The 1st Africa Social & Behaviour Change Conference

Disruptive SBC strategies for the future of Africa

19-21 February 2019 | Nairobi, Kenya
About the Conference

The 2019 Africa Social Behaviour Change Conference (ASBC) was a regional follow-on meeting to the 2018 International SBCC Summit held in Nusa Dua, Indonesia.

A commitment realized as noted in the 2018 International SBCC Summit ‘We’ve also seen others following up on the momentum of the 2018 Summit to continue the discussion and plan additional SBCC-focused events, including a Francophone Summit in the Ivory Coast, a regional conference in Kenya and a local one in South Africa.’

Although there have been numerous communication-based initiatives in the development sector across the African continent, systematic study, documentation and sharing has been poor across the continent and this conference sought to address this by providing a platform for practitioners, policymakers, researchers and academics to meet and share learning.

As the first Africa regional meeting, the conference explored several themes unique to Africa in the many presentations, such as leveraging a fast-growing telecommunication industry, and striving to create change in a setting with deeply rooted cultural practices. The conference offered participants from across different sectors an opportunity to interrogate and understand more the role of social and behaviour change in accelerating achievement of the SDGs and other important national goals, and propelling forward development.
Conference Focus

The conference was organised around the following thematic areas:

**Theme 1: The intersection between religion, culture, gender and SBC in Africa:**
Myth or reality? Under this theme, the conference examined how SBC interventions handle cultural factors, motivations that underlie human behaviour, and cultural diversities, with specific reference to using SBC strategies to disrupt aspects of African culture that are harmful and create behaviour change.

**Theme 2: Leveraging technology to transform SBC in Africa:**
Under this theme, the conference looked at how technology is being used to serve as a catalyst to facilitate social behaviour change in communities and at scale.

**Theme 3: Breaking the silos:**
Working across sectors: This theme focused on how SBC interventions can work across sectors to support development and create favourable social change.

**Theme 4: Working towards Universal Health Coverage:**
Presentations under this theme examined the role of SBC in moving our nations towards achievement of universal health coverage.

**Theme 5: Entrenching the practice: Sustaining SBC beyond donor funding:**
This theme aimed to bring to the fore discussions about sustainability of SBC interventions, which sometimes are heavily donor reliant. The theme focused on interventions that demonstrate how to cascade SBC practice to regional levels to ensure that the benefits permeate contextual issues, and are sustainable.

**Theme 6: Taking stock of the evidence base for SBC:**
Demonstrating SBC impact: This theme aimed to demonstrate the evidence base for what works in using SBC to improve human development outcomes.

Conference Highlights

Speakers challenged SBC practitioners in Africa to help bring attention on the global stage to the continent’s contribution to development, to tell Africa’s story. Delegates heard that Africa’s contributions to SBC theory and practice remains unheard on the global stage, and that it was upon them to identify what is driving success on the continent, and to design cutting-edge strategies for lasting social change. Speakers also urged the media and SBC practitioners in Africa to make investments in telling the African story, to highlight the good practices and successes from the continent and counter the negative coverage that seems to dominate coverage of African issues.

While the media in Africa has great capacity to contribute to social change, it needs collaboration with SBC practitioners to create and carry content that contributes to increasing knowledge, supporting change of attitudes and adoption of positive behaviours. Conference delegates were urged to support the media by helping create disruptive, people-centred content that sparks conversations. For instance, in Kenya, the media has been used to open up discussions on a range of otherwise taboo and sensitive topics, such as extramarital sexual relationships, forcing society to examine itself in relation to the issue. Delegates were challenged to use the media to create social conversations that people would find interesting enough to participate in, and to create a safe space where people can articulate their information needs.

Africa is characterised by vast cultural diversity, which should be reflected in SBC programs. Speakers urged delegates to take into consideration the diverse cultural contexts in which their audiences live, and design programmes that reflect understanding of people’s cultural values and motivations, which frame their attitudes, lifestyle choices and subsequent behaviour. For instance, one study demonstrated that respecting the role ascribed to males in community may be key in gaining men’s support for initiatives such as family planning. Another presentation illustrated how understanding the social and cultural meanings attached to some types of illnesses can help SBC practitioners devise more relevant interventions. Presenters challenged the conference delegates to not only challenge culture, but to also borrow from it to create meaningful, culturally relevant or disruptive development solutions.

Africa has experienced an unprecedented rise in technology in recent years, which has great potential to drive social change, and should be central to development programmes. Delegates heard how some programmes have used technology to drive positive behaviours to great effect, such as mobilising household savings for healthcare, and improving student performance by sending SMS reminders to parents to supervise their child’s homework. Interactive voice technology has also been used to deliver information to low literacy communities, and to overcome service access barriers such as stigma and lack of privacy.

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**Conference Statistics:***

- **627 Delegates**
- **171 Abstract Presentations**
- **123 Organization from over 25 countries**
- **29 Sponsors 19 Exhibitors**
Delegates were called upon to take advantage of the rapid growth of technology on the continent, and especially the rise of mobile phone usage, to create and deliver content to facilitate social behaviour change in individual communities and at scale.

Africa is also characterized by a growing and vibrant private sector, which can be a major driver of development and which can also provide resources to close gaps left by declining donor support. Conference delegates heard about several private sector initiatives that are contributing to the continent’s progress towards achievement of the SDGs. These include private businesses that have chosen to go beyond traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes to taking a more active approach to development and social goals. Collaborative initiatives between NGOs, governments and the private sector have also led to improved outcomes for communities in several sectors. For instance, delegates heard how in Nigeria, SBC activities implemented by a partnership between a local NGO, private sector agencies and the local government introduced cooking stoves that use gas (LPG) as an alternative to entrenched traditional cooking methods. To develop and implement scalable solutions with the private sector, SBC practitioners must understand what drives the sector, and how to leverage its vast resources. For instance, delegates heard that having good governance systems and accountability mechanisms are important in winning the sector and establishing joint programs.

Africa has a large, youthful population, which can be the continent’s most valuable resource if equipped with the right skills and knowledge. African nations need to harness the strengths and advantages of having a surge in the youth population, who only need to be educated and empowered to turn the fortune of their nations around and create vast social change. The conference delegates were urged to find meaningful and creative ways to engage the youth and adopt co-creation approaches which enable the youth to contribute to defining solutions, and which put them at the centre of programmes. Practitioners were also urged to adopt disruptive models in working with youth to drive change, such as the One-Million Youth Empowerment Challenge from Kenya, which has been used to mobilise youth to make a difference through a mentorship approach.

In keeping with the theme of exploring disruptive SBC strategies for the future of Africa, the conference featured novel approaches and strategies among its many presentations. These include approaches to co-creation of content with young people; models of youth engagement and mobilization;
More on the conference can be found on the Africa Social & Behaviour Change Conference website

https://asbc-conference.org/

and working with religious leaders and their congregations to increase access to reproductive health services and to break stigma and prejudice towards sensitive health issues. Presenters also discussed novel, new ways of research and measurement, such as using story-telling, conversation mapping and analysis, and using interactive drama to study attitudes and practices. Other novel approaches discussed included social media analysis and using the web to amplify messages, as well as new approaches to audience segmentation which rely on behavioural drivers – culture/habit, agency, knowledge, goals, environment, and social influence - rather than traditional segmentation by demographic profile.

Finally, the conference offered plenty of opportunities for delegates to learn new skills through hands-on skills building sessions and pre-formed thematic panel events. These included sessions on how to design programs using innovative human-centred approaches; the role of emotion in SBC programming; meaningful engagement of adolescents and young people in policy implementation and accountability; and using reality TV and web dramas to change how people on the African continent cook. The conference offered opportunities for invitation only side events. Clean Cooking Alliance showcased clean cook-stoves in promotion of alternative cooking technology, as a stand alone event.
Steering Committee

The 2019 Conference was hosted by PS Kenya together with a consortium of international and local partners including Centre for Behaviour Change and Communication (CBCC), Daystar University, Kenya, MediaCom, Kantar Public, TW Media, The Busara Center for Behavioural Economics, Nutrition International, PATH Kenya, and I Choose Life-Africa. Thank you to everyone who helped organize and sponsor the Conference and also to all of the participants who invested their time and resources to join us in Nairobi, Kenya.

The next conference is set to take place in February 2021, in Nairobi Kenya.
The idea of the conference was borne out of a need to bring SBC practitioners in Africa together, to look inwards and see what Africa can contribute into the international dialogue on social and behaviour change.

Ms Joyce Wanderi,
Chief Executive Officer, PS Kenya

I (feel i) failed as a teacher because we used to make children leave their phones outside class, we should have invested in using that gadget that already had their attention to enhance their learning.

Fidelis Nthenge,
Head, IB World Schools (Netherlands),
International Baccalaureate Organization (IB)

As we put money in the health system, if we do not recognise both the facility-related challenges and social factors that stop people from accessing care, we will not get very far.

Dr Githinji Gitahi,
CEO, AMREF Health Africa and Co-Chair, UHC 2030

Private businesses can successfully support ‘social mission’ projects and still make money. We measure the value we put in building up the businesses and skills in the young people we work with, the social return on investment in terms of value and change of behaviour. It doesn’t matter what we train our young people in, if they don’t change behaviour and attitudes, it’ll not work.

Ms Jane Mwangi,
Director, KCB Foundation (Kenya)

Through our interaction during the conference, our hope and belief is that we can together develop a road map that will lay out well defined strategies and participatory practices that sets the ball rolling for positive change in our continent.

Salma Mazrui - Watt
Chairperson, PS Kenya Board

Harnessing data can create transparency and accountability, which are central to moving countries towards achieving SDGs. I challenge you to consider technology as an enabler for development and utilise it to collect data, ensuring that it is conveyed to those that can act on it to make necessary reforms.

Philip Thigo,
Senior Advisor on Data and Innovation,
Office of the Deputy President, Kenya

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Acknowledgment

Steering Committee
The ASBC Steering committee would like to thank all the participants for the excellent execution and sponsorship of this conference.

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Satisfaction Chart

The results of an evaluation of the conference conducted online on the last day of the conference suggest that the conference largely met the expectations of the delegates, and that majority (81%) would be “likely to attend another ASBC”. Overall, among those that took the evaluation, majority thought that the topics discussed at the conference were relevant and of good quality (see chart below).

Majority of the participants enjoyed the panel discussions, the drum talks and oral presentations most. They appreciated the wide range of sessions and content as well as the depth of discussion. Sixty-seven percent of those that took the poll thought that the conference was very well organised.
The Conference was hosted by Population Services Kenya (PS Kenya), an affiliate of Population Services International (PSI), a global social behaviour change, not-for-profit organization.