

Complexity, Context, and USAID-Supported Social and Behavior Change Programming in Ethiopia

Situation

Over the past decade, there has been considerable emphasis on social and behavior change (SBC) in Ethiopia with USAID-funded investments improving demand for quality health services. Despite this progress, health service utilization in Ethiopia is still relatively low. Assessments show a lack of awareness of available health services, weaknesses in service provision, and poor uptake of health behaviors by providers.

What We Did

USAID's Agency for All Project conducted an assessment to 1) consolidate learnings from current and past SBC investments in Ethiopia; 2) explore the cost-benefit of SBC interventions and their impact on integrated and stand-alone programming; and 3) inform USAID Ethiopia's future investments.

Approach

In Phase 1, we conducted a desk review, followed by primary data collection and secondary data analysis to develop a preliminary report with draft recommendations to guide future USAID Ethiopia programming and investments. In Phase 2, we held key informant interviews to revisit and refine preliminary recommendations.

What We Learned

- This assessment highlighted a new “KAP-gap,” where implementers demonstrate technical knowledge and positive attitudes toward best practices but fail to translate them into practice.
- Implementing partners seemed to embrace the need to adapt programs to address shifting realities, yet paradoxically, they often believed that following generic protocols would lead to success.
- The focus on community “mobilization” rather than “engagement” to help individuals and households make sense of public health information prevented collective behavior change.
- There is limited evidence on the costs and cost effectiveness of SBC interventions in Ethiopia.

Impact

This assessment demonstrated that monitoring and evaluation efforts must be designed to discover which interventions work for whom and under what circumstances. It also revealed the importance of clear community engagement strategies, routine process and assessment documentation, and risk mitigation planning in SBC programming. Finally, it cautioned that valuable cost-effectiveness data will only be available if we use consistent methodology for calculating program costs.

Snapshot

Location: Ethiopia

Duration:
August 2022–August 2023

Consortium Partners: Center on Gender Equity and Health, UC San Diego; CORE Group; Makerere University

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