

Social and Behavior Change Communication Committee Ensuring Statewide Diffusion of Social Mobilization Activities in Taraba State

TCI Nigeria supports states to implement high impact demand generation activities aimed at improving social norms in favor of family planning at household and community level, with the ultimate aim of increasing uptake of family planning. Establishing state-level Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) committees or reinvigorating existing structures to serve as SBCC committees ensures a sustainable coordination mechanism as well as consistency in messaging across all demand generation activities promoting family planning information and services. In Taraba state, TCI supported the state to expand its social mobilization committee to incorporate all the health educators of the 16 local government areas (LGAs) in the state as well as key organizations in the state, such as the National Orientation Agency, Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), youth-focused civil society organizations (CSOs), etc. to become the state's SBCC Committee.



TCI conducted a two-day training for the new SBCC committee from 5th to 6th February 2019. Members of the committee, which included Health Educators from both TCI demonstration LGAs and non-TCI demonstration LGAs, were trained on the scientific approach to behavior change, value of strategic communication in changing behavior, creating awareness and demand for family planning and leveraging on indigenous events and festivals for family planning sensitization and mobilization. Following the training, the committee developed a workplan for execution of family planning activities in the different LGAs.

With the formation and training of the SBCC committee, there is widespread implementation of social mobilization activities across the state, not just in the LGAs where TCI demonstrates its high impact service delivery interventions.

What are the benefits of doing this approach?

SBCC committees are relevant in driving demand generation in the states. Some of the other benefits of the committee are:

- Health educators, who are key members of the SBCC committee, have increased knowledge of family planning and understanding of their responsibility in ensuring that communities know the benefits of family planning.
- Improved coordination of demand generation activities prevents duplication of efforts and ensures coverage of activities throughout the state.
- Community members have increased knowledge about family planning through the efforts of the committee and are less likely to believe myths and misconceptions about family planning.
- The demand generation activities carried out by the SBCC committee have resulted in increased family planning service uptake.
- The SBCC committee is a platform for experience-sharing and continuous learning, which builds the capacity of members and ensures they are abreast of developments in the field of SBCC.

How has TCI used this approach?

The formation of SBCC committees in TCI-supported states is a high impact approach which guarantees the state's ownership and leadership of its demand generation activities. The approach brings together key demand generation stakeholders at state and LGA levels, regardless as to their involvement as TCI demonstration sites. TCI uses this technique to strengthen implementation as well as sustainability of demand generation interventions in states. In Taraba State, the approach was used to strengthen integration of demand generation interventions, particularly social mobilization activities. This led to the diffusion of the high-impact activities to non-demonstration LGAs and beyond urban areas to rural areas thus expanding the reach of FP messages and interventions. Following the formation and training of the committee, it was supported to develop a workplan. As opposed to stand-alone interventions, members identified existing and relevant activities in which family planning could be integrated. This not only ensured cost-effectiveness but also expanded the coverage of the family planning demand generation interventions.

How to implement:

The following steps are relevant in establishing state-wide SBCC committees:

- 1** First, an assessment of the state's demand generation landscape should be conducted. One of the objectives of the assessment is to determine the existence and functionality of demand generation platforms in the state.
- 2** The findings of the assessment should be discussed with key technocrats/policy makers, which includes the State Health Educator and Director of Public/Community Health. If the findings reveal the lack of a functional demand generation platform that has competencies in key areas of SBCC and not just social mobilization, then the resolution of establishing a SBCC committee should be communicated by the Director to the Executive Secretary (ES) of the State's Primary Health Care Development Agency or the Commissioner for Health for approval.
- 3** A list of potential SBCC committee members should be drawn up and reviewed by the state. The list should include representatives of relevant Government Ministries (Information, Women Affairs, Youth & Sports, Education), Agencies and Parastatals, CSOs including youth-focused/led CSOs, the press as well as Health Educators from all of the LGAs in the state. This is shared with the ES/Commissioner for Health who approves the membership list, determines with the state team, a suitable date for the committee's inauguration and gives the go-ahead for the notification of the prospective committee members.
- 4** Following the notification of committee members, an inauguration ceremony should be conducted and a training to build the capacity of the members of the committee should also be held.
- 5** At the end of the training, the committee should develop a workplan to guide their execution of activities in the state.
- 6** For sustained technical assistance to the new committee, a community of practice should be created on a social media platform, like WhatsApp. This platform, which can be easily accessed, can be used for sharing information, stimulating healthy competition and continuous learning.
- 7** Periodic review meetings should be conducted to monitor/assess the committee's progress in implementing planned activities in their workplan.

Tips:

- Emphasize inclusion of existing, low-cost activities during workplan development. The focus here is to leverage as much as possible.
- Ensure the committee's workplan is inclusive, i.e., includes activities targeting young people, social mobilization, media engagement/programs, entertainment education, etc.
- Make the committee responsible for itself, by owning the workplanning process, decision making and drive the implementation.
- Provide them with SBCC materials, talking points for activities and link them with online resources on TCI University.
- Ensure data review and use sessions are key components of their workplan review meetings.
- Utilize WhatsApp to provide feedback, recognize and motivate committee members.
- Create a healthy competition among the LGA health educators and other committee members to refocus their attention on the workplan.
- Hold recognition events twice a year to recognize the efforts of high-performing committee members.



Challenges:

- The activities and process that lead up to the establishment of the committee might take longer time than planned. It is better to have the state actors actively participate and understand each stage (i.e., review of landscape assessment findings, composition of membership, etc.) before moving to the next step.
- There is the possibility that some members might not be functional, i.e. not attend or contribute in meetings, not implement activities in the workplan. Thus, the expectations for membership should be clearly stated during the inauguration meeting and membership should be subject to periodical reviews to remove non-functional members.
- Members may have a fixed mindset, doing things differently will likely take more time than envisioned. This particularly relates to data use for demand generation programming, focus on high-impact activities as opposed to a bucket-list of familiar activities.
- Some members might still come with the mindset of dependence on donor funds, thus putting a limitation on the committee's capacity to effectively implement. It is, therefore, important to stress the need to identify and leverage on existing resources from the outset. In addition, focus should also be on developing capacity of the committee on proposal writing, use of data to produce reader-friendly materials that showcase their work and give more visibility to what they do in order to attract funding.

What is the evidence that SBCC committees strengthen family planning programs?

The use of the SBCC committee technique in Taraba has strengthened integration and ownership of demand generation activities in the state. As a result, the committee has led 264 social mobilization activities that have yielded more than 52,000 people with family planning information with 42% of people referred to services completing their referrals.

In addition, due to the capacity building intervention by TCI, the committee members have become a valuable resource base for media programs, thus helping to reach even more of the populace with vital family planning information through the media. The committee has participated in 24 radio programs and 18 television programs in the last six months, July to December 2019.

Figure 1: Outcomes of social mobilization activities conducted by the SBCC Committee between July-December 2019

