



Foreword

A new era for Social and Behaviour Change at UNICEF

For over 35 years, UNICEF has been a leader in Social and Behaviour Change (SBC), leveraging the largest dedicated institutional workforce in this field. We have influenced the practice of SBC all over the world by providing SBC advice to national authorities and participating in coordination mechanisms for emergency response and development strategies. For decades, UNICEF has empowered civil societies and community leadership to spearhead global SBC initiatives to improve the lives of children everywhere. We have mobilized young people, families, local organizations, public and private stakeholders, and key decision-makers to reimagine policies, improve services, transform societies, and support the adoption of positive and protective practices for children. Our efforts have brought us closer to realizing international Development Goals and the principles outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

In 2020, as UNICEF stepped forward as a leader in the global COVID response, the need for robust Social and Behaviour Change programmes to curb the spread became clear. UNICEF began a strategic shift—repositioning and elevating its large Communication for Development network to support the delivery of higher-quality Social and Behaviour Change programmes at scale. This corporate change relies on the adoption of a new business model that includes improved institutional positioning, governance, mechanisms, partnerships, and operational and programmatic modalities.

2022 is a pivotal moment in this journey.

This year kicks off UNICEF's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, in which Community Engagement, Social and Behaviour Change has been designated a core Change Strategy. This affirms the need for social and behavioural science and practice in finding a path towards recovery from the pandemic and accelerating towards the SDGs, and ensuring that these goals, especially the attainment of children and human rights, are upheld throughout the process.

This is also the year we release our SBC Programme Guidance, the very first living SBC guidance within UNICEF to be developed between our technical staff and partners to translate our vision of science-driven change programmes into concrete and actionable guidelines.

These two milestones are testimonies of SBC's centrality to our mandate, and reaffirm our commitment to better serve the communities we work with. The children and families living within these communities deserve the best-quality programmes possible. This guidance will continue to evolve as new knowledge emerges, capturing and converting the latest insights into policies and strategies for UNICEF and its partners. In acknowledgement that people have a fundamental right to drive the decisions that affect their lives, our team has built this resource to embrace a more community-led and people-centred approach.

By promoting co-creation, participation, and accountability measures as a standard practice, we hope this guidance can be a good in itself, and can help move the sector towards community-driven frameworks that respect the voices of those we seek to serve. These aims are reflected in the ethical principles for SBC practice, outlined by UNICEF and its partners at the beginning of the guidance.

Finally, in recognition of the fact that Social and Behaviour Change can only happen at scale through partnerships, the programme guidance was built with external audiences in mind, as an accessible document that people within and outside of UNICEF can rally around. It will support our efforts to build alliances, advance the UN Common Agenda, and strengthen UNICEF and governments' institutional capacity for planning, budgeting, resourcing, implementing and monitoring quality SBC strategies at scale.

The development and humanitarian challenges lying ahead are highly dependent on social change, individual and collective behaviours, and quality people-centred approaches. Programming excellence in these areas will be essential to progress towards more equitable, peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies. UNICEF looks forward to working hand in hand with our partners to contribute to a better future.

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