2022 CLA CASE COMPETITION

COLLABORATE • LEARN • ADAPT

Case Title:

Collaborating to Inform and Adapt an SBC Multi-media Campaign in West Africa

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Developing MMH content. Credit: Merci Mon Héros, Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs

Summary:

To address critical health needs and fill a demonstrated research gap, USAID is working in West Africa through two sister projects, Breakthrough ACTION and Breakthrough RESEARCH, to deliver and evaluate a multi-media campaign called Merci Mon Héros (MMH), which means “thank you, my hero” in French. MMH collects, curates, and disseminates testimonial videos from young people and adult allies about their RH/FP realities, and how a “hero” in their life broke taboos and overcame social barriers to support them. The campaign aims to increase youth access to RH/FP information and services by addressing the social, cultural, and gender norms that pose barriers.
Breakthrough ACTION and Breakthrough RESEARCH’s collaboration around the MMH campaign embodies the following CLA subcomponents: internal and external collaboration, relationships and networks, continuous learning + improvement, decision-making, M&E for learning, and adaptive management.
MMH emerged as a key nexus for collaboration between the two projects. Where Breakthrough ACTION developed, implemented, and monitored the innovative multi-media SBC campaign, Breakthrough RESEARCH leaned into its mandate to explore and develop novel research and monitoring techniques to be incorporated into the campaign’s monitoring strategy, such as social listening and complexity-aware evaluation methods. In this way, Breakthrough ACTION received a ready-made external evaluator, without vested interest in the campaign’s outcome. Over the course of three years, Breakthrough RESEARCH and Breakthrough ACTION have engaged in joint learning and collaborative processes to monitor and refine delivery of the MMH campaign. The joint implementation and evaluation process has also helped to further understand and validate the effects of face-to-face engagement vs. online engagement in SBC programming.

Which two subcomponents of the Collaborating, Learning & Adapting (CLA) Framework are most reflected in your case? Please reference them in your submission.

- Internal Collaboration
- External Collaboration
- Technical Evidence Base
- Theories of Change
- Scenario Planning
- M&E for Learning
- Pause & Reflect
- Adaptive Management
- Openness
- Relationships & Networks
- Continuous Learning & Improvement
- Knowledge Management
- Institutional Memory
- Decision-Making
- Mission Resources
- CLA in Implementing Mechanisms

1. WHAT: What is the general context in which the case takes place? What organizational or development challenge(s) prompted you to collaborate, learn, and/or adapt?

Francophone West Africa continues to experience reproductive health and family planning (RH/FP) challenges, including high levels of maternal and child mortality, high unmet need for FP, and high fertility rates. An increase in modern contraceptive prevalence rate (mCPR) among women in West Africa could help improve these outcomes. However, FP uptake has been low in the region, particularly among adolescents. There are several factors driving the high fertility rate and low levels of FP use among adolescents, including poor access to FP services, negative attitudes toward FP and youth's access to it, and conservative religious and social norms surrounding fertility and early marriage, among others. A literature review regarding social and behavior change's (SBC) ability to improve RH/FP outcomes among youth, ranging from adolescence to early adulthood, in West Africa found evidence that traditional mass media interventions (e.g., radio and television) can be effective, but there was limited evidence on interventions using social media platforms.
To address these health needs and fill a demonstrated research gap, USAID is working in West Africa through two sister projects, Breakthrough ACTION and Breakthrough RESEARCH, to deliver and evaluate a multi-media campaign called Merci Mon Héros (MMH), which means "thank you, my hero" in French. MMH seeks to improve RH/FP outcomes among youth living in the four francophone West Africa Breakthrough ACTION implementation countries (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, and Togo). The campaign was conceived at the 2019 Francophone Summit for Social and Behavior Change's Youth Design Challenge, co-developed with youth and funded through BA. MMH collects, curates, and disseminates testimonial videos from young people and adult allies about their RH/FP realities, and how a "hero" in their life broke taboos and overcame social barriers to support them. The campaign aims to increase youth access to RH/FP information and services by addressing the social, cultural, and gender norms that pose barriers. The videos are shared through the campaign's social media pages as well as on television and radio and during community events. Implementing the campaign across multiple settings required a multi-faceted evaluation methodology to generate a more complete view of the campaign's progress and potential effect. Breakthrough ACTION and Breakthrough RESEARCH's collaboration around the MMH campaign came to embody the following CLA subcomponents: internal and external collaboration, relationships and networks, continuous learning + improvement, decision-making, M&E for learning, and adaptive management.

2. WHY: Why did you decide to use a CLA approach? Why was CLA considered helpful for addressing your organizational or development challenge(s)?

Breakthrough ACTION and Breakthrough RESEARCH build upon USAID's previous investments in SBC research and programming, including both global and country-level projects, to simultaneously guide new learning and drive broader application of proven SBC practices and tools that address global health challenges. Breakthrough ACTION aims to provide global SBC leadership, working through a number of new and existing platforms to create opportunities for technical agenda-setting, learning and collaboration, designing and implementing innovative SBC programs, and promoting shared priorities through its own programs and knowledge management efforts. Meanwhile, Breakthrough RESEARCH strives to convene and engage a broad range of health and development stakeholders, supporting them in developing, promoting, and operationalizing visionary, consensus-driven agendas for SBC research and evidence generation that contribute to measurable global health impact. Breakthrough RESEARCH also builds on its existing SBC research agendas to generate new evidence and innovative research approaches around the agenda's priority themes.

MMH emerged as a perfect nexus for collaboration between the two projects. Where Breakthrough ACTION developed, implemented, and monitored the innovative multi-media SBC campaign, Breakthrough RESEARCH leaned into its mandate to explore and develop novel research and monitoring techniques to be incorporated into the campaign's monitoring strategy, such as social listening and complexity-aware evaluation methods. In this way, Breakthrough ACTION received a ready-made external evaluator, without vested interest in the campaign's outcome.

3. How: Tell us the story of how you used a collaborating, learning and/or adapting approach to address the organizational or development challenge described in Question 2.

Over the course of three years, Breakthrough RESEARCH and Breakthrough ACTION have engaged in joint learning and collaborative processes to monitor and refine delivery of the MMH campaign. Numerous data sources were collected to evaluate the MMH campaign across the four West Africa Breakthrough ACTION implementation countries, including social listening and social media monitoring, complexity-aware qualitative analysis, and costing of social media-based campaign components. The partnership has produced several critical pieces of SBC evidence, including a series of social media monitoring and listening studies, a social media costing study, a Most Significant Change study, and a (forthcoming) data triangulation study that combines results from both Breakthrough ACTION and Breakthrough RESEARCH studies to provide a broader picture of the campaign's impact. Periodic meetings, workshops, and direct communication between technical teams have served as the bedrock of collaborative efforts. Over time, the relationship has allowed for adaptive campaign management, a more tailored campaign theory of change, and M&E frameworks for learning.

Launched in October 2019, the MMH campaign began by releasing youth testimonial videos via social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, as well as more traditional channels, including television, radio, and community launch events. Over time, BA's social media strategy evolved, increasing the frequency of their posts that include key RH/FP messages as well as other online events, such as quizzes and interactive Facebook Live events.

The two projects engaged in a phased and multi-method approach to data collection, which began prior to the start of the formal campaign launch. Breakthrough RESEARCH first used social listening to assess online conversations through social media platforms, blogs and other online venues at baseline (October 2018-October 2019). Six social media monitoring reports were then conducted between November 2019-January 2021. Breakthrough ACTION initiated data collection on number of events and participants in November 2019, expanded its monitoring data collection to include referral coupon tracking data, and in July of 2020, began an exposure survey in Côte d'Ivoire. In the summer of 2020, Breakthrough RESEARCH began collecting costing data for the MMH campaign. Informed by Breakthrough RESEARCH's evidence generation, Breakthrough ACTION made notable program evolutions in October 2020 and Spring 2021, when the program shifted focus to include more videos featuring, and messages directed toward, adults and youth "allies". Here, community events shifted to intergenerational community conversations. In December of 2020, Breakthrough RESEARCH began collecting qualitative data on Most Significant Change, completing this this process in March of 2021. The study showed, among its results and for the first time, the power of MMH community events to catalyze personal change, and more empathetic intergenerational conversation about RH/FP. In April of 2021, based on these experiences with Breakthrough RESEARCH, Breakthrough ACTION incorporated social media monitoring within its internal M&E strategy and continues to collect data on exposure to MMH messages and related outcomes in Niger.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT: How has collaborating, learning and adapting affected your team and/or organization? If it's too early to tell, what effects do you expect to see in the future?

The shared strategic objective of Breakthrough ACTION and Breakthrough RESEARCH is increased integration of proven SBC interventions in health and development programs, including health service delivery platforms. The partnership that has emerged around the MMH campaign has enlivened this mandate. It has been widely recognized across the teams that MMH represents among the best instances of collaboration across Breakthrough RESEARCH and BA's intersecting portfolios. From an implementation perspective, that Breakthrough RESEARCH was able to produce timely, programmatically relevant evidence has reinforced the value of SBC implementers and researchers co-creating research and evaluation design from the outset to maximize the potential for evidence that leads to adaptive management and adds to the global evidence base for SBC programming. Methods from Breakthrough RESEARCH's evaluation have influenced BA's MMH campaign strategy, from campaign content format to more strategic messaging, as explained below, to project management with the incorporation of regular social media monitoring methods, such as the review of social media platform analytics, metrics provided by Sprout social, and qualitative analyses of social media comments about the campaign – all of which Breakthrough ACTION feeds back into the campaign for its improvement.

5. DEVELOPMENT IMPACT: How has using a CLA approach contributed to your development outcomes? What evidence can you provide? If it's too early to tell, what effects do you expect to see in the future?

Breakthrough RESEARCH's groundbreaking social listening data mining research provided critical results that informed BA's adaptive management for SBC activities, allowing Breakthrough ACTION to implement real-time feedback for the FP/RH social media campaign in the four francophone countries. A number of key findings and corresponding adjustments are featured below:

1. Breakthrough RESEARCH data indicated that organic engagement yielded more engagement than paid promotion alone. Therefore, Breakthrough ACTION maintained paid promotional posts to drive traffic to the site and pursued free mechanisms to pull people in, through Instagram and Facebook stories and Tweet-Ups in coordination with other organizations. These findings also led Breakthrough ACTION to research other specific organizations and individuals with whom the project could collaborate.
2. Breakthrough RESEARCH data demonstrated that the majority of Facebook followers were male. As a result, Breakthrough ACTION shifted promotion campaigns to target young women, and adapted calls for action to resonate with men, incorporating issues around consent and talking to other men about RH.
3. Breakthrough RESEARCH data indicated that shorter videos increased view times. As a result, Breakthrough ACTION shortened videos and created teaser clips to increase the likelihood of consumption.
4. Breakthrough RESEARCH data found that menstruation related content and Facebook lives had some of the highest engagement across the campaign. As a result, Breakthrough ACTION continued to incorporate menstruation content and monthly Facebook lives.
5. Breakthrough RESEARCH data found that the most negative sentiment tied to the campaign was associated with religious or cultural beliefs around premarital sex. Breakthrough ACTION accordingly featured videos and live conversations with religious leaders who promoted speaking openly with young people about premarital sex. They also created and featured videos conveying that social support to young parents is more beneficial than rejecting young (single) parents.

6. ENABLING CONDITIONS: How have enabling conditions - resources (time/money/staff), organizational culture, or business/work processes - influenced your results? How would you advise others to navigate any challenges you may have faced?

It was resoundingly noted that this degree of collaboration and joint learning was a rewarding but highly resource intensive process. A few enabling features that facilitated this partnership were identified, including that scopes of work were fairly clear: Breakthrough ACTION was meant to design and implement SBC interventions, such as the MMH campaign; and Breakthrough RESEARCH was meant to evaluate its impact using multiple methods to better address the complexity of a multi-channel, multi-country intervention. Although campaign monitoring was a point of overlap on both projects' scope, monitoring activities were managed in a way to complement and leverage each other's data, leading to a richer understanding of the campaign implementation and potential effects. Data sharing agreements were pre-established in order to facilitate the collaborative process. As such, the two projects were able to clarify the different and complementary roles of their respective project staff. Another important feature was the synchronized timelines and budgets for Breakthrough ACTION and Breakthrough RESEARCH's activities. Often, uncoordinated timelines or unclear goals and objectives between projects have hampered collaborative planning and evaluation efforts. That Breakthrough RESEARCH was able to provide a rapid and nimble research method to Breakthrough ACTION ensured that it aligned with the timeline of MMH's implementation. Lastly, collaboration indicators established at the beginning of the Breakthrough ACTION and Breakthrough RESEARCH twinned mechanism greatly incentivized collaboration.