Social and Behavior Change Parameters for Resilience and Food Security Activities during Refine and Implement

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) expectations for how Resilience and Food Security Activities (RFSA) implementing partners (IPs) should address social and behavior change (SBC) post-award as part of the Refine and Implement (R&I) approach or any other co-creation process with BHA. This document builds upon the [Refine and Implement Overview and FAQ](#), and recent efforts that BHA has undertaken with IPs during the refinement phase in multiple countries. The primary audience for this document is RFSA IP staff, including Chiefs of Party, with secondary audiences of USAID BHA staff and IP headquarters staff. For additional information, please review [Social and Behavior Change Design: Handbook for Resilience Food Security Activities During the Refinement Period](#).

Background

SBC is the systematic application of iterative, theory-based, and research-driven processes and strategies for change at individual, community, and societal levels. BHA recognizes that SBC cuts across all sectors within RFSAs and that Theories of Change (TOC) invariably incorporate dozens of behavioral or social change elements. Prior workshops and evaluations have documented that IPs often courageously attempt to change many behaviors and social norms with mixed success. As a result of decades of lessons learned and several multi-country reviews, BHA has determined the need to ensure IPs adhere to SBC best practices as outlined in the RFSA technical references (forthcoming) and the [2019 FANTA review of SBC methods and approaches](#) conducted for Legacy Food for Peace (L-FFP). Below are some of the major findings from this review and other lessons learned:

- The quality of SBC design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation—including using data for decision-making throughout the activity—is highly variable.

- Implementers need guidance on how to plan formative research, including selecting methods that will produce results useful for SBC strategy design.

- Implementers work with short-term technical assistance providers at key stages of formative research, strategy design, and evaluation, but programs lack sufficient mechanisms for skills transfer from these providers to local and international partners.

- In cases where SBC strategies are evidence-based and well-designed, they are not always co-created or adequately socialized with activity staff. As such, staff may not make the connection between their work, the theory of change of the activity, and the SBC strategy, thereby limiting the effectiveness of the SBC strategy as an adaptive management tool. Often the strategies are completed too late in the project cycle to be very effective.

- Implementers tend to engage stakeholders—from caregivers and communities to implementing partners, government, and market actors—as passive recipients of messages rather than as active agents of change. This inhibits opportunities for local innovations and sustained impact of SBC interventions.

The [Legacy Food for Peace (FFP) Supported Exit Strategies and Sustainability](#) paper also highlighted several factors for sustainability, including motivation, capacity, resources, and linkages. Since 2016, L-FFP began asking partners to directly address these factors in applications by prioritizing services and behaviors that can be sustained after the project ends. If RFSAs are integrating high quality SBC, many of these factors[1] can be adequately addressed during the refinement phase.
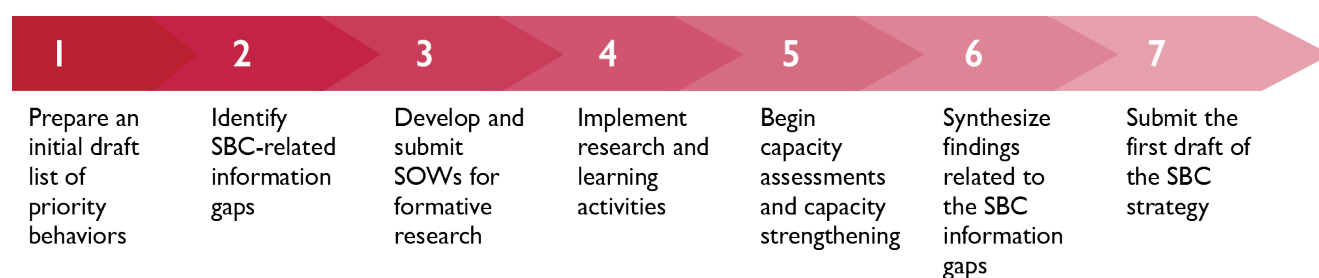
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[1] Strong SBC analysis grounded in a theoretical framework such as the socio-ecological model looks at what underpins behaviors including capacity, access to resources, and motivation.

SBC Milestones

To respond to these common challenges, BHA is working to convey the central role of SBC in RFSAs and the associated implications for R&I activities, program design, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and sustainability, especially within the refinement phase of R&I. While partners should incorporate SBC best practices into the initial proposal development, the refinement phase allows partners to investigate, validate, and revise proposed approaches as needed so that SBC best practices are thoroughly embedded in program design and staff capacity needs are addressed.

During the refinement year, there are several key milestones in the SBC process that IPs can follow that will move them towards refining the project TOC and the development of a functional and useful SBC strategy. These milestones are summarized in Figure 1 and described in greater detail below.

Figure 1: Key Milestones for RFSA Partners during the Refinement Phase of R&I

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Prepare an initial draft list of priority behaviors	Identify SBC-related information gaps	Develop and submit SOWs for formative research	Implement research and learning activities	Begin capacity assessments and capacity strengthening	Synthesize findings related to the SBC information gaps	Submit the first draft of the SBC strategy

Milestone 1: Prior to the inception workshop, IPs should prepare an initial draft list of priority behaviors[2] to achieve the project goals and outcomes across all TOC purposes. Prioritization is a necessary step to overcome BHA RFSA lessons learned stemming from reviews[3] which indicated that 1) programs with many behavioral objectives were more likely to face problems with implementation quality or sustained change, and 2) programs with fewer behaviors (8-10) achieved greater quality of implementation. There are various approaches that may be used to establish an initial prioritized list, including the Prioritizing Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Behaviors Tool, which can be adapted for other sectors. This list may be changed following formative assessments and stakeholder engagement during the refinement year, but the initial prioritization enables more targeted discussions during the Inception Workshop, and the derivation of focused questions for formative research and learning activities.

Because RFSAs have multiple sectors, no more than 5 priority behaviors[4] per sector are recommended, ideally fewer. A manageable number of behaviors will set IPs up for success as they examine the information gaps associated with each behavior.

Milestone 2: During the inception workshop and in discussion with BHA, IPs will review the TOC to **identify SBC-related info gaps** based on a thorough understanding of the context and project goals. Linking back to milestone 1, IPs will identify the information gaps associated with the initial priority list of behaviors. Research and learning efforts to address these gaps may focus on identifying factors (barriers/facilitators), articulating behavior change pathways, confirming or refining the list of behaviors,

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2 Please see examples of multi-sectoral nutrition-related behaviors compiled in the table in this USAID Nutrition Strategy Effective At-scale SBCC Guidance or in this USAID Advancing Nutrition summary. Finally, the USAID ACCELERATE project developed behavior profiles from many sectors.
3 Meta Reviews include IMPEL's Review of 16 Mid-Term Evaluations of USAID-funded Food Security Development Programs from 2015-2020 (2020) and FANTA's SBC review (2019).
4 The list of behaviors should be at the macro level and there is no limit to the number of sub-behaviors or steps that can be taken into consideration. For example, exclusive breastfeeding would be an example of a behavior. Sub-behaviors would be: Ensuring the baby attaches properly to the breast; Do not give any other substance before initiating breastfeeding, etc.

informing the design, or exploring the feasibility of a particular approach in the given context. Please note that many information gaps can be answered with <u>secondary data and desk reviews, including any previous RFSA studies and reports,</u> and will not require primary research, for which formal statements of work (SOWs) must be developed. BHA strongly urges partners to examine information gaps beyond knowledge and education of participants.

Milestone 3: Following the inception workshop, IPs will **develop and submit SOWs for formative research or assessments** to address information gaps that cannot be answered through desk review. IPs often seek to identify *what* people are doing, as well as the existing services and conditions. Given the short timeframe for research and assessments in the refinement phase, primary research efforts (e.g., pilot studies or participatory design processes) are most relevant and timely when they focus on identifying *how* SBC activities should be designed or adapted and *why* specific behaviors may or may not be practiced. Secondary analysis, where possible, should also be prioritized as much as possible. IPs should also strive to ensure coherence and complementarity across the various formative research and learning activities, which helps to ensure that each formative research and learning activity is sufficiently focused and fit-to- purpose. For example, the required gender analysis typically addresses many SBC-related questions.

Milestone 4: IPs will then **implement research and learning activities,** including formative research, pilot activities, community consultations, participatory design, and desk reviews. If using external consultants, BHA encourages IPs to require that consultants focus on skills transfer to project staff and local partners as an integral part of their SOW. To ensure ownership of the process, project staff are strongly encouraged to participate in research design, data collection, analysis, and the use of formative research results to update the TOC. During research implementation, IPs should challenge assumptions to common approaches to most RFSAs, including food assistance, care groups, village savings and loan groups, and village committees, to determine if these interventions are the most appropriate to address SBC within the project.

Milestone 5: During this period, IPs should **also begin SBC capacity assessments and capacity strengthening** of project staff and stakeholders. BHA suggests that capacity considerations be incorporated into implementation plans, allowing time and resources to train all project staff and local government and community partners on the **SBC strategy and gender analysis**. Initial capacity assessment may take place mid-way through the refinement phase, allowing for development of further capacity strengthening efforts to ensure that all actors understand their roles in operationalizing the SBC strategy, implementing and monitoring activities, and undertaking periodic reflection and adaptation of the strategy as needed. Capacity assessment should consider a variety of competencies depending on the audience, including, but not limited to interpersonal communication and facilitation skills, relationship building, community mobilization, empathy, and respect.

Milestone 6: Following the completion of the research and learning activities, IPs will refine and confirm a list of priority behaviors to help **synthesize findings related to the SBC information gaps**. To do so, IPs may find it useful to organize their existing knowledge and any new findings into a 'behavior profile' or a similar framework that lays out the priority behavior and steps to practice the behavior. The framework should include the known factors (barriers/facilitators) and actors, followed by corresponding SBC approaches and activities. Ideally, IPs will incorporate refined priority behaviors and knowledge of pathways and approaches into the TOC, which will ultimately inform the SBC strategy.

Milestone 7: Finally, IPs will **submit the first draft of the SBC strategy** after the culmination workshop, as an annex to the Year 2 Pipeline and Resource Estimate Proposal (PREP). The SBC strategy should be explicitly grounded in the project's TOC and tailored to the local context. It should include standard elements such as priority and influencing groups (or audiences); social change and behavior change objectives, barriers, and enabling factors; and a well-defined mix of approaches, activities, and channels. BHA expects the SBC strategy to act as a living document and influence changes in the project activities, including the TOC, workplan, sustainability plan, M&E plan and budget. Any changes to the SBC strategy should be reflected in subsequent annual PREP narratives.