A man with a mustache, wearing a pink shirt, is looking at a Kchibo mobile phone. The phone is a rugged, black device with a screen displaying text and a small antenna. The background is a blue metal structure.

Media Buying for Impactful Social and Behavior

Change Programming:

Insights from Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria

Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria was the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) flagship social and behavior change (SBC) project in Nigeria from 2018 – 2025 under the prime implementation of Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs. Its goal was to increase the practice of priority health behaviors related to maternal, newborn, and child health, including nutrition, malaria, tuberculosis, COVID-19 and Global Health Security priority zoonotic diseases at national and sub-national levels in collaboration with relevant USAID implementing partners and Federal and State Ministries of Health.

Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria influenced a wide range of health behaviors through a coordinated package of community-based, mass media, and digital approaches. Each approach focused on the same priority audiences, behaviors, and core messages. As a communication channel, **mass media** is critical as it is an extremely powerful tool to reach more individuals than those reached through community-based activities and reinforce messages at the community level.

Over the course of the project, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria's dedicated in-house media team developed a systematic strategy for working with and through media. This learning brief describes that system and offers lessons learned for others integrating mass media approaches into large SBC projects.

Breakthrough ACTION–Nigeria broadcast radio and TV spots, radio mini-drama series, program appearances, sponsorships, and co-productions to ensure high exposure. The project aimed to reach as many audience members as possible for the lowest cost, ensuring that all media content was optimally placed to achieve the project goal. This is the five-step process we used:

1. Prepare a Media Strategy:

For each media campaign, Breakthrough ACTION–Nigeria first developed a media strategy—a plan that guided media implementation from concept to delivery. Developed in partnership with technical teams, each campaign media strategy described six elements:



Campaign objective. A campaign objective is the outcome the project wants to achieve with the campaign. It is developed collaboratively between the media and technical teams. Once defined, all aspects of the media strategy are designed to achieve and contribute to this objective.



Intended audience(s). The strategy describes whom the campaign is meant to reach and influence, including their demographic characteristics, languages, location, and the best times to reach them.



The media mix. This may be radio, television, print, and/or social media and is determined based on accessibility to the intended audience, their media preferences, and the project's budget.



Timing and frequency of broadcasts. It is best to base these decisions on your audience's listening habits, message content, program format/length, and budget. Broadcast timing and frequency may also vary during periods of high disease transmission, or special community outreach activities such as insecticide treated mosquito net distributions or mobile TB testing drives.



The campaign period or launch date. This describes the time frame during which messages must broadcast. For example, if the campaign is about a seasonal disease such as yellow fever, the strategy may plan for broadcasts just before and during peak seasons.



The monitoring plan. Monitoring ensures that broadcasts are completed as scheduled and may be done through commercial monitoring agencies and/or independent monitors.

2. Develop a Media Plan:

The next step is developing a clear plan that details a shared understanding between the project and the radio and/or TV stations concerning the times and days of placement; daily rotation of creative executions; the number of paid and complimentary broadcasts; the stations' rates, negotiated discounts, and agreed rates; and the total budget for running the campaign. For example, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria developed [this media plan for a malaria TV and radio campaign](#).

3. Buy Media Airtime:

With the media plan in place, the project began buying airtime from all the various TV and radio stations on the plan. Media placements may be bought directly from the stations or through media buying agencies using rates per broadcast, bulk purchases, or bidding. Bulk purchases mean that a station offers a negotiated rate for a large media placement. Bidding occurs when a station is selling sponsorships or advertising around specific programs. For instance, Multichoice Nigeria sometimes invited advertisers to bid for airtime around the popular Idols Nigeria TV show. When negotiating with stations, the media team ensured that the stations accepted media purchase orders and that the project got the best rates on offer. In September 2023, when the project was managing purchase orders with over 150 media stations, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria began working with media buying agencies rather than handling the media buying process directly. These agencies handled relationships with the stations, from contract negotiations to payments to media partners.



4. Develop a Media Monitoring and Compliance Plan:

Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria monitored all channels in real time to ensure campaign compliance. High compliance meant most, or all executions broadcast by the media stations at the scheduled times and broadcasts were good quality. Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria monitored media through two main methods:



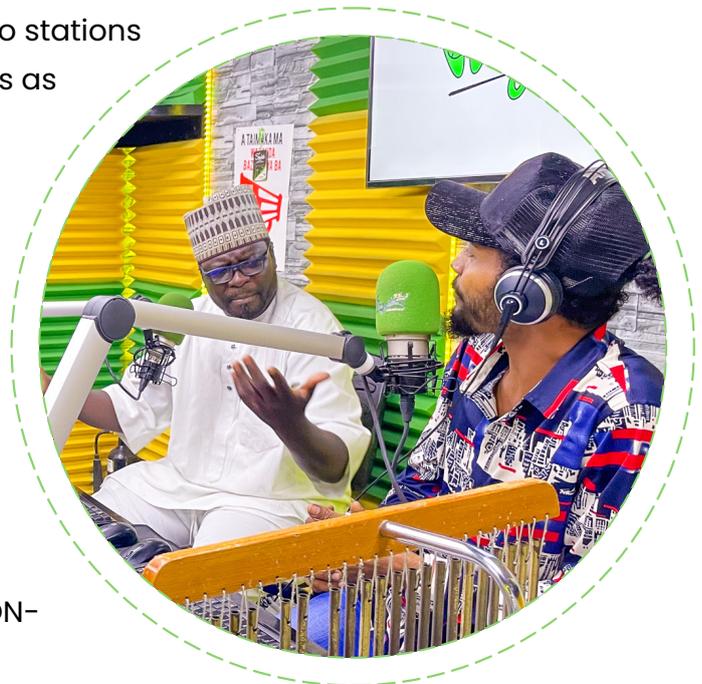
Monitoring agencies. When possible, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria contracted agencies with remote monitoring technologies to validate broadcasts in real time. This method was more effective as the technology allowed agencies to record broadcasts, so it was possible to check on the accuracy of reports. Independent monitors did not have this capacity.



Independent monitoring. The project hired and trained independent monitors in communities where media monitoring agencies did not have remote technology coverage. For example, in Bauchi, the project was broadcast on ten community stations that the monitoring agencies could not monitor. So, the project trained local residents to listen to project radio executions and report on the timing and quality of broadcasts.

5. Negotiate Partnership & Complimentary Broadcasts:

The project negotiated complementary spot broadcasts alongside paid spot broadcasts with radio stations and included them in the purchase orders as deliverables. Media buying agencies negotiated complementary spots in the same way. In addition, many radio stations exceeded the number of broadcasts agreed upon in their purchase orders. Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria monitored complementary broadcasts in the same way it monitored paid spots. Both private and government media houses offered complimentary broadcasts. In total, Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria garnered a staggering **82,320** complimentary radio and **2,040** complimentary TV spots with an estimated value of **\$1,473,844** between January 2020 and December 2023.



Lessons Learned

- Basing selection of stations and broadcast times on monitoring and research enhanced listeners' engagement, and increased campaign reach and repetitions. Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria reviewed evaluations of past communication campaigns and survey data to determine which stations, programming, and listening times audiences preferred, and used this knowledge to select the best stations and broadcast times. Media research reports also helped the project identify and adapt to emerging trends in audience media behavior.
- Independent media monitors require regular capacity strengthening. Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria conducted regular on-the-job training for independent monitors to strengthen documentation, and data sharing using WhatsApp. This improved reporting accuracy and the project's ability to respond quickly to issues flagged by the monitors.
- Periodic capacity strengthening for media partners contributed to successful media campaigns. Breakthrough ACTION-Nigeria put effort into building relationships and trust with media partners through capacity strengthening sessions. This enhanced collaboration, improved communication between the project and media stations, strengthened crisis management, and fostered a deeper understanding of the stations' mode of operation.
- Regular check-ins with media stations were integral to campaign success. These periodic assessments offered a real-time glimpse into campaign performance and levels of audience engagement; identification and swift response to issues; and adjustments to media plans. Feedback during check-ins improved ongoing campaigns and informed future plans.
- Transitioning to media buying agencies from a direct relationship with stations resulted in a modest reduction in compliance. Following the shift from in-house management to media buying agencies in September 2023, media station compliance with broadcast schedules dropped from 84% to 69%. The drop in compliance is attributed to poor communication between the media buying agencies and the stations, resulting in incorrect media plans being shared and insufficient follow up to ensure the stations were clear about expectations. In addition, the economic downturn in Nigeria resulted in many radio stations struggling to maintain electricity throughout the day, which means the stations were off the air.