

Social and Behavior Change: Democracy, Human Rights and Governance

Freedom House | July 2019

Executive Summary

Another Option is providing technical assistance regarding social and behavior change (SBC) theories and applications to assist Freedom House to better understand both the evidence base for its advocacy and civic participation mission and how to implement engagement strategies based on social and behavior change principles.

Freedom House is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) independent watchdog organization dedicated to the expansion of freedom and democracy around the world. Freedom House analyzes the challenges to freedom, advocates for greater political rights and civil liberties, and supports frontline activists to defend human rights and promote democratic change.

Recognizing that as an organization it can better leverage the recent advances in behavioral science, Freedom House seeks to examine both the evidence-base for its work and how to implement approaches based on core social and behavior change principles. It is interested in having a better grasp on the full evidence base that could inform its work and build awareness among its staff regarding the principles of SBC programs.

With this in mind, Another Option conducted a literature review and analysis of more than one hundred peer-reviewed articles, case studies, and scholarly writings of social and behavior change programs and activities implemented over the last five to seven years. The review originates from a wide-variety of development, academic, and professional fields focusing on:

Program evaluations of specific advocacy and public awareness/outreach activities including media campaigns conducted in the democracy, human rights and governance (DRG) sector;

- Specific sectors relevant to Freedom House's focus including: human rights, accountable and transparent governance, voter mobilization, politically active civil society, independent media, anti-corruption, gender equality and women's empowerment, and social inclusion (gender, LGBTQ);
- Theory-focused panel presentations, white papers and reports, and concept papers addressing underlying social and behavior change methodologies;
- Best practices and lessons learned from social and behavior change activities in these sectors.

Based on this review, Another Option developed this short brief introducing the core elements of the social and behavior change process. It then applies the SBC process to two voter mobilization and registration case studies; one from the U.S. midterm elections in 2018 highlighting SBC best practices and another from a 2017 vote registration experimental study in Kenya that captures a number of SBC challenges and provides valuable lessons learned.



Introduction

Social & Behavior Change

Social and behavior change (SBC) is a strategic process to identify and address social and cultural norms and policy regulations that impact individual and community behaviors. In the context of advocacy work, SBC interventions are designed to move past outreach and informing key audiences, and instead relying on evidence-based approaches to changing behaviors whether that is adopting new practices or technologies, participating in civic processes, or other desired outcomes. SBC programs are based on social and behavior theories (see Appendix A) and forty years of best practice literature from global programs across a range of development topics. Effective SBC activities apply a rigorous participatory process that brings together critical actors from all sectors to develop and contribute to workable solutions.

Barriers & Motivators

At the core of social and behavior change is understanding the barriers and motivators that influence behavior change. Often it is a mix of internal and external factors that influence a person, community or society's ability to change. Societal and cultural norms, such as religion, ethnicity, and traditions, and policy and regulations are the primary barriers that prevent change. For example, women in conservative religious communities may feel prohibited by cultural norms from voting. They may be veiled and it is required to show their face (facial recognition) to register and/or to vote. In many developing countries men or husbands control financial resources and women have no resources to pay poll taxes or travel to register/vote. Removing those cultural and policy barriers needs to be done to create an environment that enables women to vote, and those changes are done through a strategic SBC activity.

Similarly, young people may feel disempowered or appear disinterested in the electoral process because candidates and political parties are not utilizing appropriate information platforms or strategies to appeal to their underlying issues, interests and concerns. Choosing appropriate strategic SBC engagements based on identifiable barriers and providing motivators is critical to voting behavior.



Assessment

The first step in designing an SBC activity is to conduct an assessment of secondary research, existing policies and regulations, and cultural and social norms. The assessment will be used to determine what relevant theories, i.e., social ecological behavior, behavioral economics, social network and social support theories, to frame the overall program and specific interventions. This step in the SBC process will culminate in an analysis which describes existing lessons learned, gaps in behavior motivation, social and cultural norms, and services' policies and regulations that support or deter the sought after behavior. It will guide the design of the qualitative research instrument, sample design, and SBC plan.

Research

Applied qualitative research should then be conducted to fill in knowledge gaps, establish profiles of target audience behaviors, and segment audiences. Qualitative research includes key informant interviews (KII), in-depth interviews (IDI), and participatory action research (PAR). The findings determine each target audience's personal motivations and beliefs, aspirations and fears, as well as identifying the cultural, social, and environmental factors (norms) that influence the target audience's behavior.

For example, advocacy and public education strategies are cornerstones for affecting change at the policy and regulatory levels and addressing or removing cultural and social norms. Interpersonal communication, community engagement, and social mobilization (knocking on doors, canvassing, events/public meetings, etc.) are strategies that are effective in generating voter mobilization.

In the case of voter registration and mobilization campaigns, qualitative research is used to design the SBC activity, segment the audience and develop profiles of voting blocs, and to monitor and evaluate campaign activities so they can be continuously updated and tweaked as the voting environment evolves.

Audience Segmentation

Each SBC activity must reach multiple audiences to be successful. And, each primary and secondary audience has a specific behavior(s) that is needed to change. Audience segmentation usually crosses several categories, i.e., demographics, and further segments by willingness to change. These segments often are referred to as "doers" and "non-doers" or "acceptors" and "non-acceptors". When they accept change it is also labled "early adopters" or "early acceptors". These early acceptors become the influencers to assist others to accept or adopt a specific behavior.

Four A's Criteria

Can each of these criteria be met for target audiences in an SBC program?

- Access
- **Availability**
- Affordability
- **Awareness**

Strategy Development

SBC has a broad range of strategies that contribute to creating change [See Table 1]. Relying on one strategy alone, i.e., public awareness such as telling everyone how and where to vote, is not enough to motivate people to register or to vote. In the case of the Civic Nation/MTV voter mobilization case study explored later, strategy selection targeted norms and trends surrounding young people's engagement and preferences and led to notable SBC success. As the Kenyan case study that follows demonstrates, relying on one strategy or message, e.g. voting is your right, and using the same motivation or incentive for all voters, is a receipe for disappointment.

Each voter has a reason why he or she votes. It is not always based on logic; and it is not always based on knowing what to do. Therefore, strategies need to be tailored to influence each segment of voters using information that touches on their aspiration and dreams, as well as their fears. Women do not vote the same as men; urban populations do not vote the same as



Social and Behavior Change Strategies Training and Community Social Community Capacity Building Engagement **Mobilization Dialogues Digital** Interpersonal **Advocacy** Mass Social Communication Media **Marketing** Communication

rural; young people are motivated to vote differently than older votes; and even within those demographics, there are subsets of people that are motivated to vote differently from others who have similar lifestyles and cultural influences. In designing a voter registration or mobilization campaign, each voter segment must have its own strategic evidence-based registration campaign. One size does not fit all.

Each SBC strategy is designed and used to achieve a specific result [Illustration 2]. A specific strategy is chosen because it is most effective with a specific audience, i.e., digital media works better among a younger age segment, while print media works for an older audience segment, and for a specific outcome. Experience from global health proves that a one-strategy campaign is not effective. An effective SBC program is a systems approach, it must: 1) apply a combination of SBC strategies, and 2) select strategies that are most effective in reaching specifc audiences.

Implementation

SBC activities are undertaken based on research findings that inform audience segmentation and strategy selection. A key component of participatory SBC imple-

mentation is to work with all actors to create consensus on the process and understanding from the onset. There are many organizations and agencies involved in strategy and it is important not to disregard their messages and tools but to adapt what has been successful and bring to scale. SBC is not an activity that should be done solely by the Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) actors; it is a multi-sector action drawing from the experience and credibility of the health, education, water and sanitation, agriculture, energy, and economic growth sectors.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Measureable data on attitudes, motivations and behavior change will be gathered via in-depth interviews (IDI) and key informant interviews (KII). Voter participation and satisfaction checklists, provider interpersonal skills, and monitoring tools will also gauge SBC intervention responses. As with all the data findings through actively monitoring processes like voter registration and mobilization, strategies and interventions are adjusted as needed to ensure the most effective SBC outcomes.

Case Study I

The Campaign for Young U.S. Voters that **Encouraged the Highest Turnout in Decades**

Civic Nation (www.civicnation.org), a nonpartisan civic action organization, with support from a coalition of partners - including MTV's +1 the Vote - successfully launched the #VoteTogether advocacy campaign to increase voter turnout for the 2018 midterm elections in the United States. The #VoteTogether objective was to increase young people voting by transforming voting from a "chore" into a celebration of civic engagement. By making election season celebratory, fun, and inclusive using a community-driven experiential approach, #VoteTogether sought to change the cultural norms of voting by overcoming critical barriers to participation. Employing the fundamentals of a five-step SBC approach, Civic Nation and MTV (along with 150 other public and private sector partners), delivered noteworthy voter mobilization results for the U.S. midterm elections among youth.

Assessment

Operating under the principle democracy functions best when diverse perspectives are represented and the maximum number of eligible voters cast their ballots, #VoteTogether and MTV sought to better understand the barriers and motivators to voting, and crafted their engagement strategy accordingly. Voting trends in the U.S., especially among youth, were not positive.

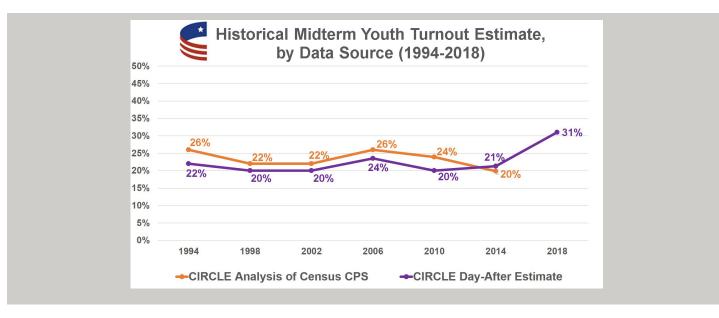
In 2014, turnout among eligible voters was just 36.4% - the lowest overall participation level for midterm elections since World War II.² Among African Americans and Hispanics, voter turnout was 40.6% and 27%, respectively. And although 62.2% of students were registered in 2014, just 18 percent made it to the polls.3 Based on the initial assessment of socio-ecological factors influencing behavior related to voting and voter registration, traditional advocacy approaches and messaging had often fallen short of motivating voters. "Get out the vote" campaigns stressing civic duty, the importance of voting, and making your voice heard, were not motivating enough young people to the polls.

While MTV's early forays into youth voter engagement in the early 1990s with the "Choose or Lose" messaging had some initial positive impact, youth voter participation in the U.S. continued to trend downward. Past results made it clear a new and improved strategy, audience segmentation, messaging, and participatory methods were required to impact social and behavioral change around voting.

Research

Identifying the various barriers as to why people did not vote was a complex research undertaking but was essential to determining how best to advocate, message, and engage. Voter turnout (or lack thereof) in the United States reflects deeply rooted historic legacies, civic norms, socio-economic trends, and electoral policy across communities, demographics, and states. Moreover, the barriers that keep Americans from voting are often reinforced by not engaging in the process. This creates a downward spiral that decreases overall civic participation.4

Survey data commissioned by MTV from MTV/AP-NORC in early 2018 showed half of young Americans were aware and contemplating voting in the midterm elections months in advance of the polls. Sixty-three percent of those polled said voting in the 2018 midterm elections would allow their generation to impact change in government. But less than 25% were confident they had enough information about the candidates to make an informed decision.⁵ Data points also revealed, young potential voters were paying close attention to current events and were nervous about the future.



Voter research also demonstrated that while young people were tuned in and did care, the underlying question was, 'how do I as one person provoke change?' Moreover a Viacom (MTV's parent company) Velocity's Culture of Proximity 2.0 study revealed 95% of people felt "being immersed in a shared experience was one of the most amazing moments of my life."6

Most significantly, in 2016 and 2017 Civic Nation ran a pilot program with the pioneering researcher and Columbia University political science professor, Donald P. Green, to measure the impact of community celebrations on voter participation.⁷ The research found that voter participation increases between one and four percentage points when the local community comes together in a celebration of democracy and civic pride. The idea of voting festivals builds on historical references to voting parties going back as far as the 18th century. At those festivals, voters at the polls socialized with friends, danced, and generally had a good time. In the modern context, Civic Nation and MTV sought to apply the tools of SBC to affect voter behavior change by recreating this enthusiasm and positive energy around voting.8

Strategy Development

#VoteTogether and +1 the Vote, applying the experimental research conducted by Civic Nation with Columbia University, were able to identify a key obstacle to low voter turnout – lack of perceived enjoyment. Voting was seen as arduous and dutiful rather than communal and festive. Low participation, especially among youth, was the result of negative socio-cultural dynamics surrounding voting.

The research showed that making voting about peerto-peer, neighbor-to-neighbor, and friend-to-friend engagement had a significant and positive impact on voter participation (the desired behavior). This research combined with MTV's data collection and polling, provided a unique voter mobilization advocacy opportunity. According to Ramon Jimenez, SVP Insights & Strategy for MTV,VHI & Logo, "The answer was to do something as a collective."9

Consequently, the core advocacy strategy employed by #VoteTogether and MTV focused on how to improve or cultivate positive social dynamics surrounding elections and youth voting. Utilizing a combination of SBC tools including social media (digital communications and website), mass media, meetings/events (interpersonal communications (IPC), partnerships, and celebrity champions, the strategy targeted youth voter mobilization.

Implementation

#VoteTogether with MTV built consensus through a broad coalition of more than 150 public and private



partners across the country around the "celebration" advocacy strategy and tools to be applied to mobilize youth voting.

Critical to starting the implementation process of motivating young voters to the polls was first meeting the target audience where they reside, online. Understanding the target audience is fundamentally social media-oriented, often using the medium to push, pull, and cajole peers, friends, and family members, online was the logical platform to initially promote civic engagement (and indirect pressure).

MTV's +1 the Vote launched a first of its kind digital experience that enabled young people to register to vote and activate unregistered friends to join them at the polls. The tool focused on the target audience's social media passion. The network also provided online resources to access sample ballots, find polling place locations, and created an interactive elections map. An explainer video series featuring celebrities breaking down the importance of midterm elections along with celebrity PSAs encouraging youth to "celebrate the voting experience" with friends and family were also part of the advocacy campaign. 10

Then at thousands of nonpartisan events promoted via social media networks and the web, hosted at polling places, community centers, city halls, and backyards across the country, #VoteTogether partners brought together families, friends and neighbors on Election Day in a celebration of civic engagement and the act of voting.11

Based on an evidenced-based approach, leveraging big data, partnerships, social engagements, #VoteTogether with MTV pioneered a way of thinking about voter mobilization and young people outreach that was unique, highly effective and predicated on the fundamentals of SBC.

Monitoring & Evaluation

By evaluating its social behavior change approach, #VoteTogether and +I the Vote (MTV) were able to demonstrate young people in the U.S. showed up to

the polls in droves, breaking records for youth voter turnout in a midterm election.

The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), Tufts University, estimated 31% of youth (ages 18-29) turned out to vote in the 2018 midterm elections, an extraordinary increase over 2014, when its day-after exit poll calculation suggested that 21% of eligible young voters went to the polls. This is by far the highest level of participation among youth in the past quarter century—the last seven midterm elections during which CIRCLE has been using this same calculation method. The 31% turnout estimate (recently adjusted to 28.2% by CIRCLE) represents millions more young people casting votes in the U.S. midterm election, compared to who voted in 2014 according to the day-after estimates. Young people demonstrated newfound levels of engagement and enthusiasm that have historically been unusual in a midterm election.

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Case Study 2

Field Testing Voter Registration in Kenya – Validating the SBC **Process**

J. Andrew Harris and Peter van der Windt from New York University/Abu Dhabi, conducted a large-scale randomized study, Overcoming Barriers to Voter Registration A Field Experiment in Kenya, to test how behavioral, knowledge-based interventions impact voter registration. Designed with the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), fieldwork in 2015-16 examined voter registration interventions and policies with IEBC field offices in seven Kenyan counties. The counties were selected to provide variation in poverty, distance, and population density.14 The methodology and results of this field experiment provide valuable lessons learned regarding the SBC process and applying an integrated strategic approach to increasing voter registration.15

Problem Statement

Kenya's voter turnout has increased from 68% (1992) to 86% (2013). During the same period, the percentage of voting age citizens registered to vote stagnated at 76% in 1992 and 77% in 2017. Given local population growth, this means approximately a quarter of citizens do not actually register to vote.16



Field Experiment Design

A total of 1,674 polling stations in Kenya were assigned various awareness-building interventions to inform citizens about how and where to register, SMS messaging to remind citizens to register (and to encourage their unregistered friends and family to register), and select polling stations were visited by IEBC staff with portable voter registration equipment (to improve logistics and

reduce cost for registrants)¹⁷. Citizens in the community surrounding the polling station were engaged and able to register on the spot.

Research

In difficult rural settings, SMS provided a convenient way to quickly contact and coordinate large numbers of citizens. However, only providing reminders via SMS did not improve registration rates. Canvassing, i.e., social mobilization and interpersonal communications (IPC), was credited with 2.4% increase in registrations. Interventions such as using portable registration boxes decreased the registration's material cost showed the best results with registration increase by 113%. It was even higher, 135% when combined with canvassing and higher still with SMS, 145%. 18

Making the registration more accessible reduced registration costs thus contributing to an increase in voter registration rates among men and youth. This was found to be particularly strong in poorer areas. These strategic interventions benefitted men and youth, but it did not affect or benefit women, the cultural barriers they faced to voting were not addressed and there was not a significant increase in women voters. 19



Lessons Learned

From an SBC perspective, it was clear from the outset a variety of common electoral barriers played critical rolls in hindering voter registration in Kenya including a lack of understanding of the registration process; procrastination and disinterest in the process; and the high indirect cost and time required to register. While this experimental study served to confirm these social norms and provided some additional cultural insight, its main value was to validate the necessity of following SBC best practices to affect change.

The field study clearly demonstrated an integrated SBC approach using a combination of targeted strategies (digital, interpersonal, community engagement, and informational) to reach specific audiences had the most impact on increasing voter registration in Kenya. One-size-fits-all strategies, often in the form of mass media informational campaigns or in this case via largescale SMS messaging, are not impactful. Moreover, SMS messaging and even interpersonal outreach that simply implored citizens to register based on improved "know how" also had little of the desired effect.

A wide variety of SBC research and program design in global health and other sectors illustrates that addressing information awareness gaps, while alluring in terms of content production, scale, and cost, is not enough to decidedly alter behavior and overcome social barriers and existing norms. Hence, traditional mass media and collateral-based voter registration awareness campaigns alone had little to no effect on voter registration behavior change in Kenya.²⁰

In terms of audience segmentation, the study also confirms that without audience segmentation and strategies designed for a specific segment, e.g. women or youth, it is difficult to overcome social and cultural norms. In the case of increasing women's electoral participation in Kenya, prior development research demonstrated a number of crucial barriers including: patriarchal culture, religious framework, household responsibilities and power dynamics, illiteracy, lack of female leadership, lack of legal documentation, physical safety, and other constraints.²¹ Voter registration interventions must directly overcome these barriers with specific gender-based strategies to increase female participation.

It was also not surprising that canvassing had some impact, general audience strategies such as SMS reminders and basic informational awareness had limited influence on youth registration in Kenya. The use of digital (SMS) and limited mass media (radio ads) did not significantly sway young Kenyan's voter registration. Specific SBC strategies catering to youth's participation, e.g., utilizing social media platforms for chat rooms, events/concerts, and targeted awareness by celebrity influencers, brand ambassadors, etc. were indispensable to affect the desired voter registration change among this audience.

Women's **Barriers** to Voting



Patriarchal culture



Religious framework



Lack of female **leadership**



Household responsibilities and power dynamics



Lack of legal documentation



Physical safety



Illiteracy



Other constraints



The study while endorsing the impact of canvassing (community engagement and interpersonal strategies) posits that these channels may have been monopolized or tainted by partisan interests (e.g., chiefs under the auspices of the Government or other political parties).²² For the SBC process to be effectual, a clear understanding of underlying political interests and the cultural context is required to inform the strategies to be employed and to build broad consensus among key actors.

Lastly, policy and regulation reform often play a critical role in facilitating SBC and should be taken into close consideration when considering strategy choices. Currently, Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) regulations in Kenya require citizens to travel from their residence to the constituency election office to register, creating logistical and cost constraints.²³ Predictably, the most impactful intervention highlighted in the field study was that the portable registration equipment increased voter registration (by reducing the material cost of registration). Part of further SBC strategy would be how to overcome the existing policy constraints that create barriers to registration by expanding participation opportunities especially in rural areas.

Appendix A - Endnotes

- https://www.forbes.com/sites/civicnation/2018/09/05/heres-how-we-can-increase-voter-participation-in-2018-and-beyond/#517965277aef
- 2 https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/2014-midterm-election-turnout-lowest-in-70-years
- 3 https://idhe.tufts.edu/2014-student-voter-turnout
- https://www.forbes.com/sites/civicnation/2018/09/05/heres-how-we-can-increase-voter-participation-in-4 2018-and-beyond/#517965277aef
- 5 IBID
- 6 https://www.viacom.com/news/the-campaign-for-young-voters-that-encouraged-the-highest-turnout-in-de cades
- 7 Green, Donald P. and McClellan, Oliver, The Effects of Election Festivals on Voter Turnout: A Field Experi ment Conducted During a Presidential Election (July 9, 2017) SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2999305 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2999305.
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- 12 https://civicyouth.org/new-national-youth-turnout-estimate-28-of-young-people-voted-in-2018/
- 13 https://civicyouth.org/new-national-youth-turnout-estimate-28-of-young-people-voted-in-2018/
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Appendix B – Behavioral Theories

- Diffusion of innovations theory emphasizes that influential leaders and respected individuals influence norms by disseminating information through one-to-one contacts and group discussions. Friendship groups and social networks are important routes of communication and change.
- Social learning theory, largely from the work of psychologist Albert Bandura, holds that people learn through direct experience, as well as through the observation of role models. It also contends that people learn through training that develops self-efficacy, for example through practice of responses to simulated situations.
- Theory of participatory education, utilized by adult educator Paulo Freire, proposes that the full participation and empowerment of the people affected by a problem is essential in order to enact change. Dialogue plays a key element in learning.
- Theory of reasoned action states that the intention to adopt a new behavior is influenced both by the subjective beliefs of an individual and by his or her normative beliefs, i.e., how norms or community standards influence an individual.
- Social Ecological Behavior model that determines both internal (individual and psychological) factors and external (family, professional services, market environment, and as well as culture and social norms) factors influencing behaviors. Results has shown that the social-ecological model extends beyond the health sector and must include influentials from other sectors, i.e., education, agriculture, commerce, public and private sector.



Appendix B – Behavioral Theories

National Environment Training and support Advocacy and Coordination Advocacy Business, Industry Research and dissemination Public Relations Advocacy materials Community, Services · Web site Materials **Training** Key Behaviours messages Communication Materials Social media · Interpersonal Communication **Public Relations** Voter · Limited Mass Media Advocacy · Communication Materials Ommunity Leaders, Family, Peers, Volunteers, State of Sta Website Public Relations Employers, Managers

Office Personal Healers, Voluntees

Employers, Managers

Employers, Managers

Employers, Managers

Employers, Managers

Employers, Managers

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Appendix D –

Donors, Implementing Partners, Programs, and Projects

Adam Smith International (ASI)

Academy for Educational Development (AED)

Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

Banyan Global

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Chemonics

Civic Nation

Counterpart International

Creative Associates

Department for International Development (DFID/UK)

Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP)

Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET)

Feed the Future

FHI360

Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO/UK)

Funders Committee

Human Rights Watch

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

Internews

IREX

International Republican Institute (IRI)

Johns Hopkins University, Center for Communication

Programs (JHU/CCP)

Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)

MTV,VHI & Logo

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

(NDI)

Netmark, President's Malaria Initiative

PA Consulting Group/Development Services (now a

Tetra Tech company)

PACT

Poverty Action Lab

Population Services International (PSI)

President's Emergency Plan for HIV & AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)

Root to Peace - Commercial Horticulture and Agriculture Marketing Program (CHAMPS)

RTI International

Search for Common Ground (SGFC)

UNICEF

United States Agency for International Development (USAID):

- Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
 - Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Bureau for Global Health
- Bureau for Global Health
 - Office of HIV/AIDS
 - Office of Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition
- Bureau of Economic Growth, Education and Environment
 - Energy and Infrastructure
- Bureau of Food Security

United States Department of State

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL)

Viacom

The World Bank



Appendix E – Journal Sources

Global Health: Science and Practice International Journal of Renewable Energy Research Journal of Health Communication National Institutes of Health, US National Library of Medicine Social Marketing Quarterly USAID Research and Innovation Grants Working Paper Series Government Information Quarterly



