Using Social and Behavior Change to Increase Youth Leadership and Political Participation

Executive Summary
Social and Behavior Change: An Overview

**WHAT.** Social and behavior change (SBC) approaches are activities and/or interventions seeking to influence the voluntary behavior of a population by addressing the factors facilitating or blocking a behavior to improve their lives. SBC approaches apply interactive, theory-based, and research-driven behavioral insights and evidence to affect sustainable behavior change at the individual, community, and societal levels. One important factor is social norms, which are unwritten rules that shape what people consider typical and appropriate behavior. Social norms have a powerful impact on behavior, especially for young people in decision-making and civic engagement.

SBC approaches use an iterative process, focusing on individual behaviors and perspectives within the socio-ecological system (see Figure 1). Adhering to local contexts, gathering data, and using existing knowledge and experiences, practitioners can design effective SBC approaches tailored to each behavior and improve program outcomes.

**WHO.** The SBC guide is for democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) and youth development practitioners working across development sectors. An SBC approach benefits from collaboration and consultation with diverse perspectives, including young people.

**WHEN.** Use the SBC guide during the planning and design stage of a program and after conducting baseline research. Activities will vary across program contexts.

**WHY.** An SBC approach can strengthen youth leadership and participation by supporting research into young people and their decision-making, improving the effectiveness of youth-focused programs, and enhancing sustainable youth civic and political participation and leadership by identifying and addressing influential social norms, attitudes, and barriers.

**HOW.** The guide includes six stages that inform the development of an SBC intervention. Each stage includes descriptions and steps for completing activities but should be customized to fit each program context for more effective implementation.
Six Stages to Develop an SBC Intervention

STAGE 1: Define the behavior the SBC intervention will focus on. SBC interventions require a thorough diagnosis of the problem and identifying the behavior to be changed as well as the attitudes, values, and people influencing that behavior.

- **Determine the setting you will be working in.** This first step is a good opportunity to narrow your focus and understand the context. Consider if the SBC intervention will cover an entire state or will focus on one or a few communities.
- **Develop a Path to Change.** Discuss the current reality to identify what the community would look like if people changed this behavior. Spot the gaps between the current and aspired reality.
- **Develop a Behavior Statement.** A behavior statement captures the purpose and mission of your work. Then, determine who needs to do what to move closer to your desired social change. The “who” is your target group – the people who you need to implement the behavior. The “what” is the target behavior, or the behavior you need your target group to implement to achieve the desired social change.

**STAGE 1 IN ACTION.** A community in a newly established democracy is holding national elections for the first time after a peace agreement, and the government hopes young people ages 18 – 25 turn out to vote in large numbers. How can a civil society organization (CSO) support young people in participating on Election Day?

- **Behavior Statement:** In order to achieve a **strong democracy** (desired social change), we need **young people ages 18 – 25** (target group) to **vote in national elections** (target behavior).

STAGE 2: Map various determinants, or factors that contribute to a person or group’s behavior, across levels: individual (the goals, values, and attitudes that define you), social (such as influential people or organizations), and structural (governing systems that determine what you can and cannot do). Focus on the most influential ones.

- **Apply the Socio-logical Model.** This model (see Figure 2) is a SBC tool to map determinants that shape an individual’s behavior. This tool analyzes the enabling environment surrounding your target group and maps determinants at the environmental, societal, and individual levels.
- **Target priority determinants.** Identify influential determinants at each level that have the greatest impact on your target behavior.

**STAGE 2 IN ACTION.** What are the determinants impacting young people ages 18 – 25 and their plan to vote?

- **Structural & Environmental:** Government identification is required for voting, but hard to obtain.
- **Societal:** Families do not trust the government and are wary of political participation.
- **Individual:** Young people feel that voting contributes to a better community.
STAGE 3: Identify Intervention Strategies. Consider intervention options and strategies, or ways to address the behavior and reach the target group, through conducting decision-making trees (see Figure 3).

- **Consider what is driving the behavior and whether behavior change is possible.** Examine the environmental, societal, and individual levels to determine the systems in place to support behavior change, if the community supports behavior change, and the social norms and individual attitudes that influence behavior change.
- **Identify intervention strategies.** Use the Decision-Making Tree tool (see Figure 3) to determine the strategies available and feasible based on your resources, the target, the behavior, your expertise, etc.
- **Create a list of intervention strategies.** Affordability, practicability, acceptability, ethicality, effectiveness, and sustainability should be taken into consideration to evaluate and narrow down your intervention options.

**STAGE 3 IN ACTION.** Use the decision-tree to identify possible interventions to promote the target behavior.

- **Structural & Environmental:** Ask the government to change the voter identification policy.
- **Societal:** Bring parents, young people, and community leaders together to discuss their concerns.
- **Individual:** Set up shuttles to pick up and return young people from polling stations.

**Figure 3. Decision-Making Tree**
STAGE 4: Design Intervention. With intervention options to address the behavioral determinants, it is time to put it all together into a designed intervention package. This involves planning activities, identifying methods of delivery, and developing materials. Collaboration with community partners, influencers, and experts is crucial and lays the foundation for testing the intervention.

- **Determine delivery methods and develop activity summaries.** Include who is implementing the intervention, who is receiving it, how it will be delivered and how frequently, and what the duration of the intervention will be. See Figure 4.
- **Develop materials for intervention activities.** Identify and create necessary materials such as photos, videos, scripts, training toolkits, and capacity strengthening guides.
- **Consider developing guiding documents.** Logic frameworks can help map out project objectives and monitor and evaluate activities. Theories of change can provide a step-by-step guide to how and why an intervention can produce the intended outcomes. These documents provide a clear pathway for the intervention and support ongoing learning during implementation.

STAGE 4 IN ACTION. The CSO selected an intervention that uses video messaging and stories to reach young people and their parents through social media outreach to address the social norm that families distrust politics and political participation. Partnering with young people and their parents, the CSO will run advertisements three times per week over three months.

![Figure 4. Delivery Method](image)

STAGE 5: Test the designed intervention. Testing allows for adjustments and improvements to activities before implementing a full-scale intervention.

- **Determine testing needs and create a plan.** Identify which elements require testing, define success criteria, assess risks, select a sample audience, and establish data collection methods.
- **Conduct and monitor testing.** Implement the pilot intervention, documenting learnings to inform future revisions or adaptations. Use focus group discussions, interviews, surveys, or questionnaires to collect information from the pilot, which can then be analyzed prior to full implementation. Testing is an iterative process that allows for adaptation and learning throughout the program's life cycle.

STAGE 5 IN ACTION: It's time to test the intervention! After designing the videos, the CSO tests the concept with a group of young people to ensure it is acceptable to them and relevant. Young people engaged provide information on video formats they like and how they engage with videos. The CSO then tests the videos with a small audience, receiving feedback and adjusting the videos before full implementation.
STAGE 6: Implement, Monitor, Adapt and Learn. After making adjustments post-pilot, implement your SBC intervention. Design monitoring plans to learn from the intervention and build in opportunities to reflect and adapt as you implement for continuous learning.

- **Implement the intervention.** Review, revisit, and revise your program theory of change and develop implementation plans that help to achieve project objectives. Continue partnering with communities, individuals, and groups throughout the process. Document activities through reporting mechanisms.

- **Monitor the intervention.** Incorporate learning and adaptation touch points and collect reports, records, and evaluation data to assess the intervention’s effectiveness. Conduct impact evaluations to assess the intervention's effectiveness in achieving its goals. Conduct process evaluations to understand how change is occurring within the program.

- **Adapt the intervention.** Adopt a mindset of adaptation and document both expected and unexpected events during implementation. Review feedback and consult stakeholders, community partners, and experts to inform intervention redesign, and better align the intervention with intended outcomes and the target audience.

STAGE 6 IN ACTION. After selecting the intervention, the CSO workshops the idea with young people and their families to better understand the video formats, characters, and messages that would align with their interests. The pilot intervention includes a few pilot videos in one town and the CSO distributes surveys to get feedback and adjust for a larger intervention. Following the pilot, the CSO then produces more videos and advertisements to run for a longer duration and in the lead up to Election Day.

CEPPS Youth Democracy, Human Rights and Governance Cross-Sectoral Initiative. Funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), CEPPS established the Youth DRG Cross-Sectoral Initiative (CSI) to examine the intersections between DRG programs and initiatives in other youth development sectors, bringing together a global cohort of practitioners, young leaders, and donors from across disciplines in a knowledge-sharing forum. This toolkit is one effort by CEPPS to respond to the expressed need for practical guidance and case examples that highlight cross-sectoral approaches to youth development.