

Tips and trends from social and behaviour change initiatives around the world

By [Nicole Biondi](#)

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From 16 to 20 April, I joined over 1,000 people from more than 59 countries (majority Global South) in Nusa Dua, Bali for the [2018 International Social and Behavior Change Communication \(SBCC\) Summit](#). The exceptionally well-run gathering explored what works in shifting social norms, changing behaviors and amplifying the voices of those who have most at stake in the success of development efforts. It was also designed to get into the ring with the issues of social justice and agenda setting that affect these decisions.



Over the five days of talks, panel discussions and hands-on workshops, a number of dominant questions arose:

- How can people's realities and voices be put at the centre of the interventions being designed?
- How do we monitor, evaluate and prove success?
- How much emphasis should be placed on shifting norms and behaviors when power structures, policy environments or lack of services may constitute problems that overwhelm the capacity of individuals or communities to act?

Once I'd mastered navigating the sea of acronyms that is SBCC, I began spotting interesting trends and collecting some useful tools.

HCD in SBCC is key

See what I mean by acronyms? Allow me to translate.

HCD or human-centred design refers to an approach to problem solving and programme design, where the people being designed for are meaningfully involved in the process. By including, gaining empathy for and understanding the people you're designing for, the solution is more likely to be relevant and effective. It's a great assumption buster. It also helps mitigate the dangerous 'us and them' syndrome that sometimes creeps into development work.

In a recent article, Sally Osberg, CEO of The Skoll Foundation, cautioned social entrepreneurs and institutions not to try to be the smartest people in the room, but to ensure that those most engaged in and affected by their societies' challenges come together in order to forge the alliances that will accelerate true and lasting equilibrium change.

A great human-centred design tool and set of resources can be found [here](#) thanks to IDEO.org. For a tool that's specifically health programme focused, you may want to have a look at this really [user-friendly field guide by UNICEF](#).

For a practical and inspiring use case, [have a look](#) at how A360 is revolutionising how reproductive health services are conceived and delivered by and for adolescent girls across developing countries.

Customer segmentation is not just for big brands

I suppose when you say it out loud it strikes one as fairly obvious - you can't be everything to everybody. Big brands and ad industry folk have always practised this truism and this conference drove home the importance of doing the same in the development sector.

What really struck me was the need to be absolutely certain about who exactly the customer is. Is our primary customer the young new mother in whom we're trying to facilitate the behaviour of exclusive breastfeeding? Or is it perhaps her grandmother who needs to understand the advantages of this practise, so that she can support her granddaughter? Building on the point made in the paragraph above, by understanding the young mother and her environment, we can begin to understand where to target our efforts.

There are myriad tools for research and segmentation, but the method used by [Africa's Voices](#) stayed with me. They have developed an innovative tool that allows for simultaneous messaging and segmentation and that allows for rapid iteration.

Edutainment works!

Research shows that we retain information more effectively through methods that engage us. And when those methods incorporate high-quality immersive experiences that are memorable and distinct, magic happens!

Overheard at the summit: *"The ad industry often takes something as boring as a bar of soap, and makes it interesting, even seemingly life-changing. In the development world, all too often, we do the opposite – we take absolutely critical, life-changing and important issues, and de-amplify them down into something as boring as a bar of soap!"* - David Ohana, speaking at UNICEF's panel on ending violence against children.

Have a look at some examples of edutainment initiatives that are anything but boring:

[Evoke: Leaders for Literacy](#)

This innovative multi-player, game-based learning platform empowers youth to collaborate globally to solve urgent social challenges using 21st century skills.

[Ubongo Kids](#)

Ubongo leverages the power of entertainment, the reach of mass media, and the connectivity of mobile devices, to deliver effective, localised learning to African families at low cost and massive scale.

There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to monitoring and evaluating impact

I wish I could tell you that in one of the sessions, hidden in a jewelled box, I found the holy grail of monitoring and evaluation. Well, I can't, but I did find the next best thing.

I met some of the people behind [BetterEvaluation](#) - an international collaboration to improve the practice and theory of evaluation by creating and curating information on choosing and using evaluation methods and processes. Have a look at their [incredible website](#) to search for or add to a multitude of options, approaches and resources to help you with measuring success.

From a poll taken at the summit:

Question: *What are the top challenges generating robust evidence?*

Answers: *Knowing what to measure; too much focus on new tools/approaches, not enough on adapting, improving and scaling methods that work; change takes time; it's hard to measure change over time and attribute it to SBCC/EE.*



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Lynn Joffe 10 May 2018



A final word or two

The final keynote speaker was Anibal Gaviria, the former mayor of Medellin, Colombia. In a passionate presentation he told us, via a translator, about the role of communication in bringing together the community to get behind projects that transformed his city from one of the most violent in the world.

“To govern is to communicate,” he said, via the translator. “For us, communication is not an option. It’s a constant obligation. It’s a two-way process.”

In the early 1990s, the homicide rate in Medellin was 390 per 100,000 people. For perspective, he said, “in a country like Bali, that has four million inhabitants, that would mean 8,000 murders in one year. That was the situation in Medellin in the 1990s.”

Since then, the homicide rate has fallen by 95%.

Gaviria attributes much of the change to the intentional creation of public spaces to unify the community, integrating many of the poorest citizens. Medellin includes a river at the city centre and then reaches into the mountains on each side. The creation of a cable car system able to transport people from the mountains improved lives for many. The city also created beautiful schools and parks for all of its citizens. These and other developments have contributed to a massive decline in the number of families in extreme poverty, from 19.4% in 1990 to 2.8% in 2015.

“By 2020, we should have zero extreme poverty in Medellin, which should be the experience of every society,” he said.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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