USING SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE TO INCREASE FAMILY PLANNING UPTAKE IN ZAMBIA

MAKING THE CASE

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Introduction

While great strides have been made in advancing family planning in Zambia since 2013 when the Integrated Family Planning Scale-up Plan (2013–2020) was first launched, the country's Costed Implementation Plan (CIP) is likely to fall short of its goals. The government's focus during this time has largely been on investing in training, service delivery, and commodities; no significant investments were made in social and behavior change (SBC).

This case study documents how Breakthrough ACTION worked with partners to make the case to the National Family Planning Technical Working Group (TWG) to include strategic and specific SBC approaches in the next CIP (2020–2026). By including SBC in the CIP, the Government of the Republic of Zambia could contribute to their overall Family Planning 2020 Commitment (and beyond) and amplify the efforts of service delivery partners to meet the expressed needs of citizens for family planning methods in the country.

Credit: Breakthrough ACTION, 2019

Family planning in Zambia

In 2017, the government of Zambia committed to increasing the contraceptive prevalence rate for modern methods from 33% to 58% by 2020. However, by 2019, the estimated modern contraceptive prevalence rate had only reached 45%.[1]

A critical challenge remains among adolescents. About 59% of adolescent girls become pregnant by the age of 19 and only 10.2% of adolescent girls aged 15–19 use modern contraceptives.[1] Teenage pregnancies among girls in grades 1–12 increased five-fold (from 3,663 to 14,849) between 2002 and 2012. In 2007, births among adolescent girls accounted for nearly 11.8% of all births in Zambia.

Social and behavior change

Social and behavior change is a discipline that uses a deep understanding of human and societal behavior and evidence-based interventions to increase the adoption of healthy behaviors by individuals, and influence the social norms that underpin those behaviors.

SBC is used to:

- Increase demand for, or utilization of, available commodities and services.
- Increase healthy behaviors of individuals and communities.
- Improve communication between health providers, clients, families, couples, and communities.
- Engage community leaders and other influencers in promoting healthy behaviors.
- Transform social norms that underpin behavioral choices.

[1] Zambia Statistics Agency, Ministry of Health (MOH) Zambia, and ICF. 2019. Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2018. Lusaka, Zambia, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Zambia Statistics Agency, Ministry of Health, and ICF.

Identifying SBC champions

In June 2019, Breakthrough ACTION facilitated a one-day workshop with members of the National Family Planning TWG who were interested in hearing more about SBC and how it could play a role in family planning uptake. During the workshop, the group:

- Discussed the importance of SBC in achieving effective family planning outcomes.
- Shared a qualitative assessment of SBC funding.
- Reviewed the Behavioral Drivers Model.
- Considered the Breakthrough ACTION Advocating for SBC in Family Planning Programs Message Framework, and how its three key pathways to impact might inform reaching influencers in Zambia.
- Identified SBC activities in the existing Zambia Costed Implementation Plan (2013–2020).

As a result of this workshop, the group determined that the SBC activities in the CIP were too general, reverting to "business as usual" and not strategic. This made the donors skeptical of their potential to be effective and therefore these SBC activities in the CIP had not been funded or implemented in Zambia in the past eight years.

Workshop participants were initially categorized as either SBC supporters or those who needed slight persuasion. However, by the end of the workshop, all participants were supporters who could champion SBC within the National Family Planning TWG. These SBC champions resolved to formulate and implement an advocacy approach that would persuade other members of the National Family Planning TWG to include and fund SBC in the 2020–2026 CIP.

Using the Breakthrough ACTION Message Framework to guide SBC advocacy

The Breakthrough ACTION Advocating for SBC in Family Planning Programs Message Framework was designed to be used by SBC practitioners with influential organizations, coordinating bodies, and individuals to increase support for SBC in family planning and reproductive health. The framework provides guidance on messages for stakeholders who may be unaware or skeptical of the benefits of SBC for family planning or have limitations in their ability to include SBC in their portfolios.

In Zambia, the message framework was used by Breakthrough ACTION and workshop participants to:

1. **Know** who has decision-making power and what decision-makers know, think, and feel about SBC in family planning.
2. **Understand** the barriers and opportunities facing stakeholders.
3. **Determine** overarching messages that will appeal to stakeholders and are likely to resonate with their desire to increase family planning uptake.

Advocacy in action

Know

Breakthrough ACTION identified the National Family Planning TWG as the main decision-making body for family planning goals and activities. The TWG is chaired by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and includes MOH members, other relevant line ministries, donors, implementing partners, civil society organizations, and representatives from the medical, nursing, and midwifery communities. Of its various sub-committees, the Advocacy Sub-Committee was identified as the logical starting point for SBC advocacy.

Understand

Barriers: Many members of the National Family Planning TWG were seen as skeptical of SBC because they were not fully aware of the evidence that SBC can effectively contribute to family planning outcomes and unclear about SBC's excellent returns on investment.

Opportunities: The National Family Planning TWG was keen to meet the country's FP2020 goals but was not on track to do so. TWG members were looking for ways to understand why they were falling short and were thought to be open to hearing about how SBC could play a role, especially with regards to adolescent pregnancies.

Advocacy in action

Determine

Goal: Increase the National Family Planning TWG's belief that including strategic SBC activities in the CIP, and then funding them, will help increase voluntary family planning uptake in Zambia, especially among adolescents.

Messaging: The Advocacy Sub-Committee chose to focus on the message framework's Key Messaging Pillar 2: SBC is rooted in global evidence and best practices. This would be bolstered by messaging from Pillar 1 (SBC approaches complement service delivery) and Pillar 3 (SBC demonstrates a high return on investment in both the short and long-term).

Key messaging pillars for investments in SBC FOR FP

Key messaging Pillars	1. SBC approaches complement service delivery	2. SBC is rooted in global evidence and best practices	3. SBC demonstrates a high return on investment in both the short and long term
Supporting Points	• SBC includes a range of approaches that can, and should, be applied **across FP programming** – not just demand • Investing in SBC **increases effectiveness** of clinical investments, services • Informed by local needs, necessary for achieving country priorities, often developed with **community collaboration**	• SBC has **clear evidence of increasing successful outcomes in FP interventions** • Strong SBC investments have **been refined over 30 years based on high impact best practices** • **Local evidence/data** is used to inform SBC programming; examples available from all regions	• **SBC maximizes FP investments** across contexts and makes use of a variety of affordable approaches • Strategic SBC uses a variety of **affordable approaches** to generate demand • **Both short-term** and **long-term** results are reached and measured with effective evaluation

Advocacy in action

Results

The Advocacy Sub-Committee chair developed and delivered a presentation to the National Family Planning TWG in June 2019 to make a case for the importance of SBC and its potential power to help amplify other efforts to increase family planning uptake. As a result, the National Family Planning TWG formed an SBC Sub-Committee, chaired by Breakthrough ACTION. This important change ensures SBC has an official platform, space, and voice in the National Family Planning TWG's meetings and deliberations.

The new sub-committee was first tasked with developing an SBC approach tailored for adolescents as data showed teenage pregnancies are of great concern. There were some questions from a few concerned members of the TWG who favored more general messaging. They felt that a focused approach on adolescents may appear to promote early sexual activity. As such, the SBC Sub-Committee:

- Developed a draft SBC strategy[2] and presented it to the National Family Planning TWG for feedback (September 2019).
- Shared with the FP TWG, an advocacy video developed by Breakthrough ACTION, to show why it is important to talk about family planning with adolescents (October 2019).
- Used the Business Case for SBC in Family Planning (developed by Breakthrough RESEARCH) to present recommendations for reaching adolescents to the National Family Planning TWG (January 2020).

The SBC Sub Committee was also tasked with overseeing the SBC activities that would be included in the 2020–2026 CIP. The sub-committee developed a list of activities and shared it with the consultants developing the CIP.

Advocacy video on the need to prevent pregnancy among adolescents.

SBC materials for adolescent contraceptive use on display at the National Family Planning TWG meeting

[2] This strategy draws from the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Nutrition Communication and Advocacy Strategy 2018–2021, which is in line with the National Health Strategic Plan 2017–2021.

Advocacy in action

Organization: Zambia National Family Planning Technical Working Group

General Overview

Role and Key Decision Rights	Earlier SBC Views	Barriers/Drivers
The TWG is the National body that influences the development of the Costed Implementation Plan (CIP) for Family Planning every year	They doubled the effectiveness of SBC and its ability to generate quick wins that they can report as achievements. Without convincing evidence that SBC has been effective globally, and that it will help decrease unplanned pregnancies among adolescents, they are unlikely to support it.	They needed proof and persuasive evidence that SBC activities are effective in increasing use of FP to be convinced of the need to include it strategically in the CIP

SBC Engagement

Audience Segment: Skeptical

Goals	Goals
Increase the SBC TWG's belief that including strategic SBC activities in the CIP and funding them, will help increase family planning uptake in Zambia, especially among adolescents.	Gathering of stakeholders from the FP TWG showed that they were keen to meet the FP2020 goals and were short of their targets. They were looking for ways to understand why they were falling short. Open to hearing about how SBC could play a role, especially with adolescent pregnancies with is a big challenge for Zambia.

Applied Messaging Framework

Pillar: SBC is rooted in global evidence and best practices

Prioritized Supporting Points	Investing in SBC can help increase your program impact and there is evidence from the last 30 years to support this claim to share with your superiors	There is evidence from various countries that support the cost-effectiveness and impact of SBC	A small investment in SBC can further strengthen and complement your service delivery investments
Key Additional Evidence/ Anecdotes	FP SBC Evidence Database	Breakthrough RESEARCH business cases	Case study and animated film from Nigeria (NURHI)

Ask: Will you consider including strategic SBC activities (and supporting them) in the 2020 CIP to complement your service side investments?

Conclusion

In Zambia, as is most likely the case in other countries, there is a latent interest in SBC but a lack of understanding on how it can play a key, contributing role in amplifying the efforts of service delivery and achieving results in family planning. With the establishment of the SBC Sub-Committee, there is now a clear body with a mandate to champion the issue of SBC within the National Family Planning TWG. Although the development of the 2020–2026 CIP has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SBC Sub-Committee will continue to play a leadership role in advocating for the inclusion of funding for SBC activities in this critical policy document.

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