Social and Behavior Change Capacity Self-Assessments

▶ Introduction

Breakthrough ACTION Guyana conducted three social and behavior change (SBC) capacity self-assessments with staff from the Vector Control Services/National Malaria Program (VCS/NMP) and the Public Relations/Health Promotion Unit (PR/HPU) of the Ministry of Health (MOH) in 2018, 2022, and 2024, respectively. Following the steps of the SBC Flow Chart, the assessments used a highly participatory process to quantify the stakeholders' respective SBC strengths and gaps, identify their capacity strengthening needs, develop SBC capacity strengthening plans, and examine the extent to which these needs were met over the course of the project. The results of the assessments informed Breakthrough ACTION's capacity strengthening activities with VCS/NMP and PR/HPU and plans for continued capacity strengthening after the project's end.

2024 SBC Capacity Assessment participants from VCS, PR/HPU and Breakthrough ACTION.

▶ Interventions

Prior to each capacity assessment exercise, Breakthrough ACTION asked participating organizations to prepare any available documentation about their SBC and malaria-related activities in advance and bring them to the workshop. This documentation was to ensure the self-assessments would be based on available evidence of existing capacity.

Each workshop followed a similar format. Facilitators from Breakthrough ACTION first led both VCS/NMP and PR/HPU through an overview of the SBC Flow Chart skill sets in plenary, as indicators for the assessment were based on the SBC Flow Chart design process (see Table 1). The two organizations then separated into small groups for the self-

assessment process. Each group included a Breakthrough ACTION facilitator and notetaker. The participants independently rated their unit on each of the questions about SBC skills and then came together to discuss each aspect in turn, reflect on how their department currently practiced those skills, and reach a group consensus about how to score their current organizational capacity. After the self-assessment/rating process, each group identified achievements and outlined next steps to address SBC capacity needs. In the midline and endline assessments, participants also reviewed and reflected on the results from their previous assessments.

Table 1: Capacity Indicators by Steps of the SBC Flow Chart

Breakthrough ACTION Design Approach Steps	Capacity Skill Sets	Indicators [a]
OVERARCHING	Systematic approach	Organization follows steps of SBC Flow Chart
DEFINE	Situation Analysis	Organization conducts situation analysis
	SBC Theory	Organization uses social and behavior change theories or models to design interventions
	SBC Strategy Design	Organization involves community partners and stakeholders in discovery process
		Organization uses data/evidence to inform strategy development
		Organization includes specific elements when preparing a written strategy
DESIGN & TEST	Design Process	Organization involves community partners and stakeholders in prototyping process
		Organization identifies/prioritizes prototypes based on audience and sub-audience preferences
	Complementary Channels	Strategy uses multiple channels/delivery mechanisms in a complementary way
	Product/Message/ Prototype Design	Organization follows specific steps for development of prototypes, messages, and materials
	Intervention Planning	Organization bases intervention plans on a previously defined (written) strategy
	Budgeting	Organization sets budgets based on actual costs
APPLY	Mobilization & Coordination	Organization follows specific steps to mobilize and coordinate with partners
	Monitoring	Organization has a system for monitoring implementation of prototypes in real world settings and providing progress reports on implementation
	Training	Organization follows specific steps then when planning and implementing training of staff and partners
	Data Utilization	Organization analyzes data to inform programmatic decisions
		Organization reviews data and analysis results with partners and stakeholders
	Scaling up	Organization has a strategy for scaling up prototypes

[a] Measurement details are provided in the self-assessment tool.

▶ Results

Figure 1 and Figure 2 present the comparison of domain scores across the three rounds of capacity assessments to measure perceived changes over time in capacity in the Define, Design and Test, and Apply phases of the SBC Flow Charts for VCS/NMP and PR/HPU, respectively.

Figure 1: VCS/NMP Baseline, Midline and Endline SBC Capacity Assessment Scores by Phase of the SBC Flow Chart
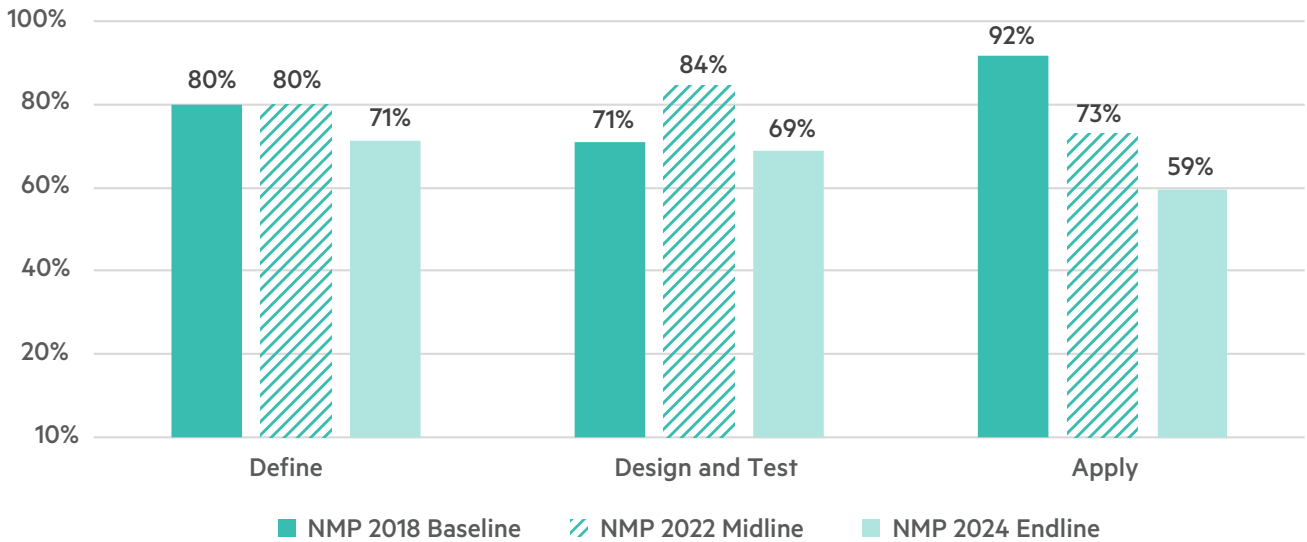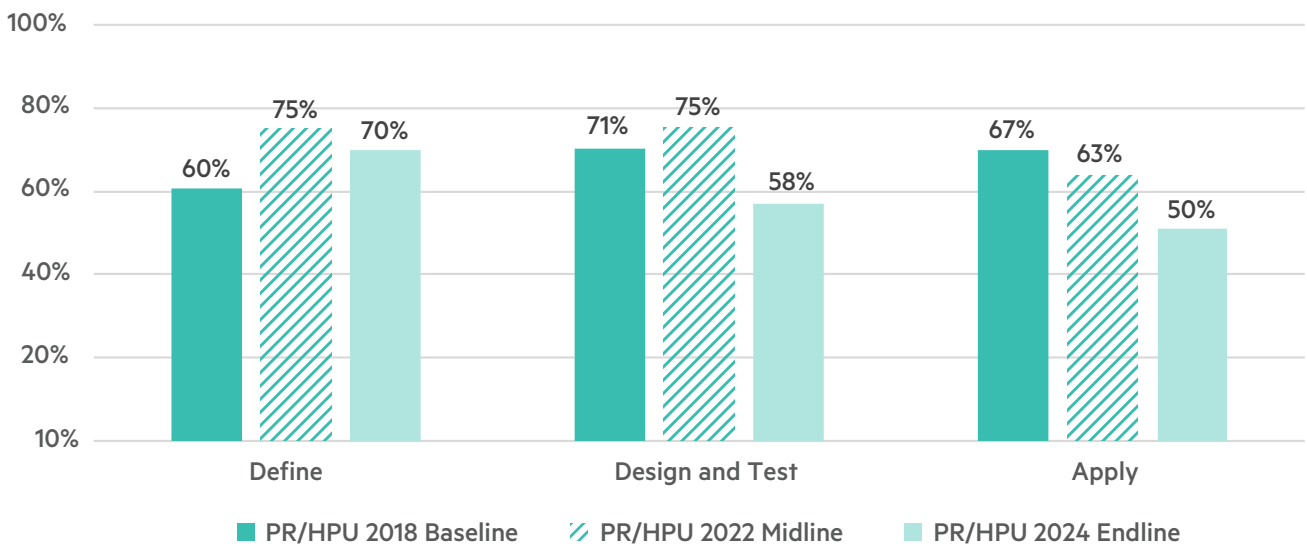

Figure 2: PR/HPU Baseline, Midline and Endline SBC Capacity Assessment Scores by Phase of the SBC Flow Chart

Although most scores decreased from baseline to endline, participants in both units noted that this result could be attributed to gaining a better understanding of the entire process and learning about the nuances and intricacies of applying SBC principles to programs. With this deeper understanding, participants realized that there was more room for improvement than they initially thought.

At endline, both organizations cited several achievements they attributed to Breakthrough ACTION's capacity strengthening efforts (see Table 2).

Table 2: SBC Capacity Achievements for VCS/NMP and PR/HPU

Organization	Achievements
VCS/NMP	Better utilization of data to guide central and regional program to increase budgetary allocations
	Increased formal engagement with stakeholders including Guyana Forestry Commission, Guyana Geology and Mines Commission, Ministry of Labor, Guyana Women Miners Organization
	Introduced malaria treatment envelopes to clients and every newly trained malaria service deliverer
	Obtained transportation (vehicle) for Region 7 using SMART[b] advocacy training
	Increased malaria testing in mining sector
PR/HPU	Worked on the development of policy to manage social media content through PR/HPU, which will help with monitoring and analyzing data
	Developed ability to tailor content to suit all populations inclusive of gender, age, and race
	Partnered with local stakeholders in the production of social media content (E-Networks and Impressions)
	Created a platform to gather feedback on public health issues and concerns done in the form of VOX spot (on-the-street interviews)
	Developed a draft communication strategy
	Improved collaboration with external partners, including Mt. Sinai, PAHO, and UNICEF
	Conducted a training on social media monitoring with staff

[b] SMART is mnemonic device that helps to remember important parts of an advocacy objective: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound.

As for priorities moving forward, VCS/NMP plans to engage with a wider range of stakeholders, train and manage their staff with the National Malaria SBC Strategy and National Strategic Plan, hold more malaria sessions on radio (at the regional level), increase their use of data to guide their malaria interventions in schools, and increase malaria SBC budgetary allocations and human resources. PR/HPU aims to employ more health promotion and communication officers across the regions, increase training for staff in risk communication, and further increase budgetary allocation for the unit.

Another notable next step includes increased efforts to institutionalize SBC within various ministry initiatives as well as across ministries to elevate the standards for and status of SBC.

> *I think the process has been an amazing one. We have learned so much over the years, and even while I was going through the rating sheet earlier, I realized how much more work we still have to do. So, even though you guys will be closing, this aspect will move ahead with us.*

▶ Lessons Learned

- **Conducting the SBC capacity assessments "apart together" allowed both for critical internal reflection within each unit and for cross-departmental collaboration.** Although it was not initially an intended outcome of the SBC capacity assessment process, both VCS/NMP and PR/HPU noted at endline that they appreciated the opportunity to interact with their counterparts. Collaboration between different units can serve as a model for other departments. Regular meetings and discussions between national and regional teams are beneficial for sharing insights and improving strategies.

- **Participant understanding of the breadth and depth of SBC increased over time.** With this qualitative increase in understanding came a quantitative decrease in self-assessed scoring. From the quantitative scores at the endline and the comparison of scores across domains over time, it is evident that workshop participants had a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of SBC and were honest about what aspects of the SBC design process they had yet to embrace successfully. The qualitative findings reflected a greater understanding and commitment to using a systematic SBC process in all future work. Programs can prepare participants in advance that a decrease in scores is possible as they gain a better understanding of what SBC entails. Instead of relying on scores, what matters most is how they tangibly demonstrate applying what they have learned to their everyday work.

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> *We know that you guys have left a whole lineup of work for us, which I know will definitely impact our work, on the content we create, the content we put out and definitely how we interact with the public. So, it has been amazing. This has been really amazing.*
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- **MOH turnover rates affected continuity of the SBC capacity assessment and strengthening processes.** Of the eight participants in the endline assessment, only three had attended one of the two previous capacity assessment workshops. These frequent shifts in staffing may have affected the quantitative scoring of the SBC capacity assessments, given different frames of reference.

- **Employing a consistent methodology at each SBC capacity assessment timepoint will increase validity of the results.** While the baseline and endline assessments were conducted in person, the midline assessment was held remotely given COVID-19 concerns. The use of different methodologies may have influenced outcomes. Future capacity SBC assessments should strive to employ a consistent approach at each timepoint to the extent possible.

- **Supporting participants to obtain relevant documentation in advance will give added credibility to scores.** Breakthrough ACTION requested that participants bring physical and/or electronic copies of relevant documentation to the capacity assessments (e.g., national malaria strategic

Participants in the 2024 SBC capacity self-assessment discuss the SBC Flow Chart skill sets.

frameworks, SBC strategies, reports, or materials). However, few participants did, largely due to challenges with accessibility, lack of awareness of their existence, and time constraints. Further thinking around how facilitators can better support this document-gathering process would strengthen the justification of self-administered scores.

- **Developing clear organizational action plans based on identified SBC gaps provided benchmarks by which to demonstrate progress.** The SBC capacity assessments did not stop at scoring alone but went further to outline how each organization planned to address their identified SBC gaps. These action plans provided concrete guidance that VCS and PR/HPU could work together with Breakthrough ACTION over the life of the project, and they informed future activities under Breakthrough ACTION's coordination and capacity strengthening intermediate result.

> **So, I was there from the beginning in terms of when we did the Design and Test workshops. So, those aspects of what we've been doing, we have been able to really grab onto. Now we are seeing how it all fits together using the Flow Chart. You know and be able to see exactly where we are. And where we could go. And for me, I am particularly happy that I have been a part of this from the beginning.**

- **Complexity-aware evaluation methods can complement self-assessment approaches to provide a more robust picture of gains in SBC capacity.** Given the challenges with capacity self-assessments noted above, programs may want to consider triangulating data from these assessments with findings from complexity-aware methodologies, such as Outcome Harvesting or Most Significant Change. Outcome Harvesting looks retrospectively at what has changed and then works backward to determine whether, and how, an intervention has contributed to these changes. Most Significant Change collects personal stories of change from intended audiences, along with why they feel that change is most significant, and then the most significant of these stories are identified. These approaches are appropriate for complex settings in which outcomes are not predetermined and activities and context evolve over time.