



The Ethics of SBC

Principles and values governing our work

UNICEF is a funder and active member of the [Global Alliance for Social and Behaviour Change](#), a coalition of organizations committed to advancing the scale, quality, impact and sustainability of SBC efforts.

SBC practitioners are very diverse, and the work they undertake also varies in scope and theoretical underpinning. No matter what shape their work takes, the dynamic professional community within the Global Alliance all share a set of norms, values and ideals that guide their work. The Global Alliance makes these principles explicit through a Code of Ethics, developed to promote ethical practice among its members and throughout the broader SBC field.

The Code is not a static set of rules but a living document that is refined periodically through collective reflections and new field experience and insights. While no enforcement mechanisms accompany the Code, it acts as a call for conversation among individuals, organizations and communities.

UNICEF has chosen to promote these principles as an integral part of its programme guidance, to encourage their use and application in all research, programming and capacity-strengthening efforts. These principles intersect with and support the implementation of the Human Rights Based Approach, which is the overarching principle behind our work. By guiding organizational and individual decision-making, the Ethics Code is intended to signify the privilege that should be accorded to underserved communities (those least likely to possess the power to represent their own interests) and drive the co-creative processes we engage them in.



Global Alliance for Social and Behaviour Change

Statement of SBC ethical values

The ethical principles comprising the Code are framed by an overarching set of three key values: the importance of citizen agency and autonomy, a respect for diversity and culture, and a commitment to participation through the process of dialogue.

The agency of individuals and communities

The field of SBC values the moral autonomy of individuals and communities. People should be

treated as chief agents in making decisions regarding their own welfare. The autonomy of individuals should not be sacrificed for the good of any larger community to which they might belong. The autonomy of communities is not to be sacrificed for the good of encompassing regions or states in which a community may reside. The autonomy of individuals should not be sacrificed for their own good, as this may be interpreted by others.

Respect for diversity

SBC work takes place across diverse social and cultural settings spanning the globe. It is imperative that the value frameworks across these settings be considered in how SBC is planned and conducted. All cultural value frameworks deserve dignity, understanding and respect. The relativity of cultural values need not be taken as final justification for any and all actions. However, locally ascribed values should be thematized and addressed in decision-making processes and during ongoing interactions.

Participation through dialogue

Dialogue is a primary way to protect the autonomy of participants and ensure they have agency in the decisions that affect their lives. Through collective dialogue, communities are able to express the aims they value, the dynamics of cultural difference can be expressed, and bridges can be built. Dialogue is the medium in which ethical values are ultimately produced, articulated and embraced.

SBC ethical principles

Professionalism

- We acknowledge our duties to our stakeholders (participants, communities, clients, funders).
- We articulate clear, strategic goals that are designed to be effective.
- We have the capacity and capability to complete our work.
- We design and implement evidence-based programmes.
- We act with integrity.

Avoid doing harm

- We intend to “Do No Harm” in the course of our work.
- We actively consider the potential for unintended negative consequences of our (in)actions.

Conflict of interest

- We seek to avoid all conflicts of interest.
- When a conflict is unavoidable, we disclose the conflict to, and seek consent from, all affected parties

Research ethics

- We seek ethical clearance before engaging in any research, from our home countries and the countries and communities where we practise.
- We ensure that those who opt to participate have provided genuinely informed consent.

- We strive to keep participant/beneficiary data confidential unless permission to disclose has been granted.
- We disclose our research aims, methods and results to participants/beneficiaries.
- We make every effort to involve participants/beneficiaries in local research.
- We disclose funding sources for our work.

Accountability

- We are transparent with our participants/beneficiaries.
- We protect personal information.
- We are honest and truthful.
- We are trustworthy.

Communication and dialogue

- We seek input from participants/beneficiaries.
- We encourage two-way dialogue and active listening.
- We aim to act on and incorporate local expressions of preference, working in partnership with local entities.
- We seek voluntary and informed consent from participants/beneficiaries before engaging in any work.
- In community dialogues, we aim to work through existing community structures and platforms, and aim not to bypass existing accountability structures.

Respect for diversity and culture

- We respect cultural, religious, ethnic, age, gender, sexual orientation and ability diversity, as well as diversity with regard to race and socioeconomic status.
- We respect the dignity of individuals, groups and communities.
- We respect local knowledge.

Underserved populations

- We respect the needs of underserved and excluded groups, including but not limited to children, people of differing abilities, the elderly, and racial, ethnic, and gender-based groups.
- These populations are the most deserving of considered assistance, but are often the least likely to be given priority in assistance protocols.
- We endeavour to prioritize the needs of underserved communities, and to be sensitive to the specific communication needs inherent in dialoguing with them.
- We take into consideration the social-ecological environments that often contribute to social and behavioural problems.

Sustainable change

- We analyse and understand the social and economic resources needed for change.
- We analyse and understand the need for post-project/intervention support.
- We promote environmental sustainability and stewardship.
- We contribute to systemic change.
- We consider advocacy for underserved groups to be a legitimate part of SBC work.

Participation

- We cooperate and collaborate with local community platforms, NGOs, service providers and community organisations.
- We promote the empowerment of participants/beneficiaries.
- We promote individual and group autonomy.
- We discourage attempts to manipulate or change behaviour without full discussion and participation with affected communities.

Fairness and human rights

- We promote the interest of justice in all we do.
- We refuse to participate in or support practices that violate human rights.
- We promote equality in our interactions.