

A photograph of three children in a classroom. In the foreground, a young girl with dark, curly hair and a nose ring is smiling broadly, wearing a red dress with a yellow and white floral pattern. Behind her, a boy wearing a light blue shirt and a grey and white baseball cap is also smiling. In the background, another child with dark hair and a white headband is visible. They are all sitting at a desk with books and papers. The background is slightly blurred, showing a natural, outdoor-like setting.

BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Achieving Agenda 2030



Cover Photo: UNICEF/BANA2013-01238/Kiron

The views expressed in this publication are from the authors and do not necessarily represent the view of the United Nations, UNDP, UNICEF or any of its affiliated organizations.

CONTENTS

Agenda 2030 and the Role of Behavioural Insights	1
Improving United Nations Programmes with Behavioural Insights: 10 Case Studies	5
Advancing Gender Equality	
Leaving No One Behind	
Protecting the Planet	
Managing Risk and Building Resilience	
Preventing Violent Conflict and Building Peaceful Societies	
Strengthening the UN’s Organizational Potential with Behavioural Insights	14
Features	
Behavioural Insights 101	2
Designing a Behavioural Insights Project	4
Generating Evidence through Rigorous Evaluations	11
Building Capacity for Behavioural Science at the UN	15





AGENDA 2030 AND THE ROLE OF BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets out an ambitious plan for transforming our world over the next fifteen years: ending poverty and hunger, protecting the planet from degradation, ensuring that people can live prosperous and fulfilling lives through economic and technological growth, and eliminating fear and violence in favour of peaceful, just, and inclusive societies.

The United Nations has risen to these challenges by developing a number of programmes targeted at achieving better social, economic, and environmental outcomes. For example, in an effort to combat environmental degradation and protect life on land, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its partners in China have built a mobile application that enables Chinese households to have their electronic waste — old

refrigerators, computers, and other devices — picked up at their doorsteps and safely recycled, instead of dangerously discarded into landfills.

In order for programmes like this one to have maximum impact, they must be designed using the latest research on what drives people to meaningfully engage with programmes. For the China recycling app to be effective, people need to be aware of the app, motivated to download it, and reminded to use it when the time comes to discard a household item.

Agenda 2030 can only be achieved if we critically examine the behavioural factors that lead people to utilize programs effectively and efficiently. Research in behavioural science — regarding how people make decisions and act on them, how they

think about, influence, and relate to one another, and how they develop beliefs and attitudes — can inform optimal programme design. Behavioural science research reveals that even small, subtle, and sometimes counter-intuitive changes to the way a message or choice is framed, or how a process is structured, can have an outsized impact on the decisions we make and the actions we take¹ (see Feature A).

A behavioural pilot programme administered by Innovations for Poverty Action in Kenya strived to reduce the over 2 million childhood deaths due to diarrheal disease each year.² These numbers could be greatly reduced simply through water chlorination, but data from the community revealed that people were not chlorinating their water at ideal rates. So researchers asked: What barriers are preventing people from chlorinating their water, and how can we restructure the process to help motivate this behaviour?

A behavioural analysis revealed that making chlorine available for purchase only at stores was a “behavioural barrier” to chlorinating water: the system required that families proactively find the time to go to the store and remember to purchase

chlorine while there. To remove the behavioural barrier, researchers streamlined the process of obtaining chlorine by setting up chlorine dispensers at the same location where people were already picking up their water. This small, low-cost change increased the presence of chlorine in people’s water by 53 percent and is now being scaled up in Kenya and Malawi to help save the lives of up to 250,000 children each year.³

In another example, researchers in the United Kingdom ran a project aimed at motivating people to use less energy in their homes. Simply making a social comparison on people’s energy bills — specifically, by telling consumers how their energy use compared to that of their neighbours — led to a significant reduction in energy consumption.⁴ Along similar lines, a study from the White House Social and Behavioral Sciences Team (SBST) showed that indicating to American veterans that they had earned an employment benefit through their years of military service — as compared to simply telling them they were eligible for the benefit — led to a 9 percent increase in access to applications for the benefit.⁵

As these examples illustrate, public policy and programme officials around the world can achieve better outcomes — often at low or no cost — simply by leveraging our current understanding of human psychology and behaviour. Indeed, countries and organizations worldwide have taken note of the power of behavioural insights over the past decade. The World Bank, as well as governments in Australia, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States have all launched dedicated initiatives to leverage behavioural insights when addressing policy challenges.

For example, the World Bank’s shift toward more “people-centred” policies is seen in the launch of its Global Insights Initiative, which has established a team charged with incorporating behavioural insights into World Bank programming. Moreover, its annual World Development Report from 2015 — entitled “Mind, Society, and Behavior” — was dedicated to a discussion of compelling examples of behavioural science at work, reinforcing how the field can successfully address development challenges, such as breaking the cycle of poverty, boosting employment, and increasing immunization rates among children.⁶

engaged the first-ever Behavioural Science Advisor to the United Nations, as a way of bringing cutting-edge behavioural science insights to the forefront of policy and programming discussions across the UN. Over the past six months, the UN Secretariat and the UNDP Innovation Facility have launched a small team of behavioural science experts — the UN Behavioural Initiative (UNBI) — charged with translating behavioural science insights into more effective and efficient UN programming and operations.

The following report highlights a series of case studies from this initiative, in which the UN is applying and testing the impact of behavioural science insights in five broad areas under Agenda 2030:



Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment



People: Leaving No One Behind



Protecting the Planet



Managing Risk and Building Resilience



Preventing Violent Conflict and Building Peaceful Societies

FEATURE A:
BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS 101

While the behavioural science literature is vast, common principles underlie and unify many key features of human behaviour. Here is a quick guide -- “SIMPLER” -- that articulates a set of common “nudges” you can use to improve programme outcomes and efficiency.

Adapted from The Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency Project, sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For example:		
S	OCIAL INFLUENCE	Persuade by referencing peers
I	MPLEMENTATION PROMPTS	Establish steps to desired action
M	ANDATED DEADLINES	Make deadlines prominent
P	ERSONALIZATION	Use name, not generic greeting
L	OSS AVERSION	Emphasize losses, not just gains
E	ASE	Reduce steps in a process
R	EMINDERS	Use phone calls, texts, postcards

Building on the success of these global efforts, in January 2016, Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon



Behavioural Science Advisors to the United Nations, Dr. Maya Shankar and Dr. Lori Foster, briefing Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon on the United Nations Behavioural Initiative (UNBI).

Working together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNBI received over 30 proposals from country offices and global teams before selecting a final set of 10 proposals that touch 14 countries.

This report also describes two pilots that UNBI is developing to internally strengthen the UN, a key focus area articulated in Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon’s five-year action agenda. Accordingly, UNBI has begun to apply behavioural insights to

improve the organization’s health and well-being, beginning initially with leadership development and improving performance management.

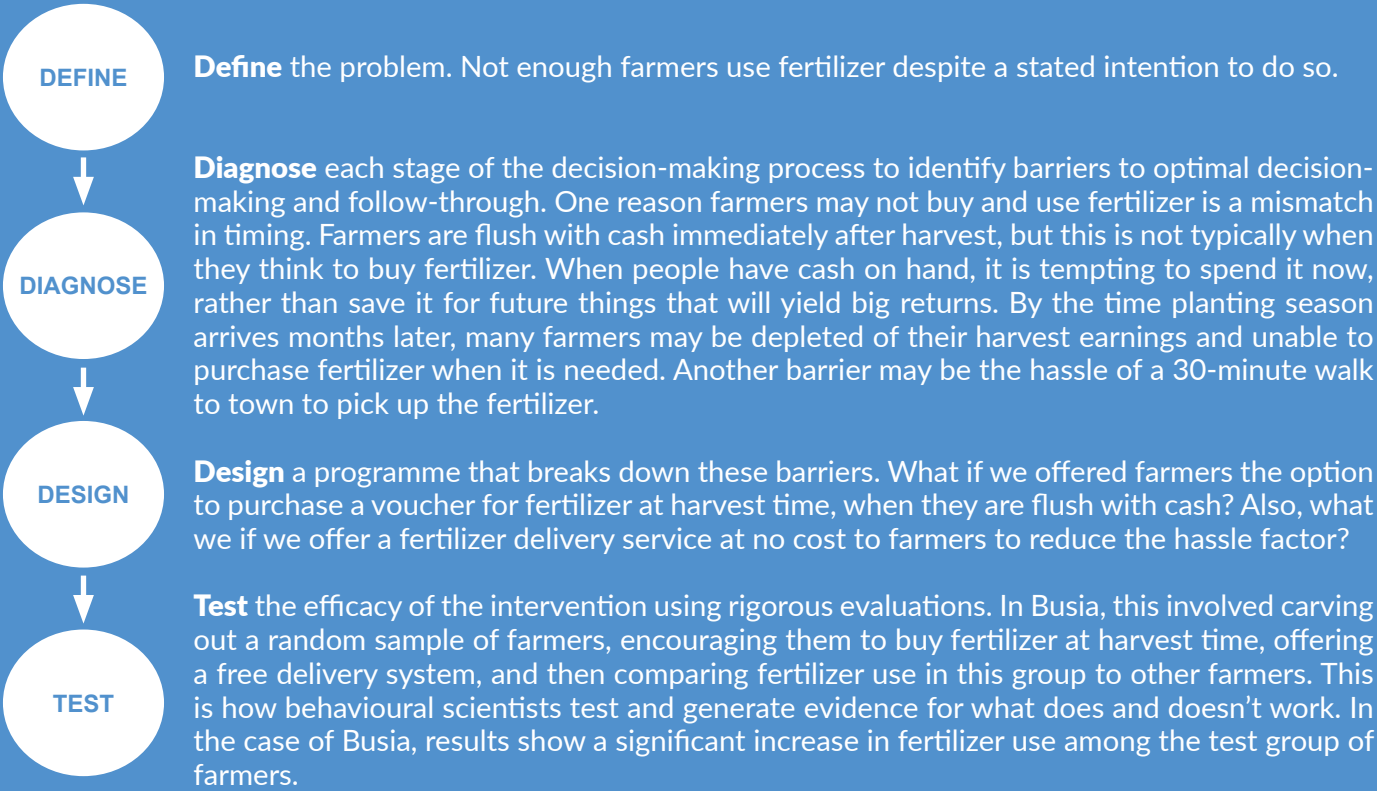
It should be noted that where possible, UNBI has embedded rigorous, randomized evaluations into these pilots to test the impact of using behavioural insights on programme outcomes (see Feature B). These research methods are important as they help to determine which behavioural interventions are effective at improving programme outcomes in specific contexts — and should therefore be brought to scale — as well as those that are not.

FEATURE B: DESIGNING A BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS PROJECT

In Busia, Western Kenya, independent researchers are interested in increasing farmers’ use of modern fertilizers to boost agricultural productivity. The challenge is that farmers underutilize these fertilizers even though, when asked, nearly 98% say they want and plan to use them.

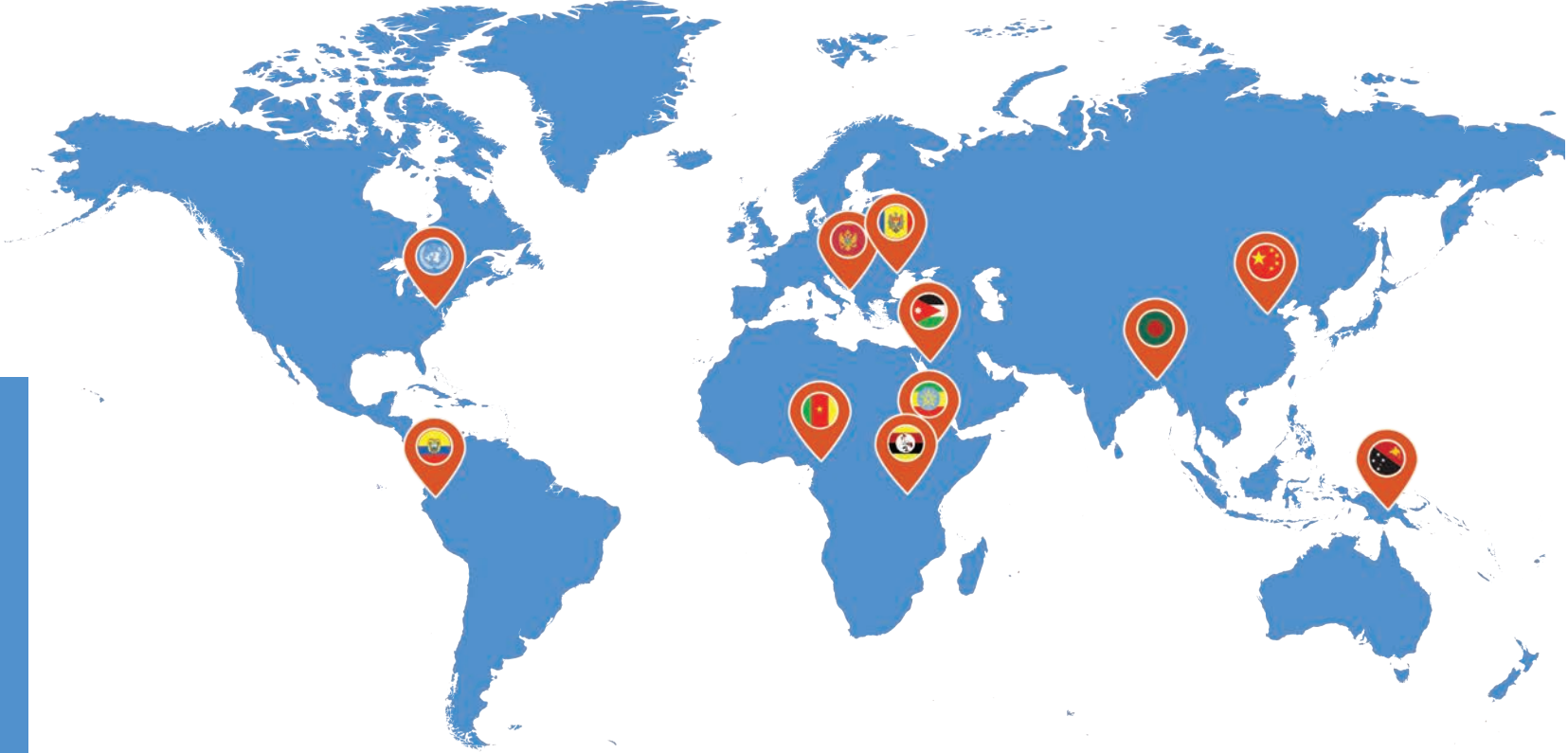
What is responsible for this mismatch between farmers’ intentions and their actions? Behavioural scientists use a systematic, four-part process to help answer these types of questions:

In the case of farmers in Busia, here’s what this process looks like:



Process graphic adapted from ideas42. Example adapted from Duflo, E., Kremer, M., & Robinson, J. (2011). Nudging farmers to use fertilizer: Theory and experimental evidence from Kenya. American Economic Review, 101(6), 2350-2390.

IMPROVING UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMMES WITH BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS: 10 CASE STUDIES



ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT



South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East
Combating child marriage by challenging social norms

UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have partnered to implement a \$246 million program called the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, with an initial focus on 12 high burden countries in South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Child marriage is both a cause and a consequence of girls dropping out of school, especially when transitioning from primary to secondary school. The Global Programme focuses on enabling girls at risk of child marriage to choose and direct their own futures. It supports households in demonstrating positive attitudes towards adolescent girls and strengthening the systems that deliver services to adolescent girls. It also seeks to ensure laws and policies protect and

promote adolescent girls’ rights, highlighting the importance of using robust data to inform those policies relating to adolescent girls. The Global Programme has the potential to directly reach 2.5 million girls, in the 12 target countries, who are at risk of child marriage or are already in union by the end of 2019. Its aim is to keep an additional 179,000 girls of lower secondary school age in school by 2019.

► **UNBI pilot:** UNBI has engaged with UNICEF and UNFPA to identify strategic entry points for engaging and changing parents’ and community members’ beliefs and attitudes about child marriage through wide-scale behavioural interventions at the country level. Research in behavioural science shows that in the same way the framing of a message can significantly influence people’s attitudes and beliefs, so too can the characteristics



of the person delivering that message.⁷ In the case of challenging norms around child marriage, the messenger should be someone with social credibility and moral influence. Given the strong historical role of religion in driving cultural norms and providing moral guidance, engaging religious leaders can be a powerful approach to promote changes in people’s attitudes and actions, alongside policies and legislation against child marriage.

As such, UNBI, UNICEF and UNFPA are collaborating to empower religious leaders who are already against child marriage — “positive

deviants”⁸ — to influence other religious leaders and their associated communities. Social network theories shed light on the most effective ways of identifying who these influential nodes within a social network might be. These theories can help identify the most influential religious leaders to bring about change.⁹ Along similar lines, this effort can leverage research showing that a sufficient number of individual connections must hold a certain opinion before any given person can be convinced of a new view by targeting religious leaders in waves.¹⁰

ing a “Skills Exchange” pilot, which begins with an analysis of the unique and marketable job skills that Syrian refugees bring into Jordan. Syrian refugees will then be trained as mentors and given platforms to teach their skills to Jordanians who are enrolled in a skills development programme.¹¹ This pilot is designed to economically support Syrians and to boost their economic stability, while also helping Jordanians develop sustainable livelihoods with their newly developed skills. It will also help Jordanians see firsthand how Syrian refugees contribute to their community. UNDP and UNBI are leveraging research in behavioural science showing that opportunities for these kinds of informal exchanges and interdependent work towards a common goal can help break down prejudice and stereotypes, thus promoting regional peace and stability in Jordan.¹²

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND



Jordan Stabilizing livelihoods of Syrian refugees in host communities and vulnerable Jordanians through skills exchanges and employment opportunities

Forced displacement and migration continue to pose major challenges on a global scale. Some of these challenges stem from barriers that prevent refugees from using and sharing their unique skills in a meaningful and productive way in their new home. One such barrier is the discrimination and unrest that can result when people in a host community perceive that refugees are taking jobs away from those native to the region.

► **UNBI pilot:** Behavioural insights can be applied to help turn this perception problem around. UNDP Jordan, together with its partners, are build-

Global Empowering the migrant workforce through skills-based qualifications

Migrants are at risk for both unemployment and underemployment, such that their work skills are underutilized in their new homeland. This can lead to skills atrophy, with implications for economic and psycho-social well-being and stability at individual, community, and country levels.¹³ Migrants’ underemployment has a variety of causes and is not due solely to biases on the part of community members and hiring employers. Part of the problem is technical in nature. At present, it is difficult for employers to understand the expertise level of a migrant worker whose skills were tested and verified in a different country.

► **UNBI pilot:** In collaboration with UNESCO, UNBI is addressing problems faced by migrants whose skills are not recognized in the country to which they have moved. This problem arises from challenges mapping qualifications from one country’s framework to another’s. For example, it is difficult for a receiving country to know the skills of an electrician who qualifies as a “Level 3” in his or her home country, if the two countries have different ranking or evaluation systems. UNBI is serving on a multi-year, multi-country UNESCO-led expert group that is developing and examining solutions to this problem through research into how job requirements vary across countries. Job analysis techniques from the social and behavioural sciences play a central role in this initiative¹⁴: Using

scientific methods to quantify cross-country similarities and differences in a job’s tasks and skill requirements can inform the development of a more universal framework for translating qualifications from one country setting to another.

Moldova Increasing accurate wage reporting and public investment through targeted communications

Informal employment poses a challenge in many parts of the world. In Moldova, it often takes the form of hidden wages: nearly 57% of employees are paid only a part of their wages formally and the remaining wages are given “in an envelope” to help firms avoid taxes.¹⁵ This means there is less available money for public investments. As a result, the government of Moldova struggles to fund essential social services, putting a significant percentage of the employed population at risk of inadequate health care and social insurance.

► **UNBI pilot:** UNDP, Moldova’s National Tax Office, and UNBI are sending timely letters to firms reminding them to report wages and pay their taxes in full. Leveraging research showing that people are motivated by social norms, firms that underpay will be compared to the best firm performers to improve overall tax payments.¹⁶ Letters will also announce that a “recognition certificate” will be given to firms if they increase tax payments by a certain percent, based on research showing that people are motivated by social recognition.¹⁷





China

Protecting the environment by promoting uptake of an e-waste recycling programme

In 2014, China produced 6,032 kilotonnes of discarded electrical goods (“e-waste”), including TVs, refrigerators, and computers.¹⁸ To promote safe e-waste recycling, UNDP and its partners launched ‘Baidu Recycle’, a mobile app that allows Chinese households to have e-waste items picked up with a click of a button at their doorsteps and safely recycled by “e-waste recyclers”. Within a year, the app arranged for the safe recycling of over 11,429 items. The service has since been scaled up beyond the original pilot cities of Beijing and Tianjin to 22 cities as of 2016.¹⁹

► **UNBI pilot:** UNDP and UNBI are developing effective messaging and strategies to promote

greater country awareness of Baidu Recycle and to increase usage in ten cities in China. For example, UNBI is leveraging research that shows people are highly motivated to take an action if their peers also take that action with the following outreach message: “Join the 250,000 people who are already helping to preserve our planet by e-recycling.”²⁰ UNDP and UNBI are also working to reduce barriers to app access by creating a feature that will enable current users to easily invite friends in their social networks to download the app through a simple SMS message. Finally, as research shows that asking people at a timely moment to commit to a future action increases the likelihood that they will follow-through on that action, UNBI is recommending that retailers ask individuals when they are first purchasing a new electronic device to commit to recycling it down the line and to download the app right there and then, at the point of purchase.²¹

Bangladesh

Alleviating traffic congestion and the resultant pollution by increasing usage of a mobile phone app

In Bangladesh, home to the fourth-most polluted city in the world, people spend an average of 2.5 hours in traffic every day.²² Increased use of public bus transportation would help to reduce both pollution and traffic congestion, but an analysis from 2014 indicates that people are deterred from taking the bus due to unreliable bus schedule information and long wait times.²³ To increase public bus transportation, UNDP and its partners developed a smartphone app called “goBD” that shows people the real-time location of buses using GPS technology, the expected time of bus arrival at their location, and an estimate of how long their journey will take.

► **UNBI pilot:** Behavioural research demonstrates that one way to increase engagement with a programme is to send low-cost, timely messages to individuals alerting them of the value of using a product and motivating them to act.²⁴ As such, UNBI is currently designing “push notification” text messages that will be delivered to users just in



advance of their expected morning and evening commutes. These messages will alert them of the ease of using the app, as well as the fact that their usage will reap significant benefits to the environment down the line. UNDP Bangladesh will measure the increase in users of the service accordingly.

Montenegro

Reducing carbon footprints by tourists through increased donations

“Friends of Low Carbon Montenegro” and UNDP are partnering to solicit donations from tourists to help fund one of three projects that will reduce carbon emissions: solar-powered boats, solar-powered phone charging stations in city centres, and recreational trails for hiking and biking.

► **UNBI pilot:** UNDP and UNBI are partnering to promote donations using a range of behavioural tools. Research shows that giving people agency over how their tax dollars are invested increases tax compliance. As such, tourists are being offered a choice of how they would like to see their donations invested — i.e., a choice between solar-powered boats, solar-powered phone charging stations, and recreational trails.²⁵ Moreover, based on research showing that removing small barriers to taking an action can significantly increase that action²⁶, UNBI is streamlining the process of donating by allowing people to make cash donations at the same time they are anyway paying for their hotel stay.²⁷ And finally, UNDP and UNBI are designing an online calculator that allows visitors to calculate their expected carbon footprint and to donate according to the amount of carbon they expect to produce during their trip.²⁸



Ecuador
Protecting the environment, improving livelihoods, and strengthening local cultural identities through crowdfunding

GreenCrowds, Ecuador’s first social crowdfunding platform, aims to harness the power of crowds to support innovative, rural grassroots projects that protect the environment and strengthen local cultural identities. It is supported by the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme, and implemented by UNDP. Through this platform, environmentally-minded entrepreneurs in Ecuador are given the opportunity to post projects in need of funding to the GreenCrowds website. This

includes projects designed to address the damage caused by the April 2016 earthquakes in Ecuador, which killed 668 people and destroyed 13,962 homes.²⁹

► **UNBI pilot:** During its first campaign, GreenCrowds did not generate sufficient funding for community projects to succeed. UNBI has therefore designed communications to prospective donors to increase their motivation to contribute, while reducing perceived barriers, such as the time and effort required to donate. E-mail messages convey that donating is a socially normative action and can be accomplished through a simple, immediate, and one-time action. In addition,

e-mails connect prospective donors with vivid, detailed stories of the people and projects in need of funding, which research shows is an effective way of humanizing the issues and mobilizing charitable donations.³¹

In parallel, UNBI, UNDP, and the United Nations Academic Impact initiative (UNAI), are partnering to establish and disseminate a toolkit that encourages university instructors to develop class projects that help raise funds through the GreenCrowds

platform. For example, university courses teaching the psychology of persuasion, behavioural economics, or fundraising for non-profits will be given an opportunity to contribute ideas to UNDP for how to persuasively solicit donations on the web site. University courses teaching behavioural research methods can complete projects that test the effects of different messaging on donation rates. The toolkit provides examples and materials that make it easy for course instructors to integrate this into their curriculum.

FEATURE C: GENERATING EVIDENCE THROUGH RIGOROUS EVALUATIONS
AN EXAMPLE FROM ECUADOR

UNBI uses rigorous research methodologies like randomized-control trials (RCTs) to directly test the impact of applying behavioural insights to UN programs. Ecuador’s “GreenCrowds” project, which sent outreach e-mail messages to individuals prompting them to donate to environmentally-friendly projects, helps illustrate the process behind designing and implementing an RCT.



STEP 1
Identify original version

GreenCrowds provided its “business as usual” outreach e-mail message to UNBI: Message A.



STEP 2
Apply behavioural insights

UNBI redesigns the e-mail message using behavioural insights that have been shown in other contexts to motivate charitable donations: this is Message B.



STEP 3
Create test groups

Each person in the population of prospective donors is randomly assigned to one of two groups: Group A will receive Message A and Group B will receive Message B. By using random assignment, each group is expected to share similar characteristics on average – such as donation history and disposable income. Thus, any difference in donation rates between the two groups following the e-mails can be solely attributed to the behavioural insights UNBI inserted into Message B.



STEP 4
Conduct test

Group A (the “control group”) is sent Message A and Group B (the “treatment group”) is sent the behaviourally-informed Message B. The presence of a control group allows UNBI to observe how much people would have donated if there had been no behavioural intervention at all.



STEP 5
Measure results and compare the two groups

Who is more likely to make donations: those who received Message A or those who received Message B? UNBI conducts statistical analyses to determine whether any differences in donation rates between the two groups are “statistically significant” – that is, reliable rather than due to chance.



STEP 6
Scale up

Based on the results of the trial, GreenCrowds can scale up the more effective messaging to the entire population in future outreach so that everyone can benefit from the intervention.



Papua New Guinea
Reducing government corruption by encouraging
public reporting

In Papua New Guinea, mismanagement and corrupt practices involving the use of public funds remain a challenge. Based on various state inquiries into the use of public funds, public servants and politicians have been implicated in many cases of abuse. Exposing instances of corruption can help bring them to an end. To meet this need, the Ministry of Finance and UNDP launched the “Phones against Corruption” platform — a simple SMS-based system that allows for anonymous reporting of corruption in public institutions.

► **UNBI pilot:** To improve the quality and quantity of corruption reports, UNBI and UNDP are developing communications and tools to increase citizens’ and workers’ willingness to report corruption.³² Behavioural research sheds light on

several barriers that prevent people from reporting corruption when they see it. First, people may fear retribution, which UNBI is helping to mitigate by indicating to people that they will be able to retain their anonymity in the process. Second, people may be deterred by the hassle of reporting due to the “transaction costs” associated with the effort.³³ As such, UNBI is designing messages that articulate a clear and easy set of steps people can take to report a case of corruption and is exploring opening up additional channels for reporting corruption, such as through e-mail or web-based forms.

Cameroon
Increasing public service responsiveness through
better job performance measures

In Cameroon, public servants perform a wide range of important functions, from processing passport applications to admitting patients into the hospital. Unfortunately, workers in such jobs

do not always provide high-quality customer service. Poor performance in public service jobs negatively affects both workers and customers. For customers seeking public services, it leads to long wait times, which can be frustrating at best and dangerous at worst. Consider, for example, the reception staff responsible for checking people into a hospital. Poor performance in such a role can prevent patients from getting timely access to needed healthcare services, and can cause anxiety on the part of family members accompanying them. Substandard performance in public service roles also affects public servants’ coworkers — especially in team settings where one person’s ability to do his or her job effectively depends on the timely and accurate completion of a coworker’s tasks. Finally, job incumbents themselves suffer from the consequences of poor performance, which include the stress of dealing with disgruntled customers and coworkers.

► **UNBI pilot:** The behavioural sciences offer insights into what motivates people to work hard and engage in “organizational citizenship behaviours,” i.e., behaviours that reflect civic participation, accountability, and concern for others within an organization.³⁴ However, without a tool to define and measure job performance, it is difficult to evaluate interventions aimed at improving performance quality. Utilizing research insights from industrial-organizational psychology, UNBI and UNDP are developing a measurement tool to assess the performance of workers in one public service job at the Emergency Center of Yaounde Central Hospital. “Critical incidents” — behavioural examples of poor and excellent performance in the job — will be collected to inform the creation of this tool.³⁵



STRENGTHENING THE UN’S ORGANIZATIONAL POTENTIAL WITH BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS

UN Headquarters Helping UN employees articulate and reach their performance goals through supervisor-employee engagement

One pervasive problem at the UN is compliance and engagement with the e-Performance Management System (e-PM). Under e-PM, supervisors and employees are expected to articulate employee performance goals and discuss progress at three distinct points over the course of one year. Unfortunately, both supervisors and employees show low engagement and compliance with this process. UNBI will be testing the impact of small ‘nudges’ – targeted and timely e-mails that use action-oriented and motivational language – to encourage supervisors and employees to complete e-PM requirements more thoroughly and on time.³⁶ UNBI will determine if these prompts increase e-PM engagement by measuring compliance rates before and after the pilot.

UN Headquarters Empowering leaders to motivate performance management

On 15 June 2016, UNBI led a two-hour training session for approximately 70 UN Chiefs of Human Resources (HR) from around the world. The session was designed to help shift HR Chiefs’ mindset from the old identity of a “Personnel Officer” who is focused on enforcing rules, to a new identity as

a “Human Resources Partner” who works with UN clients to find solutions to their HR challenges. UN HR Chiefs were taught how behavioural science can help them to tailor their communications with clients to be more effective. This exercise was strategically cast in the context of performance management.

UN Chiefs were encouraged to think beyond mere compliance with the e-PM system’s deadlines. They were taught the elements of communication that inspire and motivate people to set and strive toward goals. They then drafted communications for future use, which expressed to staff the importance of performance management. Afterwards, HR Chiefs received peer feedback on their drafts.

Research suggests that simply telling leaders that engagement with performance management is important is unlikely to prompt attitudinal and behavioural change. Alternatively, asking them to (a) independently formulate a rationale for performance management’s importance³⁷ and (b) express their rationale publically strengthens the attitudes expressed³⁸ can inspire a greater commitment to performance management by UN HR Chiefs.³⁹ Leveraging behavioural insights about the power of a “commitment device”, the session concluded by asking HR Chiefs to indicate the date by which they would send e-mail messages to UN staff members articulating their views about the importance of performance management (see image below).

Commitment to enriching performance management at the UN

I commit to sending an engagement email message about performance management UN staff members by:

Date:

/

/

Signed

You will receive a reminder about your commitment

Remember the five communication devices to use in your emails:

Imagery | Changes to the status quo | Values linked to followers | Roadmap | Challenges to followers

Behavioural Insights at the United Nations | Page 14

FEATURE D: BUILDING CAPACITY FOR BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

In 2016, UNBI participated in a number of meetings and forums in New York, Paris, Geneva, Cape Town, and beyond, engaging in capacity building exercises, contributing to research committees, and serving in a behavioural science advisory role during high-level discussions.

- Universality is one of the hallmarks of Agenda 2030. In order to be truly universal, people and communities worldwide need to understand and engage with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This requires community outreach. On 14 January 2016, UNBI presented at and participated in a Town Hall meeting hosted by the Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh, North Carolina, United States of America, with participation from the museum’s director, the United Nations Academic Impact initiative and the media. The Town Hall, entitled “Forging a Sustainable Future,” was focused exclusively on the SDGs. One theme emphasized during this meeting was the importance of leveraging the social and behavioural sciences to achieve the SDGs.
- On 7 April 2016, UNBI presented at and participated in the launch of a Behavioural Insights Research Committee in Geneva for the Green Growth Knowledge Platform comprised of inputs from UNEP, the World Bank, the Global Green Growth Institute, and others. This research committee is working to establish key behavioural insights for green growth policies.
- A 21 April 2016 high-level policy event titled “Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) for the SDGs,” co-convened by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Economic Forum (WEF) with strong representation from the private sector provides another example of the demand for behavioural insights seen at the UN. Discussions during this event organically gravitated toward the need to understand the drivers of behavioural change to move toward more sustainable patterns of consumption and production. “Behavioural change is a big challenge to achieving SCP” was one of the ten key themes pointed out in the post-meeting report. UNBI provided behavioural insights representation at this meeting.
- In the spirit of capacity building, UNBI has also agreed to develop and deliver a training programme for the General Assembly’s Economic and Financial Committee (i.e. “Second Committee”). This training will focus on behavioural insights for sustainable consumption, providing foundational knowledge on psychological processes and heuristics that should be taken into account when developing and implementing policies and programmes aimed at encouraging sustainable tourism and other topics pertaining to the environment.
- UNBI has also contributed to an on-going series of UNDP capacity building events through “Innovation Conversations” and webinars.

Behavioural Insights at the United Nations | Page 15

Endnotes

1 Thaler, R., & Sunstein, C. (2008). *Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Madrian, B. (2014). Applying insights from behavioral economics to policy design. *Annual Review of Economics*, 6, 663-688.

2 Kremer, M., Leino, J., Miguel, E., & Zwane, A. (2011). Spring cleaning: Rural water impacts, valuation, and institutions. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 126(1), 145–205.

3 Ibid.

4 Dolan, P., & Metcalfe, R. (2013). Neighbors, knowledge, and nuggets: Two natural field experiments on the role of incentives on energy conservation. London: Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics and Political Science; Allcott, H. (2011). Social norms and energy conservation. *Journal of Public Economics*, 95(9), 1082-1095.

5 Social and Behavioral Sciences Team (2015). *Annual Report*. Washington, DC: Executive Office of the President; National Science and Technology Council.

6 World Bank. (2015). *World Development Report 2015 Mind, Society, and Behavior* (World Development Report). Washington, D.C: The World Bank.

7 Cialdini, R., Martin, S., & Goldstein, N. (2015). Small behavioral science-informed changes can produce large policy-relevant effects. *Behavioral Science & Policy*, 1(1), 21-27.

8 Spreitzer, G., & Sonenshein, S. (2004). Towards a construct definition of positive deviance. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47, 828-847.

9 Aral, S., & Walker, D. (2011). Identifying social influence in networks using randomized experiments. *Intelligent Systems, IEEE*, 26(5), 91-96.

10 Easley, D., & Kleinberg, J. (2010). *Networks, crowds, and markets: Reasoning about a highly connected world*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

11 Venkitachalam, K., & Bosua, R. (2014). Roles enabling the mobilization of organizational knowledge. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 18(2), 396-410. For a general overview: Meier, M. (2011). Knowledge management in strategic alliances: A review of empirical evidence. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 13(1), 1-23.

12 Steele, C., Spencer, S., & Aronson, J. (2002) Contending with group image: The psychology of stereotype threat and social identity threat. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 34, 379-440.

13 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2016). *OECD Employment Outlook 2016*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

14 Morgeson, F., & Dierdorff, E. (2011). Work analysis: From technique to theory. In S. Zedeck (Ed.), *APA Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 3-41). Washington, DC: APA.

15 Popa, A., Lupusor, A., Rosca, I., Hirose, K., Hetteš, M. (2016). *The informal economy in the republic of Moldova: A comprehensive review*. Budapest: International Labour Organization Publications.

16 Hallsworth, M., List, J., Metcalfe, R., & Vlaev, I. (2014). The behavioralist as tax collector: Using natural field experiments to enhance tax compliance. (Working Paper No. 20007). Retrieved from the National Bureau of Economic Research: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w20007>

17 Li, N., Zheng, X., Harris, T., Liu, X., & Kirkman, B. (2016). Recognizing “me” benefits “we”: Investigating the positive spill-over effects of formal individual recognition in teams. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 101(7), 925-939.

18 STEP Initiative. (2016). China: Overview of e-waste related information. Retrieved from http://www.step-initiative.org/Overview_China.html

19 United Nations Development Programme. (2016, May 15). China: Turning e-trash into cash. Retrieved from <http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/ourwork/development-impact/innovation/projects/china-ewaste/>

20 Ferraro, P., & Price, M. (2013). Using nonpecuniary strategies to influence behavior: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 95(1), 64-73; Muchnik, L., Aral, S., & Taylor, S. (2013). Social influence bias: A randomized experiment. *Science*, 341(6146), 647-651.

21 Ariely, D., & Wertenbroch, K. (2002). Procrastination, deadlines, and performance: Self-control by precommitment. *Psychological Science*, 13(3), 219-224.

22 Khan, T., & Islam, R. (2013). Estimating costs of traffic congestion in Dhaka City. *International Journal of Engineering Science and Innovative Technology*, 2(3), 281-289.

23 United Nations Development Programme. (2016, March 1). Bangladesh: Bus data for Dhaka. Retrieved from <http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/ourwork/development-impact/innovation/projects/bangladesh-traffic/>

24 Karlan, D., McConnell, M., Mullainathan, S., & Zinman, J. (2016). Getting to the top of mind: How reminders increase saving. *Management Science*.

25 Lambertson, C., De Neve, J., & Norton, M. (2014). Eliciting taxpayer preferences increases tax compliance. (Working Paper No. 14-106). Boston: Harvard Business School.

26 Madrian, B., & Shea, D. (2001). The power of suggestion: Inertia in 401(k) participation and savings behavior. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 116(4), 1149-1187.

27 Thaler, R. (1999). Mental accounting matters. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 12(3), 183.

28 Brock, J., Lange, A., & Leonard, K. (2014). Giving and promising gifts: Experimental evidence on reciprocity from the field. (Working paper No. 165). London: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

29 Ecuadorian Secretariat for Risk Management. 11 July 2016. Retrieved from: <http://www.gestionderiesgos.gob.ec/>

30 List, J., & Price, M. (2012). Charitable giving around the world: Thoughts on how to expand the pie. *CESifo Economic Studies*, 58(1), 1-30.

31 For a classic introduction, see: Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1973). Availability: A heuristic for judging frequency and probability. *Cognitive Psychology*, 5(2), 207-232.

32 Gino, F., Gu, J., & Zhong, C. (2009). Contagion or restitution? When bad apples can motivate ethical behavior. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 45, 1299-1302.

33 Bhargava, S., & Manoli, D. (2015). Psychological frictions and the incomplete take-up of social benefits: evidence from an IRS field experiment. *The American Economic Review*, 105(11), 3489-3529.

34 Organ, D., Podsakoff, P., & MacKenzie, S. (2006). *Organizational citizenship behavior: Its nature, antecedents, and consequences*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

35 Baker, N. (2010). Employee feedback technologies in the human performance system. *Human Resource Development International*, 13(4), 477-485.

36 Sunstein, C. (2014). Nudging: A very short guide. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 37(4), 583-588.

37 Levav, J., & Fitzsimons, G. (2006). When questions change behavior: The role of ease of representation. *Psychological Science*, 17(3), 207-213.

38 Yeager, D., & Walton, G. (2011). Social-psychological interventions in education: They’re not magic. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 267-301.

39 Merrill, M., Kelety, J., & Wilson, B. (1981). Elaboration theory and cognitive psychology. *Instructional Science*, 10(3), 217-235.

Acknowledgements

The report is written by Behavioural Science Advisors to the United Nations, Dr. Maya Shankar and Dr. Lori Foster. The report and the associated initiatives would not have been possible without a large community of experts and supporters across and outside the UN. As such, the authors would like to extend the following thanks:

We would like to thank our incredible focal points in the field and in global teams who have integrated behavioural science into their projects: UNDP Bangladesh - Nick Beresford and Cameron Mitchell; UNDP Cameroon - Zephirin Emini and Jean Paul Nlend Nkott; UNDP China - Patrick Haverman and Louise Xi Li; UNDP Ecuador - María Alicia Eguiguren, Juliana Gaetner, and Sol Moure; UNDP Jordan - Minako Manome; UNDP Moldova - Alexandru Oprunenco and Dmitri Belan; UNDP Montenegro - Aleksandra Kikovic; and UNDP Papua New Guinea - Julie Bukikun and Tito Balboa Zegarra. We would also like to thank Borhene Chakroun (UNESCO), Charles Arden-Clarke (UNEP), Marco Suazo (UNITAR), Ramu Damodaran (UNAI), Jo Scheuer, Marina Olshanskaya and Mohamed Fouad Bergigui (UNDP), and UNDP Regional Innovation Leads Milica Begovic, Jennifer Colville, Ramya Gopalan, Paula Isturiz, and Marc Lepage.

Thanks also to the unwavering support and guidance of UNDP and UNICEF colleagues Malika Bhandarkar, Benjamin Kumpf, Rafael Obregon, and Kerida McDonald for championing the exploration of Behavioural Insights across UN entities.

We would also like to thank the following academic researchers for their technical support of projects: Hyunsoo Chang, Dr. Lauren Eskreis-Winkler, Dr. William Gentry, Ashley Hoffman, Hyunjin Kim, Nathan Maddix, Vera Miranova, María José Vargas, Minita Varghese, and Dr. Elke Weber. Special thanks to Nathan Maddix for his additional help providing edits and research on citations. A special note of appreciation for Ruirui Kuang for designing the report.

With our greatest thanks to UN Office of Human Resources and Management for their support of Maya Shankar and Lori Foster, with recognition in particular of Victor Kisob and Carole Wainaina. Thanks as well for the critical support provided by Daniel Goroff at the Sloan Foundation, Edward Derrick at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Sarah Brookhart and Aime Ballard-Wood at the Association for Psychological Science, and Douglas Gillan and Jeffery Braden at North Carolina State University.

PHOTO CREDITS:

Cover photo: UNICEF/BANA2013-01238/Kiron; Contents page: UN Photo/Cia Pak; Page 1: UNDP/Partha Pratim Saha, India; Page 3: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe; Page 5: Map created by Ruirui Kuang; Page 6: UNICEF/BANA2013-01239/Kiron; Page 7: UNDP Jordan; Page 8: UNDP China with Baidu; Page 9: UNDP Montenegro; Page 10: GreenCrowds Ecuador; Page 11: Icons by The Noun Project from Elliot Midson, Sharon Showalter, Nicole MacDonald, and UNDP Egypt/Abdelhamid Ezza; Page 12: UNDP Papua New Guinea; Page 13: Sanofi Pasteur/Jean Fotso; and Page 14: Hyunsoo Chang.

