

SBC enables us to keep people at the centre of what we do, and meet the needs of the most vulnerable. By ensuring that policies and programmes are behaviourally informed, designed with communities and tailored to local contexts, we will increase their responsiveness to local needs, cultural appropriateness, ownership and chances of success.

We are embarking on a journey to expand our programmatic focus and diversify our toolbox. While communication and social mobilization remain critical and central to what we do, we need more. We have excelled at individual and community engagement, but we need to pay more attention to how SBC can improve our policies, services and product delivery. This means leveraging more interventions, such as behavioural assessments and tracking, social listening platforms, user- and human-centred design, choice architecture, feedback and accountability mechanisms, participation in local governance, and strengthening sectoral systems through the SBC lens. The success of these techniques will rely on strong vulnerability and social network analyses, so that they help prioritize and empower underserved populations, challenge systems of dominance and contribute to intersectional social justice.

Our staff is what makes us great, so strengthening capacity is central to this shift. Communication for Development (C4D) has a fantastic network. It is the largest of its kind with a global footprint, institutional recognition and expert skills in engaging communities. To transition this extensive network to SBC, the staff will build upon this expertise and be continuously and progressively equipped to deliver more of the interventions described above. This offers our staff professional growth while enabling our programmes to improve. Our staff will also benefit from the help of a pool of specialized technical partners, with world-class expertise on SBC.

Additionally, UNICEF leaders and staff outside the core network of dedicated specialists, whose portfolios heavily depend on behaviour change — technical experts and sector managers in sectors — will be offered the knowledge, skills and tools to own and integrate SBC into their plans, collaborate with experts, request support, and create the right operational models and partnerships for delivery.

Both experts and non-experts play a critical role in ensuring a more structured, measured and scientific approach to Social and Behaviour Change at UNICEF.

There is momentum for change. The COVID-19 crisis has emphasized the need for quality SBC programming, and has provided opportunities to improve the way we work. Behavioural approaches which have long been adopted outside the development and humanitarian industries are now getting more traction in our sector. UNICEF managers have called for the next generation of SBC programmes. As the organization enters its 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, capacities and activities will be progressively aligned with this new vision, so that interventions on the ground continue to diversify and improve over the coming years.

This Programme Guidance is a key building block to realize the new vision and strengthen the SBC function. Within UNICEF, this guidance is part of a larger renewed business model which touches upon different strategic and operational components to change our institutional system. This guidance is also designed to be useful to the needs of our many partners outside UNICEF, because building local and national capacities and stronger communities of practice is central to our mission. We want this guidance to fuel interaction and collaboration with local authorities, civil societies, donors and financial partners, the private sector, UN agencies and NGOs. Ultimately, we hope this guidance can support our commitment to helping countries and citizens improve the lives of children.