EatSafe - Evidence and Action Towards Safe, Nutritious Food

Stories from the Forefront: Interviews with Social and Behavior Change Communications Media Professionals

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ACRONYMS

Below is a list of all acronyms and abbreviations used in the report.

CCSI   Centre For Communication and Social Impact

COVID   Coronavirus Disease (2019-nCoV)

DIME   Development Impact Evaluation Department, World Bank

MIT   Massachusetts Institute of Technology

NGO   Non-Governmental Organization

PMC   Population Media Center

PSA   Public Service Announcement

SBCC   Social and Behavior Change Communications

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USAID's Feed the Future EatSafe – Evidence and Action Toward Safe, Nutritious Food (EatSafe) tests whether the consumer and their behaviors and actions can shape informal markets to adopt better food safety behaviors. The EatSafe project will use a variety of media-based SBCC interventions to reach market vendors and consumers to help change attitudes and behaviors around food safety.

This report presents stories from top practitioners in the field of Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) media worldwide – including executive directors, country directors, producers, and researchers – in order to uncover the nuances of program development that can guide more effective EatSafe SBCC media productions and help implement more sustainable programs.

At the conclusion of interviews with six SBCC professionals, two broad themes emerged that have practical implications for the design of EatSafe SBCC media interventions.

First, storytelling works and can be an effective tool to influence behavior change, particularly when expert storytellers work closely with behavioral experts. Storytelling can emotionally engage the audience through immersion within the storyline. This emotional engagement, in turn, can help make an audience more receptive to a core food safety message. Stories can also allow the audience to identify with characters and learn from their successes and failures. And when done appropriately, stories can lead to self-efficacy by showing the audience, through the vehicle of a recognizable character, that a behavior or action is doable and can lead to a better outcome.

Second, human connection is essential for a successful storytelling intervention. This connection begins with the program staff and in-country media personnel creating the intervention. SBCC media has unique requirements and know-how in media in general (news, entertainment, etc.) does not equate with SBCC expertise. This gap can be addressed by close working relationships between SBCC technical experts and local media personnel.

The human connection theme continues with the audience. Any successful SBCC media program must be rooted in learning from the audience about what kinds of stories would appeal to them and consistently returning to the audience to refine the productions. It is essential not to rely on assumptions about an audience, even those that might seem obvious.

Finally, connection with local groups, associations, and leaders can help greatly in distribution; their buy-in can help market the media in effective and cost-efficient ways.

1. INTRODUCTION

SBCC is a relatively recent term in health communication field, debuting in the early 2000's. It evolved from the term behavior change communication (BCC), which focused only on changing behaviors of individuals. BCC Practitioners quickly noted that if behavior at the individual-level was to be sustainable and become habitual, other changes in the individual's spheres of influence, such family, peers, community, social and structural factors, were required to support and enable individual-level behavior[1]. Thus, the 'S' (social) was added to BCC so that community mobilization and advocacy would be included along with communication strategies aimed at changing behaviors. Central to SBCC intervention planning and design is the socio-ecological model (SEM), which is a framework used in human development and health promotion[2]. The SEM posits that individual-level change is complex and occurs over a long period of time because it is influenced by multiple factors across multiple levels. The levels of influence are individual level factors (attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, perceptions, preferences), family and peer networks, community (settings and services offered), and the broader social and structural level (religion, cultural values, social norms, policies, regulations, etc)[3]. BCC and now SBCC is a label for interventions that rely on the strategic use of communication activities and multiple channels in different socio-ecological levels of influence.

The aim of this USAID-funded report is to better understand this process through detailed interviews with top SBCC practitioners throughout the world. This report intends to provide a resource for understanding key practical insights of how to *do* SBCC media and do it well.

Our approach to this exploration was journalistic in nature and was grounded in Pierce Mill's Story Sourcing practice. Through Story Sourcing, we seek to uncover scenes and situations that are typical of life in the community but that also may include some kind of conflict, theme, or emotion within them. We look for vivid descriptions of various situations that the audience has experienced; these are then used as the basis for writing original stories for an SBCC media intervention.

Here, we looked for stories and anecdotes from the global community of SBCC media professionals, not to inform the writing of scripts for a specific media intervention, but to refine the craft of producing effective SBCC media for EatSafe.

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[1] https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/Module0-Practitioner_2.pdf
[2] Glanz K, Rimer BK, Viswanath K, editors. Health behavior and health education: theory, research, and practice. John Wiley & Sons; 2008 Aug 28.
[3] McLeroy KR, Bibeau D, Steckler A, Glanz K. An ecological perspective on health promotion programs. Health education quarterly. 1988 Dec;15(4):351-77.

Through our conversations with the field's top practitioners we distilled their most important observations about how to succeed in SBCC on the basis of the following premises: that there is no wisdom without experience, and that it is easier and cheaper to learn from the mistakes, challenges, and successes of others than to reinvent the wheel each time.

2. METHODOLOGY

During the summer of 2020, six SBCC media professionals were interviewed to gather novel insights into the craft of producing SBCC media programs (see Figure 1).

As SBCC media have been produced around the world with numerous goals and in numerous forms, we selected interviewees based the following criteria:

- geographic diversity of program implementation
- specific and complementary expertise within SBCC media production (program design, production, funding and sustainability, formative research, and evaluation)
- willingness (and organizational permission) to speak openly
- extensive experience working on SBCC media programming in LMICs

The project team identified interviewees based on the above criteria, contacted them by email, and communicated that the interviews were part of the USAID-funded EatSafe project related to food safety, and that EatSafe was ultimately looking to use media to encourage behavior change among food vendors and consumers in select Feed the Future countries. We mentioned the possibility of this report being published for a wider distribution.

All interviews were conducted via Zoom video chat. Participants were asked for their permission to record the conversations for purposes of ensuring accuracy. Interviews lasted 1-2 hours. All interviews were transcribed (see Appendix 1). Interviewees also responded to follow up questions via email.

The aim on the interviews was to elicit stories and anecdotes about SBCC media productions. The project team prepared a set of eighteen initial questions that served as a starting point to the interviews and as lead-ins to discovering relevant stories (Figure 2). Questions were tailored prior to each interview to reflect the expertise of the interviewee. In addition, since the interviews were done sequentially, the project team reviewed transcripts on an ongoing basis and identified questions of interest that were still lingering. These questions were then asked of subsequent interviewees or in follow-up emails.

Table 1: Interviewees

Interviewee	Background	Interview Focus
Stevan Buxt Freelance, SBCC Film Producer Cape Town, South Africa	Stevan is a film/tv producer and media educator with two decades' experience in international development, innovation, and education. He has run major campaigns globally, including *Search for Common Ground,* a 2018 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee TV Web Series in Myanmar.	Production
Babafunke Fagbemi Executive Director, The Centre for Communication and Social Impact Abuja, Nigeria	As the Founding Director of CCSI, Babafunke has had over 25 years of developing, implementing and managing strategic health communication initiatives in various thematic areas of integrated health and social development. She is globally acclaimed as one of the leaders in Africa on Social Behaviour Change Communication. She has worked on key health and development projects in Nigeria with Johns Hopkins SuNMaP project, DAI's PATHS1, Netherlands Leprosy Relief, and the United Nations Population Fund.	Audience
Katie Mota Co-Founder, Wise Entertainment Los Angeles, CA	Katie is an Emmy-nominated showrunner, writer, producer, and director who recently served as executive producer and co-showrunner for *East Los High*, which ran for five seasons, making it Hulu's longest running original. She has produced shows in countries all over the world, including the 70 episode telenovela *Ultimo Ano* with MTV Latin America	Distribution
Aric Noboa President, Impact(Ed) Washington, DC	Aric is responsible for the vision, growth and management of Impact(Ed), a non-profit organization using the power of media to transform education and improve lives in underserved communities around the world. Working with Discovery Communications and other public and private sector partners, Impact(Ed) has created dynamic learning environments in schools in 16 countries, improving student learning, teacher effectiveness, and community engagement.	Funding and Scaling
Victor Orozco	Victor is Senior Economist at the Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) Department in the World Bank	Evaluation

Senior Economist, The World Bank Washington, DC	Research Group. His research focuses on development economics, behavioral economics, and mass media and behavior change. He founded and led the World Bank's impact evaluation program on Entertainment-Education and the use of media entertainment with development objectives.	
Rajan Parajuli Country Director, Population Media Center Kathmandu, Nepal	Rajan leads the PMC-Nepal team. Rajan is a prominent journalist, media trainer, and communication activist in Nepal. For several years he has worked in radio and television production, organizing mass awareness campaigns in poor and marginalized communities, and training young journalists of Nepal. He served as Program Director at Antenna Foundation Nepal (AFN), an innovative media organization of Nepal.	Storytelling for Behavior Change

Table 2: Initial Interview Questions

Interview Questions

(These will get the conversation started – other questions may arise. Questions will be tailored to the specific type of interviewee.)

1. *First, to what extent have you engaged in this area?*
2. *Can you tell me about each of these projects?*
3. *What did you think was important as you began producing your program, and what did you come to find was actually more important by the time you finished?*
4. *Walk me through how you produced, implemented and ultimately distributed your program? What went smoothly? What was anything but smooth and why?*
5. *Were you to start this project from scratch, what would you do differently in light of all this? Above all, what would enable you to avoid X (having to re-do everything, or cost overruns, etc.)?*
6. *Y also proved to be an enormous challenge for you. How would you prevent a recurrence, or solve that problem, were you presented with it anew?*
7. *What could you control? What was completely beyond your control?*
8. *Where did you find the biggest divergence between your own usual protocol for producing content and the reality on the ground, which demanded a very different approach?*
9. *Did you achieve some sort of innovation in your process as a result of the frustrations you encountered?*
10. *Can you talk a bit about the role of the writer in the process? How important is a strong writer to the success of the program?*
11. *How much does the program format or approach (e.g., comedy, drama, fear-based) influence the emotional impact of the story? How do you decide what approach to take?*
12. *What are some examples of differences you have seen in how the process needs to be approached in different geographic or cultural contexts?*
13. *To what extent have you included members of the audience in the development and/or distribution process? What are the benefits and challenges of doing so?*
14. *How much did constraints from donors play into the program development process, in terms of funding issues or in directing how the process should be carried out?*
15. *How do you use formative research to guide your media development?*
16. *We have covered a lot of ground so far, but it is possible I missed something important by not asking the right question. May I try another angle? Could you think of one anecdote to share – something that made a big impression on you, or gave you new insight, in your effort to create your SBCC media program?*
17. *Can I discuss your name and the names of your project(s) freely in my write-up, or do you require (partial) anonymity?*
18. *Do you have any photos of your program in action that you might be able to share with us to use in the article?*

3. STORIES FROM THE FOREFRONT: INTERVIEWS WITH SBCC MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

3.1. The Producer

The rain was pouring down, as it did every day during the Yangon television shoot. The program's producer, Stevan Buxt, struggled to get all of his scenes shot. His main challenge was that the 2018 production lasting from May to July coincided neatly with the start of Yangon's monsoon season, yet some number of scenes in this series about drug abuse had to be shot outside. In those three months, the Myanmar capital gets three times the rain that London gets in a year.

"You basically watch AccuWeather," Buxt explains. "You have your outside shoot [gear] ready and you watch AccuWeather by the hour. Then, suddenly, if the rain stops, it's boom: Let us stop now the inside shoot and use the sunshine."

The native of temperate Cape Town, South Africa, who prides himself on shooting all of his projects on time and within budget, won that round with the weather, but faced tougher battles still. Among them, he had to somehow protect his crew on an unsafe set.

"Literally the roof could have come down in this place…I walked in and then I see this whole thing is balancing. I am just like: There's rain coming down and there's rust in the roof. We have got cables everywhere with electricity!

"I sometimes lose my cool and I just said: 'Everyone off set – except the actor, the sound guy and the DOP [director of photography], and the director!"

Upset about the lack of a safety protocol there, or at any available alternative film production site, Buxt determined to press on as quickly as possible. His earlier training in development work for groups such as the Red Cross gave him the confidence to adapt and upgrade occupational health and safety standards. He completed the shoot successfully, indoors and outdoors, with no casualties, earning the appellation "Monsoon Man."

But his greatest challenge in Myanmar was not the incessant rain amidst the suffocating tropical heat, nor even his mosquito-infested apartment. It was, as it often is, human relationships. A film crew has to work harmoniously, and it did not help that there was discord between Buxt and one of the senior local crew members. The Burmese fellow was resistant to learning how to perform his role. He had extensive film production background, but in news, yet they were shooting a drama, and this colleague was reluctant to accept Buxt's authority as producer.

That changed when the two of them went out to purchase a few items in the city. Buxt's colleague offered to help him find what he needed, apologizing for not being conversant in English.

Recalls Buxt: "We're in the city. We were out. 'Let us have a beer,' Buxt said. "We started talking and I said, 'What music do you like?' Suddenly, he started to talk English: 'Punk music.'

'What punk music do you like?'

'I love the Ramones.'

I said, "I'm a big fan of the Ramones." I said, 'Do you know much about British punk?'

"He said, 'No.' I started talking about The Clash, because I'd actually…managed to interview the late Joe Strummer. There was a sudden connection about music."

Things changed immediately from this point onward. Suddenly, Buxt's colleague, along with speaking a confident English and showing off his tattoos, began taking instruction in drama production and became a core part of a cohesive team. In retrospect, it was not the influence of alcohol or their common interest in punk rock that broke the ice between them, so much as the simple act of sharing a meal together.

"There was just this comfort of enjoying his favorite food and my favorite food. It was not after the beer or whatever, it just started immediately. There was just this comfort of sitting in the rain and breaking bread…Because if you're able to break the bread, that's when the barrier moves."

3.2. *The Executive Director*

The Centre for Communication and Social Impact (CCSI) is one of the leading social and behavior change organizations in Africa, and Babafunke Fagbemi has been its executive director since the Nigerian NGO's inception in 2001. In addition to its highly trained professional staff, the nonprofit makes use of an army of 10,000 volunteers, to convey some sense of the scope of this Abuja-based organization.

CCSI's impact is of similar magnitude. One recently completed evaluation found that more than 400,000 women who would not otherwise have done so sought out family planning services. What brings this accomplishment into view in our lineup of SBCC stories from the field is the extraordinary degree of sophistication with which CCSI designs its programs.

Fagbemi credits her team's meticulousness and creativity in crafting messages for CCSI's successes.

"It's not just the team in Abuja sitting down and deciding that, 'Oh, yes, we want to work with [an image of someone who looks a certain way],' she says. "Who determines that? It's the interactions with the *audience*…We always have a consumer-lens perspective and use human-centered design."

The NGO applies human-centered design in its recent malaria-education initiative. The group's research found that pregnant women and children under five were the most vulnerable. Reaching this vulnerable group of women and children paradoxically required generating a high degree of male involvement.

"In [Nigeria's Muslim] north, if you do not get the husband involved, you can empower the woman as much as you want to. If the husband is not supportive, she is not able to take the action," Fagbemi says.

To facilitate having discussions with a vulnerable target population that does not normally go out in public, CCSI staff and volunteers organized meetings in their residences where the women could have these conversations comfortably.

"We could not expect them to come out to a public place and hold community dialogues and listen to some of the video screens or the radio programs that we had. We had to go into their communities."

This was no mere tea break.

Aisiri Adolor, tasked with monitoring and evaluating CCSI's projects, emphasizes the extent to which the NGO's detailed planning makes the difference between success and failure.

"For every campaign that we do…we make sure it's guided by science. We usually do formative research…to understand the audience better so that we do something that is targeted. This has been our principle across all the projects we do."

In the malaria education program, that meant sending in trained volunteers who spoke the language – over 300 are spoken in Nigeria – and who were female; having male instructors interact with these married women would breach Islamic etiquette.

But much groundwork was needed to pave their way. CCSI works with "advocates" who first legitimize the message with key influencers, or gatekeepers, as Fagbemi calls them. These advocates meet with the husbands in the places they gather, in a relaxed fashion, in the evenings, and even at soccer games. Informing the chief of the community and getting his endorsement is also key.

The sensitive issue of family planning provides a good example of this.

"The project set up an advocacy core group…made up of religious leaders, and in the north, that was really key," say Fagbemi of a 10-year project in which CCSI was a partner. "That was the first barrier that had to be broken by the management of the project itself."

The religious leaders felt it would be improper for the campaign's messaging to imply there were economic benefits to family planning but removed their objections if the campaign emphasized the health benefits to the family.

"We took that advice, and that really paid off," Fagbemi says.

CCSI's campaign management is exemplary, yet of course every SBCC practitioner understands that cultural awareness is make or break. So perhaps the most impressive feature of the NGO's approach to behavior-change intervention is its emphasis on impacting consumer demand. After all, Economics 101 tells us that supply rises to meet demand, and hence fostering a desire for a certain public good could be a more reliable way to attain it than just lobbying public officials.

One more example of the CCSI approach: An anti-corruption campaign in which CCSI targeted its messaging to increase demand for essential services for the disabled.

"The goal of the project from a demand-generation standpoint is to change the mental mindsets of Nigerians around corruption," Fagbemi says. "For us not to sit down and think, 'Oh, corruption has come to stay, there is nothing I can do, and it does not affect me.'"

Public corruption has consequences across society, but it has enormous implications for disabled persons in a country lacking the infrastructure that Western societies take for granted. Some Nigerian states have no laws mandating access to public transportation for the disabled, and thus public transportation systems that are privately owned have no incentive to help this minority; in other instances, laws that exist on the books are not enforced.

Corruption lies at the root of such problems, explains CCSI's senior media officer Seun Akioye:

"The government has not provided the enabling environment to allow these things to happen. If the environment is not there, *why* is it not there? Because the money that was supposed to be used for that has probably gone into somebody's bank account."

And the effects of such corruption reverberate, Akioye adds:

"Those who are visually impaired…don't have a guide dog that can help them go through our usually congested and traffic-prone streets and roads. They have to find a way to move around using just probably a stick, or sometimes a child is holding them. Now the child that is holding them cannot go to school, cannot do other things that he is supposed to do, and is busy holding these people probably to go out and beg in the street."

To address this pressing social problem, CCSI and its partners began with formative research which indicated that many disabled people did not appreciate that corruption affected them. In order to build this awareness, CCSI first needed to show how the failure of legislators to fulfill

their promises affected this group's health and education. They encouraged the disabled to make their voices heard through formal and informal associations, and to reach public-policy decision makers through religious and community leaders, whose voices are generally strong in Nigeria.

"Then, for some of the models that we use for our messages, especially for some of the animation, we make sure that the stories are centered around hardships that persons with disability would actually encounter, just because they are disabled," Fagbemi says. Without CCSI's understanding of the root of the problem, these messages would likely have fallen flat.

3.3. *The Marketer*

Katie Mota's got the same roots as other SBCC media producers. She produced a successful telenovela for MTV Latin America. She worked extensively in Papua New Guinea, Mexico, Brazil and other low- and middle-income countries.

But those roots branched out differently, because of her determination to transport the same sort of social impact objectives she used in international development projects to Hollywood, this time portraying underrepresented people or subjects. She and husband Mauricio Mota co-founded Wise Entertainment, which became a significant new player on the Hollywood scene with its path-breaking teen drama *East Los High*, featuring an all-Latino cast. The show became an overnight sensation – and lasted four seasons, which is a huge accomplishment and contains valuable lessons for SBCC practitioners.

In 2013, Wise Entertainment was shopping for a distribution partner that would be convenient for its target viewers, which the firm found in the then-new streaming platform, Hulu.

But there was a trade-off.

"It needed to be a free platform, it needed to be digital, something to watch when and where they wanted...That was part of the reason we chose to go with Hulu," Mota recalls.

"Then because they were in their infancy, there was like zero marketing dollars. They spent less than $100,000 in targeted marketing to launch in Season 1, which if you know Hollywood, usually it's millions."

"We in two days had more viewers than *Grey's Anatomy*...not on ABC, but on the platform, which was still massive," Mota continues. "Within a month, we brought in more than a million Latino viewers to their Latino platform. [A budget of] less than $100,000 doesn't buy you that."

Indeed, that is an awful lot of eyeballs for such a modest budget. So, what accounts for this marketing magic? Mota offers generous detail. In essence, in the same way that Babafunke Fagbemi's CCSI painstakingly procured the endorsement of religious leaders and the support of

husbands before reaching out to their true target audience, pregnant mothers and their children, in the traditional communities of northern Nigeria, and in the same way that Stevan Buxt discovered that good relationships was the *sine qua non* of a successful film shoot, Mota discovered that strong community connections was the fuel that propelled *East Los High* to unpaid-for prominence.

"There's so much marketing that can…be done for free if you have good relationships with people that have already built-in communities," Mota says. "By using the nonprofits, and the community leaders and the people that we're already working with and talking to about the show, about the characters, about the issues, you actually can really create a groundswell that way.

"Because we're not only influenced by billboards, we're actually even more influenced by when our friend says, 'Hey, you should watch this. Check this out. Wow, I have never seen this portrayed in this way.'"

Specifically, Wise Entertainment developed relationships with more than 30 nonprofits in Los Angeles and across the United States. The upstart entertainment company partnered with these groups as part of their feedback mechanism in developing stories.

"It wasn't this thing we did at the last minute of like, 'Hey, will you help us? We like you. Will you come market our show?' It was a multi-year relationship that we had built and authenticated through, again, coming back to our beginning point of real meaningful dialogue where we actually made changes to our program based on what they told us," Mota says.

On the basis of these collaborative relationships, Wise Entertainment created marketing materials for them to "pump out" to their networks, and the rest is history. As an example of the potency of this effort, the film company had embedded a partner organization's find-a-clinic widget into the show's website for the show's debut, whose subjects included teen pregnancy.

"Within the first month…it was something like 20,000 people had used that widget to find the clinic from the *East Los High* website...Again, less than $100,000 doesn't buy you that."

The moral of Mota's story, one that will ring true for media producers who have been stung by disappointment in their distribution reach, is to be, as she put it, "our own best marketers."

3.4. *The Rainmaker*

Success in Hollywood is measured at the box office. And while international development projects are designed and evaluated on the basis of their impact on health and social outcomes, let us not delude ourselves that their equivalent of box-office performance is not also closely scrutinized. By that measure, Impact(ed) International is the Walt Disney of SBCC media and its award-winning film *Inside Story* the Star Wars of entertainment-education. What *Star Wars* and

Inside Story have in common is viewership in the hundreds of millions. A tale of soccer and romance, *Inside Story* is the most watched film in Africa and possibly its most influential source of instruction about HIV/AIDS.

While movie classics may be great for the same cinematic reasons – the intricacy of their plots, stagecraft and high production values – the business model employed by Hollywood and SBCC media are worlds apart. Generally, the former relies on ticket-paying customers, the latter on government, corporate or foundation funding.

Hollywood's business model is for-profit film studios bankrolling projects with the expectation of earning a big profit off of their capital-intensive investment. Washington-based Impact(ed), on the other hand, is a non-profit that manages its film production with grassroots partners but funds its operations from donors such as USAID, Chevron, and Johns Hopkins Health and Education in South Africa, just a few of the donors credited with sponsoring *Inside Story*.

As a veteran of media-based projects in Africa, Impact(ed) President Aric Noboa served as executive producer of *Inside Story*. And though he remains deeply involved in the creative side and every other aspect of SBCC production, our discussion here is geared toward getting the inside story of procuring funding, which is likely the first concern of any SBCC media producer since, it goes without saying, nothing gets produced without financial backing. Many people produce SBCC media, but very few have put together coalitions of 11 major donors to achieve Hollywood-sized film budgets. Noboa is one of them.

What he has found in the labor-intensive work of putting these consortia together is that they are very issue-oriented. Every donor has got its priority projects. Backers of *Inside Story* – about a rising Kenyan soccer star and immigrant to South Africa whose world is upended when he tests positive for HIV – were all interested in health. But try to do a media project on the environment and it's back to coalition-building again.

"What we're trying to do right now," Noboa says, "is really think about upending that business model and trying to see, can we get donors to come in as initial investors, and perhaps build a media fund that could fund a number of projects or even a whole new media brand, so that we're not dealing with one-offs and not solely dependent on the donor community. Can we build a revenue structure such that we are at least supplementing, if not, supplanting at some point the donor community? Because that would be a way that we can make sustainable change and ensure that we are being driven by impact, not only driven by donor needs and interests."

More stable funding and greater focus on impact? Perhaps the SBCC community should be rooting for Noboa's success. But while that kind of forward thinking may drive future progress, for now the SBCC community must reckon with differing perceptions of what should be funded. According to Noboa, the donor community gives its media partners appropriate latitude in the

creative process, without interference, but other sorts of conflicts can arise, even if well-intentioned.

Noboa relates one situation in which a donor said: "We don't really want you to do research. We just want you to dive in. We know what the issues are." He ably parried that thrust by getting the donor's agreement to invest in a more defensible budget item called "story development."

Other minor conflicts occur when Impact(ed) is seeking to follow an optimal SBCC media production path, for example by creating and then discarding some scripts after testing the concept with their audience. That sort of ideal iterative process may be at odds with the donor's timeline. Donors were also uncomfortable when Impact(ed) made some wardrobe changes between Seasons 1 and 2 of another program, again after audience testing.

"It would be great to have a donor that was willing to really do some testing and take some risks, see some failures and then move on," Noboa says. That again is why he aspires to establish a media fund, where the risk for each investor is lessened by its participation in a broad funding pool.

"If we have an effort that is more revenue-driven than it is donor-driven, then we can take those risks and learn those lessons and we'd be able to do it on our own without having to kind of drag the donor along with us," he says.

Impact(ed)'s communications manager, Madiha Qureshi, added an interesting irony to this discussion, which is that the audience that Impact(ed) and its donor partners are targeting suffer much less risk aversion, commenting on "just how open communities were to explore topics that might have been considered more taboo [such as child marriage].

"But when you actually talk to them, they were actually very excited about exploring those topics," Qureshi says. "I think that was insightful for us, because sometimes *we're* afraid to take a risk, but the local communities are not."

Risk aversion and donor timelines are relatively minor, nettlesome issues. A revenue-based media fund remains an unachieved dream that most SBCC media producers likely have never even considered. But there remains one issue of major consequence in the here and now that is likely the biggest funding-related hurdle in the SBCC world, and that is obtaining money for evaluation.

"It's not easy to get production money, but it's even more difficult to get evaluation money," Noboa says. "Some donors will say, 'If we can't have the gold standard" – which will be like a randomized control trial, which is very expensive – 'If we can't have that, then we might as well not have anything.'

"I know of projects in the SBCC realm that essentially have had – it's a million-dollar project and a million-dollar evaluation to really get at impact. It's that expensive to do some of these really intense trials and randomized controls."

Despite this cost, quality evaluation is needed in order to isolate impact.

"If you put something on TV, and people start calling, for example, an abuse hotline: Well, was it because that show was on TV or was it because there was a drought and more people were at home and actually rates of abuse increased? That is especially true right now during COVID. We're having a very difficult time trying to isolate causality when there are so many really earth-shattering things happening simultaneously," Noboa says.

3.5. *The Evaluator*

We only need widen our angle within Washington, D.C., if our objective is to achieve that "gold standard" in SBCC research evaluation. To that end, meet Victor Orozco, a senior economist with the Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) department at the World Bank. Orozco's job is to perform randomized control trials, following the logic of clinical trials, where groups or individuals are randomized, assigned to treatment and to control groups and where the question of program effectiveness is about causality – "not association, observation, correlation, but causality," Orozco emphasizes.

"Did an intervention work and by how much? Some call it the gold standard."

That gold standard is what funders, as well as SBCC producers, want. But that is not what they generally get.

"Compared to other development fields like microfinance, like education, like conditional cash transfers, like health, where they have a lot of evidence – especially randomized controlled trials of large-scale programs run by governments or by NGOs – unlike those sectors, the SBCC sector lacks this large scale impact evaluation to test effectiveness," Orozco says.

This hurts the business case of SBCC as a cost-effective tool and can lead to the perception of waste. Some donors may not want to squander their funds on scripts that are written and then thrown away after audience testing, as Impact(ed) does, yet Orozco insists this may be *necessary*.

"The SBCC field, like all fields, needs to combine formative research and focus groups with randomized controlled trials of pilots to see what's worth scaling up."

And yes, such testing costs money.

"But then they give you clean estimates of what is the impact of an innovation, a crucial input for credible cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit yardsticks."

Orozco, along with Nobel Prize-winning economist Abhijit Banerjee of MIT and Eliana La Ferrara of Universita' Bocconi, evaluated a popular education entertainment program serial in Africa called *MTV Shuga*. Despite their looking at the script with a healthy scientific skepticism, thinking its HIV prevention message might backfire, their findings provided a huge boost for SBCC media and its scriptwriters.

To change hearts and minds of audiences, scriptwriters need to camouflage the educational messages in an entertainment format. "There's a lot of evidence out there that once people, especially teenagers, feel they're being preached at, you could have boomerang effects," Orozco says. "They're like, 'Wait, this short video clip is trying to change my deep-seated beliefs about the world? No way. I will do the opposite.'"

Not so with *MTV Shuga*.

"The scriptwriters showed us that they knew what they were doing, and the randomized control trials showed, yes, they knew what they were doing. HIV testing doubled; chlamydia infections were halved. This is a good example about expertise of edutainment experts, behavioral experts working on the script."

Orozco emphasizes that these statistical health outcomes were *objective* measures of behavior change, not mere self-reporting based on answers to surveys. These dullest of details produced by left-brained analysts may offer the greatest validation possible for right-brained media producers because they show that their creative efforts *work* – that, as Orozco puts it, "knowledge, attitude and behavior outcomes were greatly driven by character identification and program immersion.

"Now, the scriptwriters, the artists have known this for millennia, but this is experimental evidence that is saying, 'This educational drama worked, and in addition, the unique mechanisms of character identification and program immersion of edutainment narratives are an advantage over information-only campaigns.'"

And, SBCC media producers ought to know, their edutainment narratives work where billboards, manuals, books and PSAs often do not succeed. The difference, says Orozco, is the immersive experience of storytelling where the reader or viewer comes to identify with a character. When that happens, the brain is likelier to absorb new information, meaning that inner voice saying, "No way, I'll do the opposite," weakens.

Orozco offers *The Queen of Katwe* as another example of the impact SBCC media can make.

"It's a real story of a Ugandan girl who makes it to the Moscow Chess World Championship because one of her teachers realized she had a lot of potential and helped her. There's a randomized control trial that shows that just by showing this movie, immediately after people get excited."

That part is not surprising. What is, however, surprising is that the math scores of viewers after a week – especially lower-achieving students – go up and the likelihood of their failing math declines by over 10 percentage points.

"There's no math teaching [in the film], but it just tells you the power of improving non-cognitive skills of believing in yourself," Orozco says. "Now imagine if that emotion is sustained and makes you study more because now you believe more in yourself…Just by making it salient."

3.6. *The Motivator*

Getting people to believe in their power to change, taking an important issue…and making it salient. What is that secret sauce at the heart of the storyteller's craft? We can find it in the heights of the Himalayas, where Rajan Parajuli serves as Nepal representative for South Burlington, Vermont-based Population Media Center (PMC), a major player in SBCC media.

A January 2019 PMC report assessing the impact of PMC's two radio serial dramas (*Mai Sari Sunakhari* and *Hilkor*) includes impressive data, including clinic visits where 11% of visitors cited the former and 18% the latter as the motivation for their visits.

"It was not a prompted question. It was an unprompted question," Parajuli says. "We never named our drama when we asked that question. *They* named our drama as a motivating factor for visiting the clinic."

The robustness of these results did not surprise Parajuli. He says he and his team have been using PMC's behavioral change communication methodology in regard to child marriage, gender-based violence and girls' education in Nepal since 2016, and he describes that methodology, which PMC has been deploying for some 20 years, as "scientific and proven."

He credits PMC for tightly monitoring implementation, and is confident in its efficacy, such that that is not what keeps him awake at night, so to speak.

"The thing is that methodology is very simple. It is very simply articulated. But putting stories, putting drivers into that methodology, is the difficult part."

Determining those drivers, Parajuli says, is heavily dependent on understanding the local culture and doing formative research, which is typically arrived at via focus group discussions and similar

methods. In short, Parajuli is preoccupied with qualitative research in proportion to Orozco's obsession with quantitative evaluation.

"It's all learning. It's all how seriously you take the local people, how seriously you can observe…That is why PMC [hires local] staff, because behavior is so deeply rooted with culture, so deeply rooted with local religions, local tradition, local values, and no other people than local experts, local people can understand."

Even a native-born Nepalese like Parajuli must check himself.

"As a communicator what happens is, we make two, three early mistakes. First, we think that we know our audience. We think that we know what they want. We think that we know what they need and we do not go back to them and look at them. That is the biggest mistake normally we do all the time."

He cites as an example PMC's child marriage campaign in Nepal. PMC ended up creating two separate programs after its research indicated that the drivers for early marriage were completely different in Eastern and Western Nepal. In Eastern Nepal, parents were the key drivers, seeking to lessen the amount of dowry they would have to pay to marry off their daughters. In mountainous Western Nepal, PMC's research found that adolescents themselves were the key players in early-marriage decisions, often eloping at a young age out of fear their parents would later choose the wrong spouse for their children.

The key here is that Parajuli's team of researchers and focus-group moderators get at these issues prior to and then in tandem with the writing and production of the shows. Once clarity about the target audience is achieved, "then producers and writers create an imaginary situation which is…based on the real ground-based formative research. That makes the audience think: 'Oh, this family in the drama looks like me. They have been facing the same situation that I am facing in my community.'"

To get the audience beyond the threshold of behavior-change contemplation, PMC's plots are built on three types of characters. There are positive characters, heroic or admirable types; there are negative characters, the classic villain. And then there is "the transitional character," neither hero nor villain.

"They're somewhere in the middle. That is the secret sauce of our behavioral change communication," Parajuli says.

"We tell our story from the perspective of this transitional character. This transitional character is the people in the crowd that we are trying to change. People…who want to do good in life, but

they do not know how to do it. They have been doing it bad assuming that that makes their life better. Our transitional character represents the society that we are working for, working on."

Parajuli says audiences of PMC's radio programs at first are drawn to the positive and negative characters. They find their virtues or the exciting things they do charming or intriguing.

"The more drama goes on, they tend to get curious about this transitional character," he says. "At the end of the program…every time the transitional character is the most popular character. Why? Because that character represents our listener. They win at the end. They do the right thing. They come out of this dilemma that our audience is normally in…We give them that confidence."

Indeed, PMC's program has inspired a markedly high level of confidence in one group of 10 to 15 teens, who – with no bidding from PMC or anyone else – formed an independent group to fight against child marriage in their community.

"They always meet together and listen to our drama, *Mai Sari Sunakhari*. Then whenever a child is forced for marriage in their community, they go to that home, talk to their parents, try to convince them to delay the marriage, and talk about the consequences of early marriages," Parajuli says.

SBCC media producers have many possible outlets for their creative talents. But they have entered this unique field to make a difference in the world. The satisfaction of helping someone is reward in and of itself, but when your audience takes it upon itself to help *their* peers, that is akin to compound interest, where you get a rate of return not just on your principal but on your interest too, thus rapidly magnifying the total return. It is more than stopping a vicious cycle; it is starting a virtuous one.

In a phone call, the teen volunteers told Parajuli they succeeded in preventing a number of child marriages. *That* is success in SBCC media.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERVENTION DESIGN UNDER EATSAFE

Central to EatSafe's work is understanding and then potentially shaping the motivations, attitudes, beliefs, and practices of consumers and food vendors through media-based SBCC interventions.

Although this article was not intended to focus on food safety, the ideas presented here, drawn from global stories of SBCC productions, will be of value when planning for an effective, timely and cost effective production of media programs in service of improving food safety in informal markets.

1. Human Connection is an essential component of successful media-based SBCC production and intervention and should form the backbone of the process.
· *Learn the audience.* Do not assume that you know what they want. This is often the biggest mistake in a program: assuming something (even something that seems obvious) about the audience and then creating a media product around that assumption.
· EatSafe personnel should *provide hands-on technical assistance to the local crew throughout the production process*. It is important to develop strong working relationships with the on-the-ground production teams and not to assume that media production expertise equates with SBCC media production competence. Media programs designed for behavior change have specific production needs and use techniques which can differ from typical media productions (news, entertainment, etc.).
· Although deadlines are aggressive and budgets are tight, *never shortchange the need for iteration in the program design process.* Testing of scripts with the audience, and re-writing scripts when needed, is key to making an effective and useful program.

2. Storytelling works and should be used to help motivate behavior change, particularly for a topic related to food, which ties in deeply with attitudes, values, and mores of a culture.
· Stories can often provide an advantage to information-only campaigns in behavior change communications, particularly when expert storytellers work in tandem with behavioral experts.
· *Character identification is a key* element of storytelling and connects the audience to the action in the story. Working with the audience in advance helps to discover the kinds of characters that will resonate with the target audience.
· A good strategy is to *make use of positive and negative characters to initially attract attention to the story,* but then use "transitional characters" who share the target audience's struggles to illustrate ways to move along the path of behavior change.

- *Story immersion* (also sometimes called "transportation" into the world of the story) allows the audience *to become emotionally engaged* and consequently more open to the core messaging of the program.
- SBCC stories should demonstrate self-efficacy. *The audience must feel that they are able to change their behavior.* If it seems too difficult or too out of reach, success is unlikely.

Although full scale randomized trial studies have been used in other fields to establish causality (e.g. education, health, microfinance), evaluating storytelling as an SBCC intervention tool using full scale randomized trials is rarely done due to cost and timing constraints. Still, as the World Bank's Victor Orozoco mentions above, "The SBCC field, like all fields, needs to combine formative research and focus groups with randomized controlled trials of pilots to see what's worth scaling up."

3. Distribution is key and should be considered at the beginning of the process, not at the end.
- Do not let distribution be an afterthought of a well-designed program, but rather *make it an integral piece of the project from the design phase on.*
- *Engage early and collaborate often with local groups*, associations, and leaders, as they can become your best "marketing agents" within a community and can make each marketing dollar go that much further.
- *Carefully consider the cultural context* when determining where the intended audience is to hear/watch/see the SBCC media. For example, some programs might need to be viewed in a private setting to reach the target audience.

Recommendations for the Design of Future Studies and Interventions within EatSafe

EatSafe aims to generate evidence and knowledge on leveraging the potential for increased consumer demand for safe food to substantially improve the safety of nutritious foods in informal market settings. Central to EatSafe's work is understanding (and potentially shaping) the motivations, attitudes, beliefs, and practices of consumers and food vendors. While EatSafe will undertake novel primary research on consumer and vendor motivations and practices, it is essential to ensure that this work is informed by and builds on what has already been done—both in terms of methods used and results obtained. Based on the results of this review, we recommend EatSafe consider the following in the design of its methods and interventions going forward:

1. Learn the audience. EatSafe personnel in the country offices should *provide hands-on technical assistance to the local crew throughout the production process*. Media programs designed for behavior change have specialized production techniques that can best be informed by EatSafe to accomplish our food safety objectives.

2. Develop stories should demonstrate self-efficacy to assist t*he audience to feel that they are able to change their behavior.* This will help maximize success.

3. Embrace the need for iteration in the program design process. Testing of scripts with the audience, and re-writing scripts when needed, is key to making an effective and useful program.

4. Food, which ties in deeply with attitudes, values, and mores of a culture, is a great topic for storytelling. Stories can often provide an advantage to information-only campaigns in behavior change communications, particularly when expert storytellers work in tandem with behavioral experts.

5. Character identification is a key element of storytelling and connects the audience to the action in the story. Work with the target audience to discover the kinds of characters that will resonate, including the use of positive, negative and transitional characters.

6. Allow the audience *to become emotionally engaged* and consequently more open to the core messaging of the program through story immersion.

7. Make distribution *an integral piece of the project from the design phase on. Engage early and collaborate often with local groups*, associations.

8.Carefully consider the cultural context when determining where the intended audience is to hear/watch/see the SBCC media.

9. Evaluation of the program's effectiveness will be useful both during implementation and after completion.

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Click on the links below for transcript of each interview:

Interviewee / Transcript Link	Organization	Titles	Location
Stevan Buxt part 1. Stevan Brux part 2.	Freelance	SBCC Film Producer	Cape Town, South Africa
Babafunke Fagbemi	The Centre for Communication and Social Impact (CCSI)	Executive Director	Abuja, Nigeria
Katie Mota	Wise Entertainment	Co-Founder	Los Angeles, CA
Aric Noboa	Impact (Ed) International	President	Washington, DC
Victor Orozco	The World Bank	Senior Economist	Washington, DC
Rajan Parajuli	Population Media Center	Country Director	Katmandu, Nepal