Disruptive SBC strategies for the future of Africa
About Social & Behaviour Change

All human interactions - be they social, economic or political - are shaped by behaviour. These interactions are the basis of development; and if development is about change, then behaviours must change. Innovative solutions leading to change are needed to make change happen.

Social environment plays a critical role in behaviour formation and change especially because people are not always in control of the issues that determine their behaviour. **Social Behaviour Change (SBC)** seeks to address internal motivators or barriers that affect these interactions, as well as internal and external factors such as the community, the physical environment, economic determinants and policy frameworks. Behaviour change strategies therefore need to take a multi-sectoral approach in ensuring that all the factors affecting human behaviours have been addressed to promote positive behaviour change, health and well-being.

Over the years there has been a shift in how we see the function of communication, changes in focus from communication from being a support function to being an integral, vital, critical component of any strategy. There has been a move or pivot from ad-hoc communication to strategic, systematic, planned, inclusive and on-going communication approach.

Despite these shifts in communication, some fundamental truths have emerged; the change process is dependent on the context of implementation thus can be highly variable, hence a context specific approach is key. Countless factors influence behaviour change: knowledge, motivation, attitudes, social norms and so on, making change an emergent, ongoing and complex process which cannot be captured within a short timeframe. But evidence has shown behaviour does change over time.

The **Africa Social & Behaviour Change Conference (ASBC)**, the first of its kind, will establish a platform that brings together practitioners and different stakeholders to showcase theory, effective programmes, approaches and lessons learnt within the African SBC context. The key outcome expected from the ASBC Conference will be a road map of solutions and a shared value proposition to promote a thriving and durable African society. This is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which work in the spirit of partnership and pragmatism to assist people to make the right choices to improve life in a sustainable way in the decades ahead. Through the conference, practitioners, researchers and policy makers across sectors will understand the role of social and behaviour change in accelerating achievement of these goals, and propelling forward development.

Population Services Kenya (PS Kenya), an affiliate of Population Services International (PSI), a global social behaviour change, not-for-profit organization, has taken the initiative to organize this timely conference, acknowledging that behaviour change has moved to the centre stage in the work of African governments, civil society and their domestic and international partners, to foster better outcomes in communities. Working with other likeminded stakeholders including the government, donors, private sector and other implementing partners the Africa edition will be seeking to create a forum for learning and rich exchange of SBC innovations across sectors.
Why an Africa-specific SBC Conference?

The Africa Social & Behaviour Change Conference (ASBC) is timely because of three key reasons:

1) there have been numerous communication-based initiatives in the development sector across the African continent; 2) the continent has provided a platform for the implementation of multiple approaches in diverse areas of development: health, governance, education, environment, economy with great learnings; 3) systematic learning, documentation and sharing has been poor across the African continent and there is need to address and improve this. We believe that the African experiences will contribute greatly to the SBC discourse globally and strengthen professional practices. The dearth of Africa-based SBC theories so far is a consequence of the lack of systematic scholarly research. This Conference will be the first to offer a step in this direction.

Africa’s diverse culture has worked as a catalyst, or as a barrier, over the years in areas such as response to diseases (TB, Malaria and HIV), traditions such as early marriage, family planning, female genital cutting (FGC) among others. Culture viewed from one perspective can however be oppressive, unchanging, and uninformed by new knowledge. It is therefore critical to view and use culture as a dynamic force which is ever changing and evolving and which has great power to transform lives.

By daring to replace cultural aspects that harm us with those that empower us, we have an opportunity to bring about transformative change. This is the disruption promised.

Acknowledging communication as a primary driver of behaviour change, the ASBC Conference will provide an occasion and platform for Africans to begin to reason together and take ownership in bringing about sustainable change.

The SDGs set out specific targets to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. They present significant targets for Africa to fast-track her development agenda, for the benefit of all her peoples (citizens and immigrants, displaced persons and refugees), by creating synergies across sectors that ensure efficiency in implementation of diverse programmes. Building on successes realized in the health sector, it has been recognized that there are other emerging areas for impact for the SBC field including; youth, bullying, agriculture, conservation and the environment, and economic inclusion including empowerment that can leverage on the growth and gains for impact.

Acknowledging the diversity, opportunities and persisting challenges, Africa requires radical new thinking for social behaviour change strategies to shape the future of her people and not business as usual.
Who is this Conference for?

Disruptive SBC strategies for the future of Africa call is for: practitioners, academics, researchers, policy makers, students, development partners and other institutions that utilize SBC interventions in different sectors in Africa. Youth is characterized by exploration, innovation and creativity. These are some of the traits most needed to design groundbreaking new approaches to improve the SBC practice. To make interventions more effective and evidence based, young people need to be engaged to take part in the designing and refining of proposed interventions targeted at them so that they are not only viewed from the beneficiaries lens alone but also as agents of change. Young people will therefore be meaningfully engaged through this conference in support of the SBC vision for Africa.

The Agenda of the Conference

The theme of the conference is *Disruptive SBC strategies for the future of Africa*. Practitioners, researchers, policy makers, students and other groups and institutions that utilize SBC interventions will be engaged around 5 key thematic areas pertinent to the core African context. The conference will comprise (but not be limited to) keynote speeches and a full range of sessions (oral presentations, posters, pre-formed panels, and other interactive sessions) skills and capacity building workshops, exhibitions and multi-media show cases.

The themes of the ASBC conference are:

1. **The intersection between religion, culture, gender and SBC in Africa: myth or reality?**
   Behavioural motivation is influenced by geography, history, culture, beliefs and a host of other factors. Increasingly there has been a need to contextualize solutions that are SBC driven from a more localized perspective, showcasing culture and region-specific issues. This theme will speak to creating an African context-specific platform to highlight SBC interventions that are largely affected by cultural diversities.

2. **Leveraging technology to transform SBC in Africa**
   Technology has been used as a catalyst to advance development in many other fields such as agriculture, banking (mobile banking, mobile savings), financial sector (online stock market), and health (mhealth). This theme will speak to what technological advances have been / can be used to facilitate social behaviour change in communities and at scale.

3. **Breaking the silos: Working across sectors**
   SBC is a transdisciplinary practice and hence we need to get better at talking to each other. Engaging multiple sectors provides an opportunity to leverage knowledge, expertise, reach, and resources, benefiting from combined and varied strengths to work towards the shared goal of producing better outcomes across all the spheres. To achieve this, collaboration has to be built across various stakeholder groups (e.g., government, civil society, and private sector) and across sectors (e.g., health, environment, transport, agriculture and economy). Central to a multi-sectoral approach is willingness of leadership to plan and execute successful coordination where all the major stakeholders share a common vision and perspective.
4. **Working towards Universal Health Coverage**
The inclusion of health for all and financial protection in the Sustainable Development Goals was a watershed moment for the movement to advance universal health coverage. Global support has spurred remarkable progress, with more countries than ever pursuing UHC. However, it is no easy feat to design and implement the reforms needed to make UHC possible, and it’s a formidable goal for a country at any income level. This theme will seek to answer the question whether there is a role for SBC towards achieving UHC and what can we learn through practitioner-to-practitioner.

5. **Entrenching the practice: Sustaining SBC beyond donor funding**
Internationally, there has been increased growth of the Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) practice since the inaugural SBCC summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (2016) and the follow up summit in Bali, Indonesia (2018) that focused on better understanding what works in shifting social norms, changing behaviors and in amplifying the voice of those who have most at stake in the success of development efforts. Consequently there is an increasing need to cascade the practice to regional level to ensure that the benefits permeate contextual issues.

This theme will seek to learn from sectors that have practiced SBC, building on what has worked with a goal of entrenching the practice across nontraditional sectors, thus increasing people’s knowledge and skills to serve across both public and private initiatives, eventually reducing the overreliance on foreign funding. A more skilled African workforce spanning across health promotion, agriculture, immigration, governance, environmental conservation, conflict resolution, road safety, among others, employing SBC skills would therefore lead to economic, social and civic advancements and sustainability.

6. **Taking stock of the evidence base for SBC: demonstrating SBC impact**
This theme will build the evidence base for what works in not only using SBC to improve health outcomes but also demonstrate the impact of SBC in any fast changing arena in the development sphere including changes in use of technology for SBC, behavioural economics, human-centered design (HCD), adaptive management (AM), doing development differently (DDD) as well as in areas with an appetite for impact such as youth, agriculture, environment, economic inclusion, economic empowerment, and thereby identifying strategic opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration with an objective of positioning SBC as a solution for development across sectors.

**Dates and Location**
The ASBC Conference will be held in Nairobi, Kenya from February 19th to 21st, 2019.

www.asbc-conference.org