

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE: FINDINGS FROM AN SBC REVIEW OF LEGACY FOOD FOR PEACE DEVELOPMENT FOOD SECURITY ACTIVITIES

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Identification of implementation weaknesses led BHA to focus more on the **how**—via designated SBC staff, new technical guidance, and enhanced capacity strengthening to improve program impact.

BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES

Resilience programming by the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA, formerly the Office of Food for Peace or FFP) recognizes that social and behavior change (SBC) is important in all sectors and can lead to improved food security and nutrition outcomes. In 2018, FFP conducted a review of SBC methods and approaches within DFSAs (now Resilience Food Security Activities or RFSA) to—

- describe the fundamentals of SBC theory and practice and identify current consensus on evidence-based global best practices
- assess how well SBC approaches were aligned with best practices and compare common strengths and weaknesses in the SBC approaches
- make recommendations to improve the impact of SBC activities.



Credit: CRS 2013

METHODS

The USAID-funded Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project (FANTA) consulted experts and reviewed global literature to map SBC best practices, then reviewed documents from 11 activities in 8 countries, conducted interviews with staff, and observed 4 activities in 2 countries (Malawi, Zimbabwe).

Limitations: The small sample and limited observations precluded conclusive depictions of implementation. Observation-based evaluation would be needed to verify the scope and impact of implementation features we report.

RESULTS

Although many activities adhered to some SBC best practices, such as integrating multiple approaches and engaging secondary audiences, the quality of implementation varied widely.

Common Design Challenges

- trying to change many behaviors simultaneously
- underutilizing participatory research methods, which limited potential to reveal key factors and foster ownership
- weak application of findings to design
- emphasizing barriers over leveraging existing norms, practices, and roles that enable positive behavior change

Common Implementation Challenges

- limited understanding and use of SBC strategies, especially when designed by outside experts or not socialized
- focusing on individual-level change by providing information to individuals while neglecting social and structural factors
- limited capacity of some frontline workers to facilitate group dialogues or deliver interpersonal communication effectively, although activities did work to improve SBC capacity overall

APPLYING LEARNING

The review's general recommendation to focus more on the "how" (implementation quality) than the "what" has led to shifts in BHA's processes and support to partners post-award, including:

- BHA has designated SBC advisors as key personnel.
- RFAs ask applicants to prioritize behaviors for each sector.
- Guidance on cross-cutting SBC strategy development
- BHA has developed SBC capacity strengthening tools and supported implementers to pilot these
- BHA and partners are providing TA on new SBC tools to support application of SBC best practices

