ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** Nutrition programs addressing chronic malnutrition require social and behavior change communication (SBCC) that resonates with communities and addresses specific cultural and contextual challenges. The objective was to develop a culturally relevant SBCC strategy for Ntchisi district, Malawi as part of a WFP-supported government stunting prevention program.

**Methods:** We conducted interviews with national and district-level stakeholders and reviewed materials on local nutrition-related SBCC activities. We conducted formative research using participatory community workshops, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic methods to understand infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices and perceptions of a lipid-based nutrition supplement (LNS). We applied these findings along with knowledge from the peer-reviewed scientific literature around effective SBCC to develop an Ntchisi district-specific SBCC strategy.

**Results:** National and district-level stakeholders are united through the SUN movement to reduce stunting. The government of Malawi has a National Education and Communication Strategy (NECS) based on SUN tenants; however, most stakeholders could not articulate how to operationalize NECS. Nonetheless, by aligning with the NECS strategy, stakeholders welcomed the development of an Ntchisi-specific SBCC strategy. Results from the formative research guided the tailoring of NECS messages to generate salient communication targeting unique challenges.
and facilitating factors of the lean, harvest, and post-harvest seasons around IYCF

Conclusions: This work demonstrated how a national-level commitment to the SUN movement can facilitate community-level operations. Supplementing SUN materials with results from formative research is necessary for context-specific and culturally-appropriate approaches to behavior change.

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