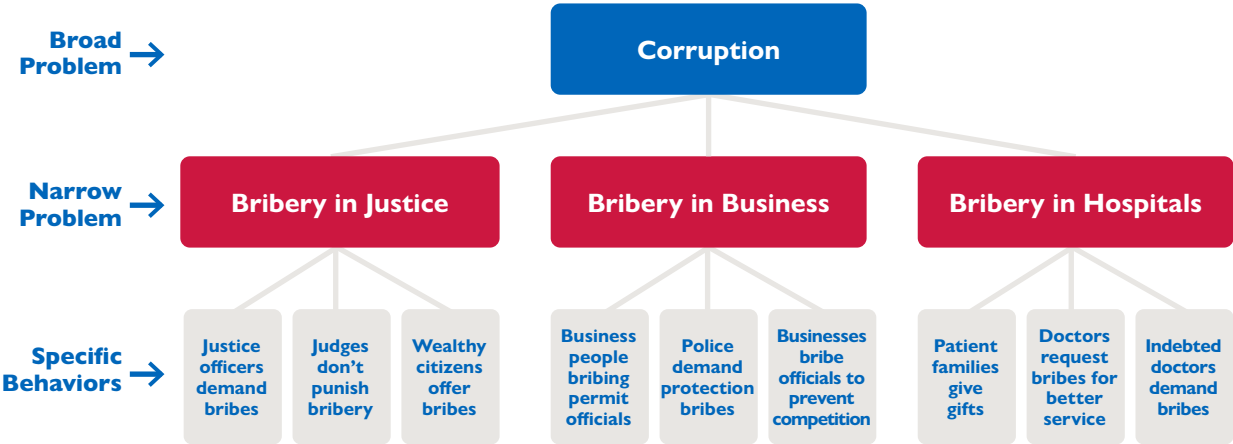**Whose behaviors** need to change to address the problem?

Find the behavior to target: Draw on existing literature and key experts, or conduct new research, to identify the **who** and the **what** of behavioral change.

- **Balancing the who and the what:** Whose behavior do we want to change and whose behavior can we change? When mapping out key behaviors, keep in mind who would need to change their behaviors. **Note:** The people whose behavior needs to change may not be the ones we want to help, but may be those standing in their way.

- **Go local:** Identifying behaviors, understanding barriers and opportunities, and developing interventions all require understanding local values, needs, and norms. **Localization** and co-designing with local peoples is crucial.

"How to" worksheet: Gather a brainstorming group of key experts and stakeholders, especially those with local experience, and map from the general problem to the specific behaviors that could solve the higher-level DRG problem.

- Prioritize potential target behaviors that are **meaningful**, **measurable**, and **changeable** within the timeframe and resources of the activity.

Below is a sample behavior tree that identifies specific behaviors to target for change from the broad problem of corruption

	Corruption	

Broad Problem →

Narrow Problem →

Bribery in Justice	Bribery in Business	Bribery in Hospitals

Specific Behaviors →

Justice officers demand bribes	Judges don't punish bribery	Wealthy citizens offer bribes	Business people bribing permit officials	Police demand protection bribes	Businesses bribe officials to prevent competition	Patient families give gifts	Doctors request bribes for better service	Indebted doctors demand bribes

Behaviors for good, behaviors for bad: Depending on the problem you face and the population you are working with, sometimes you may have a target behavior to encourage, and sometimes you have a target behavior to discourage. And then sometimes you may have both together.

Example: In a misinformation program, the behavioral goal might be not to share misinformative articles. In a voter engagement campaign, however, the behavioral goal might be for voters to seek out information on candidate policies.

Step 3. Identify Structural, Social, and Individual Barriers and Opportunities for Behavior Change

Behavioral science and the SBC approach help us identify the best ways to achieve behavior change by removing barriers to the behavior and by finding opportunities that link new behaviors to existing beliefs, values, and behaviors. Be sure to consider all of the different barriers that might be at play. Activities like **behavioral mapping** can help with this.

- **Remember:** People are complex. Barriers and opportunities can be rational, emotional, social, and more. Identify distinct values or beliefs that are especially important in your locale as potent barriers or opportunities that need to be addressed or can be capitalized on to create sustainable change.

Application Zone: Finding the Barriers and Opportunities

In India, movements to improve human rights for transgender and non-binary people identified rich pre-colonial traditions of social acceptance as opportunities **to improve attitudes and push for institutional protection of rights**.

Programming to increase women's political leadership identified the need to change the behaviors of men in key positions of power **to address the barriers and opportunities** that could give women access and opportunity in those spaces.

A preference for using local informal justice systems was a key barrier to the success of formal justice development programs in Afghanistan.

Populate the evidence you gather into the **worksheet**. With a comprehensive analysis, you will identify key barriers and opportunities to use in developing strategic interventions.

Remember that people can also be barriers and opportunities

We also want to know the people who might be barriers to or opportunities for behavior change.

- It is important to **identify key stakeholders** in the behavior and environment, and the role they likely play in encouraging or discouraging the behavior.

- We can also understand the environment in which the stakeholders operate through a **political economy analysis** that helps us understand why things happen as they do.

Example Barriers	Example Opportunities
Structural: The legal infrastructure to combat corruption is underdeveloped, and access to justice for regular citizens is difficult.	**Structural:** Local/community governance institutions exemplify democratic values and respond to citizen needs better than the central government.
Social: Collectivist norms of gift-giving to build social relationships become intertwined with corruption, inhibiting anti-corruption work.	**Social:** Collectivist norms of equality and respect create opportunities for messages about how corruption abuses community property.
Individual: Many citizens don't recognize the line between gift-giving and corruption, and don't feel empowered to challenge corruption.	**Individual:** Two-thirds of citizens indicate corruption is among their top two concerns and prefer anti-corruption candidates.
Stakeholders: Many judges have close ties to police forces that benefit from corruption, making them unlikely to support reform.	**Stakeholders:** Religious leaders, often from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, are widely respected and willing to oppose corruption.

Application:
How to use the SBC evidence to develop effective programs

An evidence-based SBC approach enables strategic programming: SBC informs your programming and interventions by remaining focused on the behavior to change and the barriers to and opportunities for that behavior change. A SBC approach will also help you create effective programs by drawing on behavioral insights into how and why people behave a certain way.

Use your evidence: A SBC-based evidence-gathering process may discover many possible ways to encourage behaviors. Use your analysis to prioritize behaviors and interventions, and tailor your interventions to target barriers and capitalize on opportunities to encourage behavior change.

Here are some SBC-guided strategies to encourage behavior change

Nudging

A **nudge** is a freedom-preserving intervention to encourage behavior change in a predictable way that is informed by some general principles of how people make their choices. A nudge encourages a desired option without preventing a person from making a different choice. For example **Easy, Attractive, Social, and Timely (EAST) approach** to interventions from the **Behavioral Insights Team** uses our understanding of how people behave to make the behavior **easy** and **attractive**, and encourages it at the right **times** while capitalizing on **social** influences that affect our choices and behaviors. Nudges have been used to **help people register to vote**, and to **encourage them to go vote**. The **Explore guide** by the Behavioral Insights Team and the **IRS Behavioral Insights Toolkit** are great resources.

Common types of behaviorally-informed "nudges"

Defaults	Making the desired behavior the default choice; opting-out vs. opting-in.
Social Norms	Encouraging desired behavior by telling people that others engage in it.
Ease and Simplicity	Simplifying complex systems and reducing the "cost" of the behavior.
Pre-commitment	Getting people to commit to a future action makes it more likely to occur.
Pre-planning	Encouraging people to make a detailed plan for future action.
Timely Reminders	Promoting the behavior in a timely way helps maximize its influence.

Use your opportunities

Work with any beliefs or behaviors that might be helpful opportunities to encourage behavior change. SBC seeks to make it easier for people to engage in their desired behavior, and the more you connect with what people already believe, value, or desire, the more successful you will be.

1) Do people already engage in a similar behavior but in a different context? If so, connect the contexts to encourage the behavior.

2) Is there a cultural value connected to the target behavior? If so, connect with that!

## Unlock behavioral potential with social norms

Unlock behavioral potential with social norms: Social rules derived from *what we think others do and what we think others expect us to do*, can often play an important role in how we behave; **changes to these norms** can therefore offer the potential for encouraging behavior change in a self-sustaining way.

Social and behavior change communication (SBCC)

Social and behavior change communication (SBCC): If your programming will include messaging, use the behavioral insights from SBCC to develop the best messaging for your audience, and consider **an online course** to learn more.

Tip: Consider who your audience is and use that to identify the best messenger.

Learning:
How to build learning and evaluation into SBC programs
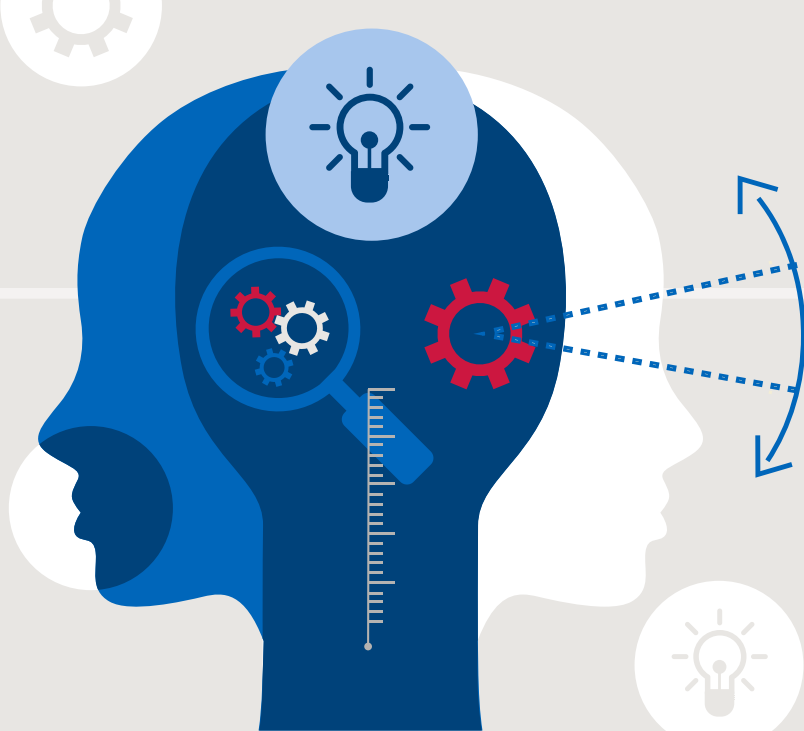
SBC as an active evidence-informed approach

A SBC approach to DRG programming is not only about identifying, collecting, and applying the best evidence available, but also about **monitoring, evaluating, and learning** (MEL) throughout the SBC-informed programs. This improves the ongoing programs and creates better evidence for future projects.

SBC and MEL: A match made in heaven

SBC identifies targeted interventions to achieve the best outcomes. This enables efficient programming, but means that small changes in circumstances can limit your program's success. Stay aware of any changes through rigorous MEL strategies.

A SBC theory of change often involves identifying a barrier or opportunity to focus on. Embed rigorous evaluation into the activity to identify changes to the target behavior as well as to the barriers and opportunities you are targeting or utilizing.

Learning happens throughout the program cycle

Learning at the beginning enables comparisons before and after program interventions.
Learning during the program enables us to improve the intervention mid-stream.
Learning at the end enables evaluation of program effectiveness and how to improve future programming.

How to learn at the beginning of the program:

Before the activity begins, develop an evaluation design to collect high-quality evidence. Collecting good evidence is often only possible when planned in advance.

Frame your goals with clearly-defined outcomes
- Identify clearly-defined behavioral outcomes in your theory of change.

Build learning points into your timeline
- Identify checkpoints to measure progress and effectiveness, focusing on clear, reasonable, and measurable goals.

Developing measurable checkpoints and clearly-defined outcomes

The target behavior is usually a great outcome to measure, although it may be difficult.

If you are measuring an intermediary step to enabling the behavior, make sure that the outcome measures are the best proxies for the outcome of interest.

Accurate measurement of behavior can be difficult. People may be biased toward telling researchers what they think researchers want to hear, and they can also make mistakes. Being aware of **various measurement biases** can lead to better learning.

How to learn during the program

Develop and follow a learning strategy to check the effectiveness of the program.

Is the program working? If not, how can it be done better?

If the program is not working, identify the gap in the theory of change. Which assumptions for change aren't being met? What changed from your initial SBC analysis?

How to learn at the end of the program

Return to the questions: Did the program work? How could the program have been improved?

Use the high-quality evidence you collected to understand if and how the project met the pre-established goals and timelines.

Evaluations

Reflect on the right **evaluation design** for your program, depending on what you hope to learn and which phase of program implementation.

> **Tip:** Use the **DRG Learning, Evidence, and Analysis Platform (LEAP)** for the latest information on better technical approaches, indicators, and evidence in the DRG sector.

Questions? Comments? Reflections?

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for more information or assistance.

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