



CASE STUDY

Tackling obesity through multi-disciplinary coalitions

COM-B MODEL

BEHAVIOUR

CAPABILITY

MOTIVATION

OPPORTUNITY

Better Health Programme Mexico

In Mexico, nearly 75 percent of people over 20 are overweight or obese, compared to 20 percent just 30 years ago. The country has implemented national policies to combat the problem, like imposing taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages, regulating food in schools, and restricting some package labeling. However, community programmes and public health communication campaigns have not been prioritised. The severity of Mexico's obesity problem is a burden to its health system and the economy, with some estimates suggesting obesity will curb Mexico's GDP by 5.3 percent.

The UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) Better Health Programme Mexico (BHPMx) aimed to tackle some of these issues by introducing projects to curb non-communicable diseases (including obesity and diabetes), boost Mexico's health

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workforce and strengthen partnership between the two countries.

Because obesity is a complex issue, BHPMx drew upon a diverse group of experts to design its interventions. People's attitudes toward diet, food, nutrition, and exercise are based upon many factors, meaning solutions to influence eating habits and food choices must draw on expertise across a variety of disciplines. For example, market research, economics, and advertising, when combined with robust methodological frameworks, can develop effective holistic programs.

To tackle obesity, BHPMx piloted the use of behavioural science to create a public health communication campaign in two municipalities in Jalisco state. The project created a Behaviour Change Working Group bringing together a diverse, multi-disciplinary, international coalition which included academic researchers, Mexican health institutions, local government authorities, and private consumer research and advertising companies.

DAI convened and facilitated the group, developed clear objectives and outcomes, invested time in one-to-one conversations with each party, developed project milestones, and fostered cohesion and trust amongst members. Due to the group's diversity, DAI also introduced a shared theoretical framework on which to base participation and research. The framework, UCL's Behaviour Change Wheel, was based on the COM-B model (see diagram) and helped create a common understanding of the science of behavioural change.

The framework created a common lens to examine specific behaviours and pinpoint a behaviour to modify during the programme. Chloe de Schryver, Associate Director of C2V said: "We had lots of different views and lots of different types of expertise in the room. But because we were working with such a wide range of people, it was also important to have a shared framework, to make sure we were working towards the same goal."

As a result, the group developed a comprehensive, evidence-based, public health communication campaign to reduce sugar consumption in two municipalities. The Behaviour Change Working group demonstrated the importance of multi-disciplinary coalitions to tackle complex problems, and highlighted the importance of strong facilitation and frameworks within those groups to improve cohesion, build common understanding, and develop consensus.

The strength of the group's collaboration led to mutual group learning, relationships that outlasted the life of the programme, and a strong campaign, developed through creative tension. Anabelle Bonvecchio Arenas PhD, Director of Research on Nutrition Policies and Programmes, National Institute of Public Health said: "It has been a very gratifying experience to be part of the [working group]. Having these very different perspectives is not only enriching but also an opportunity to learn and strengthen the field of behavioural science in Mexico."