Jane Goodall Institute

CONSERVATION CO-CREATED

When Communities and Nature Thrive Together

A Practical Guide to Behavioral Science in Conservation



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Find the latest version of this book online:
janegoodall.org/behavioral-science-for-conservation

(Cover photo) Soccer fans during a BCC soccer tournament. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

(Opposite page) Farmer tending a compost heap. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha



Jane Goodall Institute

It is an honor and a privilege to write the foreword for this guide on Behavioral Science in Conservation. This publication reflects the dedicated effort of many colleagues and communities who have collaborated with the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) as a trusted partner. Together, we embarked on a journey to understand the drivers of resource degradation affecting chimpanzees — both directly and indirectly — and to implement initiatives that address these threats, reduce harm, and foster sustainable livelihoods and coexistence.

I witnessed firsthand the efforts of teams co-creating lasting change for the benefit of local people and the environment, through the integration of behavioral science with JGI's community-led conservation approach, Tacare, which incorporates spatial tools for planning and decision-making.

I am pleased that we have documented this journey. Conservation and development practitioners can now draw on our experience applying complex behavioral science within a community-led framework and adapt this process to their own work. Beginning something new and complex often feels like an uphill task, but this guide offers clear, actionable steps to initiate and implement a high-impact behavior change project at an appropriate scale.

One of my key takeaways from this effort was that the final strategy isn't always what you initially expect. During the selection process, for instance, composting emerged as the most effective solution for mitigating the impact of agriculture on the degradation and loss of riverine forests — an unexpected result that ultimately improved crop productivity and enabled women to farm closer to home.

My hope is that this guide equips everyone interested in behavior change with the practical tools needed to launch successful campaigns that advance both conservation and community livelihood outcomes.

Alice Macharia

Alice Macharia
Vice President, Africa Programs
The Jane Goodall Institute

(Opposite page) Wild mother and infant chimpanzee. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Bill Wallawer

"Wouldn't it be amazing if we could somehow package everything we've learned over the last four years and share it with conservation teams curious to give behavior change strategies a try but don't have a social scientist on their team?"

That question is what sparked the idea for this book.

Conservation organizations are doing incredible work with limited resources. They are passionate, dedicated, and determined to make a difference. Yet, too often, they find themselves relying on the same approaches that have been used for decades—approaches that may raise awareness but may not be shifting behaviors in lasting ways. We know this because we've been there.

This book exists because we want to help make the tools of behavior change accessible. We know many organizations have limited time, staff, or funding to dedicate to this work. By sharing our experience, the choices we made, the challenges we faced, and the lessons we learned from communities, we hope to provide a practical resource you can adapt to your own context.

What follows is grounded in practice, inspired by theory. These are lessons and strategies developed in collaboration with communities, tested in real-world situations, and refined through both successes and failures. Some insights came from magical moments when everything worked out as we had hoped, while others revealed mistakes we needed to correct and learn from. Together, they form a set of approaches that can help you design initiatives rooted in evidence and experience.

We hope that wherever you are in your journey, this book gives you something valuable: the curiosity to try a new approach, the nudge to rethink something you have been working on, or the confidence that you don't necessarily need a large team or budget to try behavior change strategies.

Keep in mind that this guide reflects where we are in our own journey of understanding behavior change in conservation. It is not the final word. We continue to adapt and improve, and we invite you to do the same. Your experiences, insights, and innovations will carry this work further than we can imagine. Try, adapt, and make this your own. Let us know what worked, what didn't, and what we missed. Above all, we want this book to feel like an invitation. We hope you find it both useful and inspiring.

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(Opposite page) Farmer posing next to the harvest. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction



Farmers showcase composted produce during the BCC event.
Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Why This Book Matters

Conservation is about people. Protecting species and ecosystems depends on how people interact with the land, water, and resources around them. Raising **awareness** about these issues is essential, but awareness alone rarely leads to lasting change in today's complex world. To meet the scale of current conservation challenges, we need approaches that not only help people understand the problems but also help them adopt new, sustainable **behaviors** to counter them.

That is the purpose of this book.

We've written it for practitioners who are eager to integrate **behavior change** into their conservation work, whether you're part of a large NGO, a government agency, or a community-based organization. You don't need a big budget or a background in psychology. What you do need is a willingness to try something new, to listen deeply to the communities you work with, and to start small while building confidence over time.

This book is for you if you've ever wondered:

- Why don't people care, even though we've been telling them why this matters?
- Why aren't people adopting the solutions we're offering?
- How can we design programs that support ethical behavior change?
- Where do we even start if we want to apply behavioral science to conservation?

Our goal is to meet you where you are and offer a roadmap for moving from awareness to **action** — one step at a time.

Who We Are and How This Came Together

This work grew out of the Jane Goodall Institute's (JGI) Landscape Conservation in Western Tanzania (LCWT) project, a multi-year initiative funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) that addressed the interconnected challenges to chimpanzee conservation, local livelihoods, forest restoration, and productive agriculture. In collaboration with farming communities across the region, JGI set out to test how behavior change approaches could help reduce deforestation for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

Our initiative was co-created with local farmers, implemented by the dedicated JGI Tanzania team, supported by JGI USA, and enriched by the expertise of social scientists, agriculture experts, community leaders, and behavior change strategists and facilitators from Impact by Design, Inc. Together, we blended conservation priorities with community-driven solutions, producing not just a successful initiative but also insights we believe can help others.

This book is the result of that collaboration: field practitioners, researchers, and community partners combining knowledge to make behavior change more approachable for the wider conservation community.



(Above) Scenic natural landscape. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Liz Vogel

(Opposite page) Wild chimpanzee gazing upward. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Stephano Lihedule

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who has supported our campaign over the years. This work would not have been possible without the dedication, trust, and collaboration of an extraordinary network of partners, colleagues, and friends.

To all the volunteers and community members who trusted us and supported us every single step of the way — your faith in this process and your active participation made all the difference. Your willingness to engage with new ideas and approaches was the foundation upon which everything else was built.

This campaign represents the collective efforts, wisdom, and commitment of all these remarkable individuals and organizations. We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to have worked alongside such dedicated partners in the service of conservation and community. This initiative and this book are the product of all these contributions.

TO THE JANE GOODALL INSTITUTE TEAM

This work reflects the efforts of many people at our institute. We are deeply grateful to the JGI Tanzania team, who ensured that activities took place despite countless logistical challenges. Special recognition goes to our charismatic and talented campaign lead, Robert Mkosamali, whose dedication was the driving force behind the campaign, and to the Kigoma field team — Lameck Rusanganya, Michael Pandisha, and many others who brought that vision to life on the ground. Together, they worked closely with communities, traveling long distances and problem-solving daily to keep the campaign moving forward. Their commitment to supporting communities, meeting people where they are, and ensuring that our approaches truly served local needs was invaluable to the success of this campaign.

A note of deep appreciation goes to Freddy Kimaro, Emannuel Mtiti, and Paul Cowles for their exceptional leadership and their trust in our process. Your guidance and support created the conditions necessary for innovation and success.

We are grateful to Lillian Pintea, whose knowledge and guidance helped us focus our efforts on preserving riverine forests. When we faced critical decision points, your expertise enabled us to make impactful, informed decisions. We would also like to thank Devin Jacobs, who worked with us to analyze our geospatial data and helped us understand the impact of our efforts on local forests. Your analytical skills and dedication to uncovering insights have been invaluable.

We also thank Shawn Sweeney, Merlin van Lawick, and the JGI communications team, who brought creativity and energy to the development of all the branding materials and campaign elements now recognized across the landscape. Your work helped bring our vision to life in ways that truly resonated with communities.

Finally, a very special thank you to Alice Macharia, JGI Vice President of Africa Programs. You took a chance on something ambiguous and experimental. You consistently asked the right questions, challenged us to think more deeply, and offered unwavering support every step of the way. Your faith in this work and your guidance have been instrumental in everything we have accomplished.



Group of infant chimpanzees. Photo by Jane Goodall Institute RoC/Fernando Turmo

TO OUR PARTNERS

To Dr. Lauren Watkins and our colleagues at Impact by Design, especially Dr. Amielle DeWan, thank you for being the catalyst behind this work and for equipping us with the confidence and tools of behavior change science.

We also thank our partners at Seeds of Hope, particularly Dr. Betty Waized, for their tireless support with data collection and fieldwork. Your meticulous data collection efforts ensured that we had the necessary information to make informed decisions at every turn. This evidence-based approach was crucial to our ability to adapt and improve continuously.

Agricultural expertise was vital to this campaign, and we extend our gratitude to Kellen Hayes at Good Nature Agro for helping us understand what composting looks like in practice for Tanzanian farmers. This work proved to be part art, part science, and your expertise was essential to navigating these complexities.

We acknowledge our partners at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for their generous financial support. Without this investment, we would not have been able to undertake this incredible work or achieve the results we have seen.

Stella Mercurio

Stella Mercurio
Director, Africa Programs
Jane Goodall Institute



Jane Goodall Institute

How to Use This Book

This book is designed to be practical and adaptable. Throughout the chapters, we will use the story of a real case study from western Tanzania to walk through each stage of our Theory of Change, from community engagement to achieving conservation goals.

The case study, introduced in Chapter 2, describes how the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania partnered with farming communities to co-create a composting initiative that reduced pressure on forests while improving livelihoods. You'll see this story woven throughout the book to connect ideas to real-world practice.

Each chapter explains why each stage matters, shares best practices you can apply, and describes what we did in practice. Along the way, you'll find stories and examples to help you adapt these ideas to your own initiatives.

Throughout each chapter, you will find references to tools, templates, and worksheets designed to help you put these ideas into practice. All of these resources are gathered in The Practitioner's Toolkit at the back of this book. They are designed to be adapted, not followed rigidly. Make them your own.

As you read, you will also notice a set of icons used throughout the book.
Here is what each one means:

ICONS

- Glossary/ Terminology
- Quotes from the Field
- Facts and Statistics
- Insights
- Practitioner's Toolkit
- Looking Ahead
- Case Study
- Key Takeaways for Practitioners

(Opposite page) Wild chimpanzee observations by researcher at Gombe. Photo by Nick Riley Photography

ESSENTIAL TERMS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Action
The stage in the Theory of Change when intention becomes reality—when someone actually tries the behavior being promoted. Action is not about persuasion; it is about creating safe, supported opportunities for people to take an initial step without fear of failure or irreversible consequences.

Action Maintenance
The stage focused on helping people sustain a new behavior over time, moving it from a deliberate effort to a routine practice. Maintenance is not about keeping people motivated indefinitely—it is about making the behavior easier, more familiar, and more compatible with everyday life.

Attitudes
The way a person thinks or feels about a behavior, issue, or group—typically reflected in how they act. In behavior change initiatives, understanding existing attitudes helps teams design messages and strategies that connect with what people already believe rather than working against it.

Awareness
Having knowledge that a behavior, problem, or opportunity exists. Awareness is often the starting point of a behavior change journey, but on its own, it is rarely enough to drive action. People can be aware of something and still not change what they do for many reasons, sometimes within their control and sometimes not.

Barrier
Anything that prevents a person from adopting or maintaining a behavior. Barriers can be practical, such as a lack of time, money, or materials. They can also be perceived, such as when someone believes something will be harder or riskier than it actually is. Identifying and reducing barriers is central to behavior change design.

Behavior Change
A strategic approach that goes beyond raising awareness to support people in adopting specific, sustainable behaviors. Rather than asking how to get people to comply, behavior change asks how to create conditions where sustainable choices make sense, feel achievable, and can last.

Goals
Clear, specific, and measurable statements of what a behavior change initiative is trying to achieve. Effective goals focus on long-term impact, are aligned with both conservation priorities and community values, and are developed transparently with input from all stakeholders.

Incentives
Tangible or intangible rewards that motivate or encourage someone to take action. Incentives can be useful in the early stages of a behavior change initiative to encourage first attempts, but they work best when paired with intrinsic motivation; otherwise, behavior may stop when the incentive does.

Nudges
Small, timely prompts or environmental cues that help people continue a behavior without requiring constant motivation or conscious effort. Nudges can be a powerful tool in action maintenance, helping behaviors endure by reducing friction and reinforcing routines.

Social Diffusion
The process through which a behavior, idea, or innovation spreads from early adopters to wider social networks, becoming increasingly normalized within a community. Social diffusion is the mechanism that allows a behavior to outlive the campaign that introduced it.

Social Norms
The behaviors, values, and expectations that a person is understood to conform to within a particular group, community, or culture. Social norms are a powerful driver of behavior—people are more likely to adopt a behavior when they believe others like them are already doing it. Behavior change initiatives often work to shift what feels normal and expected within a community.

Target Audience
The specific group of people whose behavior an initiative is designed to influence. A well-defined target audience goes beyond broad demographics to include an understanding of values, motivations, barriers, and social context—the factors that shape whether strategies will resonate in practice.

Target Behavior
The specific, concrete action that a behavior change initiative is designed to promote. A target behavior is not a broad aspiration but something people can recognize, try, and talk about—something defined clearly enough that anyone can describe it in simple terms.

Theory of Change (ToC)
A tool that makes your path forward explicit by linking planned activities to desired outcomes, surfacing assumptions, and creating a shared roadmap for your team and partners. In behavior change initiatives, a ToC describes both how you will achieve your conservation goal and how specific behavioral shifts will contribute to it.



For a complete list of terms, see the Glossary at the end of the book.

CHAPTER TWO

Stage Setting



Idda Joel tending to her compost heap. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Where Change Starts: Meet Idda Joel

In Sunuka village, on the western shores of Lake Tanganyika, 31-year-old Idda Joel — a hardworking farmer and mother of three — faced the same challenge as many of her neighbors: year after year, the soil on her small farm produced smaller harvests. Without money for commercial fertilizer, she did what generations of farmers before her had done, turning to the fertile soils of nearby riverine forests and clearing new plots of land in hopes of producing enough food for her family.

"I barely got any surplus from my farm for a long time," she recalled.

Idda's determination was strong, but breaking the cycle was difficult. New farming plots in the forests offered only short-term gains, and each season required more time, effort, and longer walks to transport the harvests back home. She described this period as one of hardship, when her family often lacked enough food to get by. Still, she continued to work hard, doing everything she could to provide for her children.

Everything changed when Idda learned how to make and use compost with simple, locally available materials. By restoring the fertility of her own small farm instead of clearing new land, she broke the cycle she had been trapped in for years. The results were remarkable. "Compost performs miracles," she said, "hunger is no more." In a single season, she and her husband harvested 20 kilograms of Bambara nuts, 170 tins of husked rice, and six tins of maize — a drastic increase from previous years.

"I barely got any surplus from my farm for a long time."

—Idda Joel



Scenic view of forest. Photo by Mike Wilson

For the first time in many years, this abundance meant her family had enough to eat and a surplus to sell. The additional income allowed them to invest in a small piggery, build a three-bedroom home, and purchase new furniture. Composting also strengthened relationships within her household and community. "Unity is strength," she reflected, describing how men and women began working together more closely in the fields and at home.

Idda's story is just one example of how farmers, when equipped with practical and sustainable tools, can transform their livelihoods while reducing pressure on the forests that sustain both people and wildlife.

Understanding the Challenge: A Fragile Balance of People, Forests, and Chimpanzees in Western Tanzania

Tanzania, nestled in East Africa, is a land of natural beauty, rich with remarkable and diverse people, cultures, and natural resources. Along the rivers and lakes of the western part of the country, narrow bands of riverine forests provide fertile soils, shade, and water for the communities that depend on them. These same forests are also critical habitats for chimpanzees — our closest living relatives — making them vital for both people and wildlife.

Yet these forests are under growing pressure. Western Tanzania has experienced rapid population growth, migration, and refugee resettlement from neighboring countries, as well as the expansion of large-scale monoculture crops such as tobacco, cotton, and oil palm. At the same time, small-scale

farmers across the region have struggled with declining soil fertility. As their fields produced less each year, many saw no choice but to turn to riverine forests in search of fertile ground.

This creates a fragile balance, as people depend on these forests for much more than just farmland. There, they gather firewood, mushrooms, honey from local apiaries, medicinal plants, and other essential resources. Families rely on forests to survive, but every tree cut for farmland reduces the habitat chimpanzees need and undermines the long-term health of the ecosystem. The struggle is not one of preference, but of necessity — a necessity driven by declining soil health and urgent needs at home. Farmers told us again and again that they turned to forests because their existing farms could no longer sustain them.

Understanding this reality was a pivotal moment for the composting initiative you'll explore in this book. Protecting chimpanzee habitat and conserving western Tanzania's forests would only be possible if we addressed the everyday challenges that left farming families with little choice but to turn to the forest for what their own land could not yet provide. Any lasting solution would need to improve soil fertility, strengthen food security, and reduce the pressure to farm in forests vital to both communities and wildlife.



Group of farmers working the land. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Why We Needed a Different Approach: The Case for Behavior Change

Raising awareness has always been a crucial component of conservation. Posters, radio programs, environmental education programs, community meetings, and school events help people understand the issues at stake and why they matter. Awareness provides a foundation, sparking curiosity, building knowledge and skills, and inspiring people to think differently about the world around them.

For many years, the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania and its partners had been dedicated to forest protection in Western Tanzania through capacity building, education, land-use planning, and systematic forest monitoring. These efforts made a real difference: farmers gained skills, communities developed land-use plans, and climate-smart agriculture techniques grew in adoption across the region.

Yet even with these successes, change was not spreading quickly enough to match the scale of the challenge. We needed an approach that could build on this strong foundation while helping families adopt new practices more rapidly and sustainably, especially in areas where farming and forests meet. That realization led us to focus more intentionally on behavior change strategies designed specifically for farmers in Western Tanzania, helping them adopt new practices in ways that were practical, motivating, and truly theirs to own.



Farmer evaluating the maize quality. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha



Farmers collecting tomatoes at plantation. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Awareness and behavior change are not opposing approaches — they work best together.

Awareness creates the foundation, while behavior change builds the bridge to action.

Raising awareness often asks: *"How do we tell people about this problem?"*

Behavior change asks: *"How do we work with people to solve this problem together?"*

The table below highlights some distinctions between the two.

	Raising Awareness	Behavior Change
Purpose	Inform people about an issue or topic, create readiness for change	Identify and address **barriers** and **benefits** to trying a new behavior by directly engaging with **target audiences**.
Strategies Used	Media, training, information sharing, education.	Community engagement, piloting, commitments, prompts, nudges, **incentives**.
Assumption	More knowledge and awareness can change **attitudes** or lead to someone taking action.	When barriers are removed and benefits are clear, people will take action — especially if they have a role in the process.
Focus	May have a broader reach to the 'general public' or be targeted to specific groups of people.	Initiatives are often co-created with and aimed at influencing specific groups of people.
Measurement	Success is often measured by participation or knowledge gained.	Success is often measured by rates of people adopting the new behavior and conservation outcomes.
Challenges	May not lead directly to action; can be slow to shift habits; can be hard to tie conservation outcomes directly to awareness-raising initiatives.	Requires more time, testing, and resources to design and adapt.

Table 2.1: Awareness vs. Behavior Change

Searching for Fertile Ground: The Tanzanian Composting Initiative

When the Jane Goodall Institute began its Landscape Conservation in Western Tanzania project in 2018, the goal was ambitious: to protect forests and chimpanzee habitats while also improving community well-being. The project worked across multiple strategic areas—agriculture, livelihoods, population health, and forest conservation—recognizing that these issues are deeply interconnected.

As the team looked more closely at the drivers of deforestation, one factor kept surfacing: declining soil fertility. Families told us their fields were producing less than before, leaving them with little choice but to clear new plots of forest land. For many, this was a matter of survival. Without fertile soil, food security was at risk, incomes were limited, and the cycle of forest loss continued.



Farmer showcasing tree nursery. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Shawn Sweeney

"The family food intake was inadequate, and life was miserable. I spent much time farming in the forest."

—Idda Joel

This insight invited us to look at things differently. If soil fertility could be restored, farmers could grow more food on the land they already have, reducing pressure to clear new forests. Composting emerged as a promising solution. It was practical, low-cost, and built on materials already available in villages. Just as importantly, it aligned with farmers' **goals**: improving yields, strengthening household food security, and creating income opportunities.

The composting initiative began with a **pilot** in three villages. Farmers experimented with making compost, applying it to their crops, and sharing their experiences with neighbors. Early results were encouraging, and word spread quickly. Over time, the initiative expanded to eleven villages across the region. It reached hundreds of farmers directly and thousands more through **demonstration plots**, radio programs, and farmer-to-farmer exchanges—just a few of the strategies you'll discover in this guide.

What started as a single strategy soon became the backbone of something bigger. Composting offered families a practical alternative to clearing forests or purchasing expensive chemical fertilizers, while also giving them a sense of pride and agency. Farmers, like Idda Joel, showed what was possible when new ideas were introduced in ways that respected local realities and built on community strengths.

Looking Ahead: What You'll Find in the Coming Chapters

The composting initiative in western Tanzania is more than a case study—it is a living example of how behavior change strategies can be successfully co-created with communities and adapted in real-world conservation. In the chapters that follow, we return to this case study to show how each stage of the process unfolded.

Our approach was not only shaped by years of field experience but also by proven frameworks that emphasize understanding your audience as the foundation for lasting change, including **Community-Based Social Marketing** and **Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC)**.

This guide builds on these frameworks and follows a set of core principles for designing impactful behavior change initiatives:

1. **Collaborate early** with communities and other experts to gain a deeper understanding of the problem.
2. **Brainstorm solutions** together that can directly address the problem while being culturally relevant and practical.
3. **Design and test strategies** with your audiences with a learning mindset, open to change.
4. **Adapt and expand** as you learn, keeping the communities you have built trust with at the center of every change.

"In behavior change, you cannot be everything to everyone. It has to be tailored, and once you plan with communities, not for them, it will grow on its own."

—Lauren Watkins

These principles will guide you through the chapters ahead as we explore each stage of the process: building trust with communities, creating awareness, fostering **intention**, supporting action, and sustaining change. For each stage, you'll find practical strategies, lessons learned, and stories from the field.

Whether you are working with farming families, coastal fishers, urban residents, or any other community, remember: people are more likely to change when the path forward feels possible, valuable, and supported. At its heart, this work is about meeting people where they are. Collaboration is not just a step in the process—it is the key to all of it. Let it be your guide in creating behavior change strategies that are lasting, meaningful, and genuinely supported by the communities you serve.

CHAPTER THREE

Preparation



Community member inquiring about compost on information desk. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Before You Begin: Why Careful Preparation Matters

Every successful behavior change initiative starts long before the first activity on the ground. Careful preparation gives you the clarity, relationships, and support you need to design strategies that fit the realities of the people you are working with and the places they live.

This doesn't mean you need to have everything figured out before you begin. What matters most is being intentional: taking the time to understand the problem you are addressing, building trust with communities, and creating the conditions for collaboration. Skipping these steps can lead to wasted resources and missed opportunities, while investing in them lays the groundwork for solutions that last.

Think of this stage as drawing your map. The path ahead will not be perfectly straight, and you will learn and adapt along the way, but preparation ensures you start moving in the right direction.

In this chapter, we'll walk through what you really need to get started, what to expect on this journey, how to set a strong foundation, and how we applied these steps in Tanzania before piloting our initiative. Through this work, you will see why piloting is the key to success.



Compost farmer speaking to Kigoma Regional Commissioner during an event. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

The Essentials: What You Really Need to Get Started

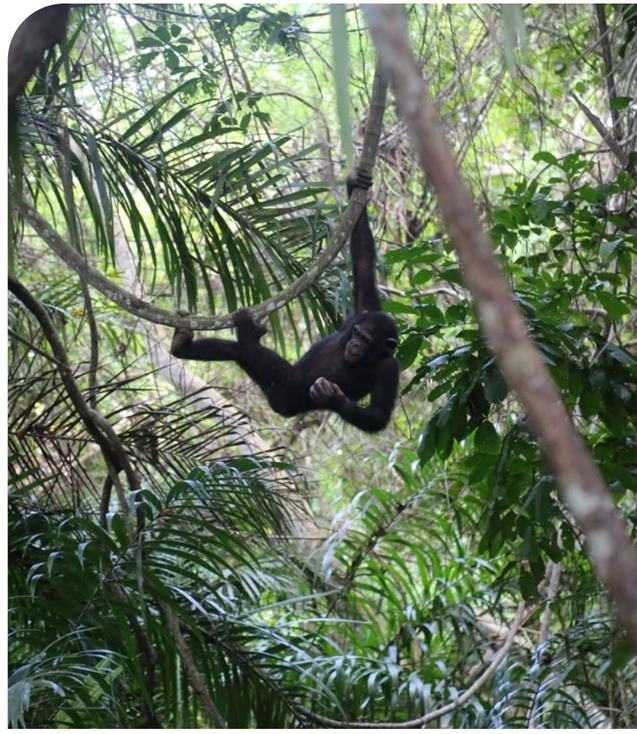
Starting a behavior change initiative can feel overwhelming, especially if behavioral science is new to you or you think you need to have every resource in place from the beginning. The truth is, you don't need perfection to get started; you need the right essentials.

Here's what you *don't* need:

- **A perfect plan.** Your strategies will change as you learn. Flexibility is more valuable than certainty.
- **A large budget.** Many impactful initiatives start small and scale over time.
- **Outside experts for every step.** Local teams, community members, and trusted partners often bring the most important knowledge.

Here's what you *do* need:

- **Leadership support.** Having decision-makers on board creates the space and backing you'll need to succeed.
- **Trust and relationships.** Building mutual respect with communities and partners is the foundation of any lasting effort. This takes a willingness to listen and the patience to build these relationships over time.
- **A committed team.** You don't need a big team, but you do need people willing to invest time, energy, and creativity, and ready to embrace the growing pains of trying something new.
- **Curiosity and a learning mindset.** Be prepared to be flexible, test, and adapt along the way.
- **Basic resources.** Even small amounts of funding, materials, or staff time can be enough to begin. As you engage with the community, you may even find that unexpected resources become available.



Chimpanzee hanging from a forest vine. Photo by Jane Goodall Institute RoC/Fernando Turmo

- **A clear theory of change.** Whether you create one from scratch or adapt an existing framework, a theory of change is your roadmap. It links planned activities to desired outcomes, helps you test your assumptions, and provides a shared vision for how small steps will add up to conservation impact.
- **A plan for monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL).** This isn't optional. A MEL framework helps you know if your approach is working, where to adjust, and how to share what you learn. Even a basic system for collecting data and reflecting on progress will strengthen your initiative.

Focusing on these essentials will keep you grounded and realistic, while also giving you the confidence to take the first steps.



You will find the **Before You Begin: A Preparation Checklist in The Practitioner's Toolkit** at the back of this book to help you work through each of these essentials as you prepare.

The Road Ahead: What to Expect on This Journey

Behavior change initiatives are rewarding, but they rarely follow a straight path. As you move from preparation into implementation, expect the process to be an iterative one full of learning, adaptation, and growth.

Here are a few things you can count on:

- **It takes time.** Building trust, testing strategies, and adjusting along the way is not quick, but it creates stronger outcomes. It may feel slow compared to more traditional approaches used in raising awareness.
- **It requires teamwork.** No one person can carry this work alone. Success depends on diverse skills, perspectives, and partnerships.
- **It may feel uncomfortable at times.** You may need to step outside your comfort zone, try new approaches, or share decision-making in ways that feel different.
- **It's worth it.** When communities and organizations work together as true partners, the solutions that emerge are stronger and more sustainable than anything designed in isolation.



BCC Netball Tournament. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Robert Mkosamali

Building a Strong Foundation: Preparing Yourself and Your Team

Preparation isn't only about having the right resources; it's also about creating the right conditions for change.

Preparation isn't only about having the right resources; it's also about creating the right conditions for change. This stage is where you put the essentials into practice and begin shaping how your initiative will take root.

Connect with communities early on. The most effective initiatives begin by listening. Take time to learn about people's daily realities, challenges, and strengths. Building genuine trust and showing respect for local knowledge lays the foundation for collaboration.

This may look like:

- Holding informal conversations with members of the community to see how *they* see the problem, before introducing initiative ideas.
- Conducting a short survey with open-ended questions about daily challenges and aspirations to get to know more about their lives before making assumptions.

Define the problem as clearly as you can. Conservation challenges are complex, but you absolutely must do the groundwork to identify the specific problem you are trying to address. Be honest about what you don't know, and seek the answers from community members or technical experts.

This may look like:

- Holding workshops to map out local perceptions of the problem alongside scientific data.
- Testing assumptions with simple field studies, observations, or rapid assessments.

KNOW YOUR STARTING POINT

If you are entering a new community, the engagement stage will take longer. Trust has to be earned from the ground up, and that takes time, consistency, and patience.

If you are working in a community where you or your organization already have a presence, do not assume that trust is automatic. Take time to understand your organization's history there, including any past initiatives, and be mindful of how that history might influence how communities receive you as you move forward.

Secure leadership commitment. Whether it's community leaders, government officials, funders, or your organization's leadership, having the support of decision-makers makes it easier to align priorities and keep momentum. It's important to involve them early and continuously in your process to avoid having to repeatedly make the case for their support, especially when behavior change approaches are new or when leaders want faster results.

Build the right team. You don't need a large team, but you do need the right mix of skills and



A farmer tills a plot of land. Photo by Nick Riley Photography

perspectives. Look for people who can bring local knowledge and community trust, the technical expertise you need once you clearly understand the problem you want to address, and a willingness to problem-solve together.

Establish communication and decision-making processes. Clear roles, expectations, and ways of working together help prevent misunderstandings later on. Even simple project management tools and systems like regular check-ins, shared notes, and calendars for project activities, a task tracking tool, and clearly defined points of contact can make a big difference. Communication that is frequent and accessible maintains buy-in and cohesion, especially when teams are spread across offices, field sites, and time zones.

Plan for resources. Budget and materials may feel like constraints, but they can also spark creativity. Be realistic about what you have, and transparent with partners about what's possible. Often, communities will bring their own ideas and resources to the table once they feel invested. Later in this guide, we will provide you with tools and support to make decisions based on your available resources.

Create as much clarity as possible about what you are trying to do. Define what the initiative *IS* and what it is *NOT*. Be explicit about your focus and expected outcomes to prevent scope creep and manage expectations.

Rather than focusing on what people shouldn't do, behavior change work identifies why people do what they do and then promotes specific, positive behaviors they can adopt.



Behavior change work identifies why people do what they do and then promotes specific, positive behaviors they can adopt.

You will want to avoid the urge to pack in too many calls to action. When audiences are asked to do many different things at once, it dilutes impact and makes it harder for any single behavior to stick. The clearer and more focused the call to action is, the more likely it will succeed.

Together, these steps provide a foundation that allows your initiative to grow in a way that is both practical and sustainable.



As your initiative moves into implementation, keeping your team aligned and your work on track becomes just as important as the preparation itself. **Running Your Initiative: A Coordination Checklist in The Practitioner's Toolkit** will help you do exactly that.



Looking Ahead

Careful preparation may not feel as exciting as launching an initiative, but it is what makes everything else possible. By taking time to build trust, clarify the problem, and set strong foundations, you give your initiative the best chance to succeed.

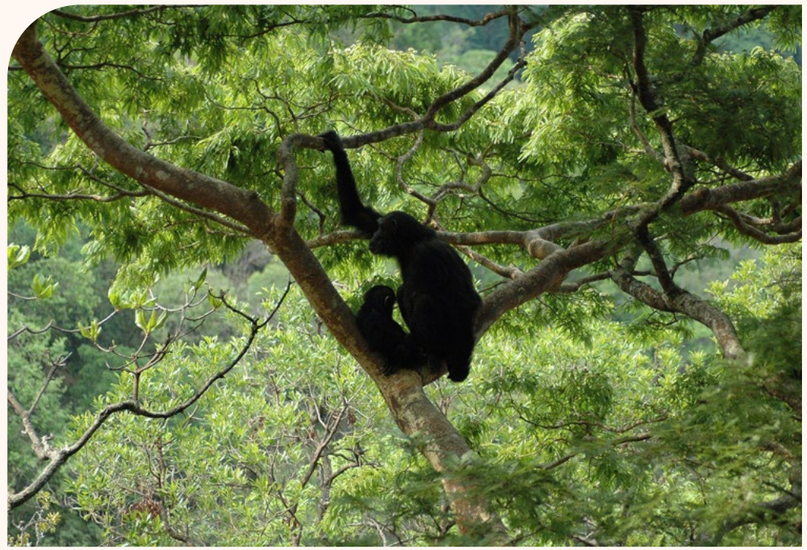
In the next chapter, we turn to the first stage of our Theory of Change: Community Engagement.

Before we get there, we'll look at how our teams applied the principles from this chapter in preparing for the composting initiative in western Tanzania. This example brings the concepts to life and lays the groundwork for everything that follows.

Case Study: Preparing for the Composting Initiative in Western Tanzania

OPENING WORKSHOP: BUILDING A SHARED VISION

In May 2019, our preparation began with a workshop in Kigoma, Tanzania, that brought together the Jane Goodall Institute team, technical experts, internal decision makers, and funders. Led by Drs. Lauren Watkins and Amielle DeWan, Executive Director of Impact by Design, the workshop was designed to prepare the core planning team before engaging directly with communities.



Profile of mother and infant wild chimpanzees on a tree at Gombe.
Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Anna Mosser

The sessions combined skill training and strategy. Participants were introduced to the principles of community-based behavior change, explored examples from other sectors, and practiced using tools such as root cause analysis. At the same time, the group began applying these methods to their context in western Tanzania, discussing what was already known about deforestation in the region and challenges facing communities.

This workshop served two critical purposes: it built a shared understanding of behavior change within the team, aligning partners and decision makers on why this approach would be central to the initiative, and it began the process of identifying the root causes of deforestation in the region — the core problem we hoped to address. By blending learning with planning, the group established a common foundation that made the next stages of preparation, working with communities, conducting baseline research, and piloting strategies focused and collaborative.

UNDERSTANDING ROOT CAUSES

As part of our preparation stage, the planning team used **root cause analysis** to begin untangling the complex web of issues driving deforestation in western Tanzania. This exercise wasn't about jumping to solutions. It was about pausing to understand the deeper forces at play so that any future strategies would be grounded in reality.

Working with technical experts, local experts, and available information, the group identified a set of root causes and weighed them against what could realistically be addressed with our resources and behavior change strategies. The table below summarizes what we found and the key considerations that shaped our next steps.

Root Cause	What Is It?	What Did We Learn?
Illegal Logging	Unauthorized harvesting of trees in protected forests for construction, furniture, and other uses.	Driven largely by enforcement and governance gaps; not feasible to address through community-level behavior change.
Settlements	Displaced people from neighboring countries are establishing new communities within forested areas.	Rooted in displacement and the need for secure housing, behavior change was unlikely to influence this.
Uncontrolled Fires	Fires intentionally set for rituals, hunting, or land clearing that spread uncontrollably.	Deeply tied to cultural practices and unpredictable, alternatives may not be widely accepted or practical.
Small-Scale Subsistence Farming	Families are clearing forested areas to create small farms for food and income.	Driven by survival and food security; represented a potential entry point where behavior change could realistically support households while reducing forest pressure.
Charcoal Production	Trees harvested and burned to produce charcoal for heating and cooking.	Limited access to alternative energy meant systemic solutions were required; difficult to shift with behavior change alone.
Cattle Herding	Nomadic herders moving livestock through forests in search of grazing land.	Influenced by cultural traditions, governance gaps, and mobility; difficult to target with a localized initiative.
Large-Scale Farming	Clearing vast areas of forests for crops such as tobacco and oil palm.	Driven by powerful economic and industry forces; beyond the scope of a community-based initiative.

Table 3.1: Example of a Root Causes Analysis of Deforestation in western Tanzania

This step gave us a clear picture of the pressures on forests without yet deciding which behaviors to target. By the end of the analysis, one theme stood out. While many drivers of deforestation were beyond the reach of a community-based initiative, one stood out as both urgent and actionable — the expansion of small-scale farms. Families depended on these farms for food and income, yet their practices were putting pressure on nearby forests. This was a place where new, more sustainable practices could make a real difference for both people and nature. With this focus in mind, the team was ready to explore which specific behaviors could be supported and encouraged.

BASELINE RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL CONSULTATION

Identifying small-scale farming as a promising focus gave us direction, but it didn't give us enough detail to act. To design strategies that would resonate with farmers, we needed a much deeper understanding of their daily realities, **values**, and challenges. That's where baseline research and technical consultation came in.

Thorough baseline research is essential for any behavior change initiative. It helps you learn who your audience is, what they care about, and who they trust. Just as importantly, it reduces the risk of designing an initiative that looks good on paper but fails to connect in practice. This data allows you to design strategies that meet people where they are, reducing the risk of launching initiatives that may not resonate or gain traction.

In our case, the Jane Goodall Institute and partners carried out a **baseline study** covering 813 households, complemented by conversations with local leaders, focus groups, and what we saw and heard in communities firsthand. Together, these gave us a rich picture of:

- **Cultures** – including tribes, languages spoken, and religion.
- **Socioeconomic indicators** – such as the types of homes people live in, items they own, and income sources.
- **Family size and composition** – to understand household structures and labor availability.
- **Farming practices and harvests** – what crops were grown, how they were cultivated, and yields.
- **Trusted information sources** – including who people turned to for advice, and which communication channels (e.g., radio, meetings, neighbors) were most relied upon.
- **Time use** – how people spend their days, especially in relation to farming, family care, and other livelihoods.

Alongside household surveys, we consulted **technical experts** such as agricultural extension officers, geospatial analysts, and agronomists. These consultations provided an external perspective on farming systems, soil health, and conservation pressures. In some areas, we also conducted **soil testing** to confirm what farmers were experiencing in their fields: declining fertility that limited productivity and fueled pressure to clear new land.

Together, the baseline research and technical consultation gave us both breadth and depth. We now had a picture of everyday life in the communities, combined with biological evidence and expert insight. This foundation prepared us for the next step: exploring which specific farming behaviors might realistically shift pressure away from forests while supporting families.



We now had a picture of everyday life in the communities, combined with biological evidence and expert insight.

Exploring Solutions

With a clearer picture of the community and their realities, the team was ready to explore potential solutions. The goal was to identify specific behaviors that could reduce pressure on riverine forests while putting community priorities at the center of the solution — food security and livelihoods.



The goal was to identify specific behaviors that could reduce pressure on riverine forests while putting community priorities at the center of the solution — food security and livelihoods.

At this stage, it was tempting to move quickly toward one idea, but the stakes were too high for guesswork. Instead, we laid out a range of possible alternative behaviors we could promote with our initiative and used a Consequences Table to weigh them systematically against criteria that mattered.

The table helped us compare options such as adopting composting practices, improving intercropping techniques, and 'zero-grazing.' Each potential behavior was assessed for:

- **Conservation impact** – Would it measurably reduce forest pressure?
- **Feasibility** – Could households realistically adopt it with the resources available?
- **Time to benefits** – Would results be visible quickly enough to keep people motivated?
- **Cultural fit** – Did it align with community values and traditions?
- **Equity** – Would women and men both benefit?
- **Risks and trade-offs** – What unintended consequences might arise?
- **Ease of monitoring** – Could we track adoption and outcomes over time?
- **Support from partners** – Were technical experts and local leaders positioned to reinforce the behavior?

This exercise didn't produce a single "right answer," but it made the trade-offs clear. It also gave the team a structured way to discuss what mattered most (and why) when choosing a 'solution' — or alternative behavior to promote in the initiative to come.

Through these discussions, **composting emerged as a particularly promising behavior**. It directly addressed soil fertility issues, driving farmers to set up new farms in riverine forests. It also had visible short-term benefits for farmers, was low-cost, climate-smart, and could be done using locally available materials. We shared the idea with a few farmers and colleagues, who also expressed optimism about its potential to strengthen farms while reducing the need to clear forests.



Close-up of hands holding compost. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Robert Mkosamali

At the same time, we knew composting was not a quick or simple fix. It is a complex process that requires time, practice, and support to master. That reality underscored the importance of moving carefully. Our next steps were to **choose villages for piloting** and collect more information about our target audience so we could learn what it would take for composting to succeed in practice.

The consequences table gave us confidence in this choice — not because it was perfect, but because it was transparent, evidence-based, and aligned with both community needs and conservation goals.

The Consequences Table template in The Practitioner's Toolkit will help you apply the same structured approach to your own initiative before committing to a **target behavior**.

MAKING THE CHOICE

When the team weighed composting and zero-grazing using a **consequences table**, both scored well, but composting pulled ahead on the criteria that mattered most. It scored high on conservation impact, feasibility, ease of monitoring, support from partners, and data confidence, while zero-grazing scored low on policy alignment and only medium on feasibility and budget. Baseline soil testing also gave us confidence that composting would show measurable improvements quickly, and within a single farming season we can see real gains in soil health and harvest results, which we knew would matter for keeping farmers motivated early on. No behavior scored perfectly across every criterion, and that is the point. The table did not hand us an obvious answer. It helped us see the trade-offs clearly enough to make one.

Prioritizing Villages for Piloting and Why Piloting is Essential

With composting identified as a promising behavior for the initiative to encourage, one that would directly support farmers and reduce their need to start farms in nearby forests, the team turned to the question of where to begin. Launching across all priority areas at once was not realistic, nor would it have been wise. Instead, we needed to choose a handful of pilot villages where we could learn quickly, adapt, and build early momentum.

Villages were prioritized based on several factors:

- **Level of forest pressure** - Was there an urgent need to reduce expansion into riverine forests near certain villages? Where are healthy forests we can still have a positive impact on?
- **Community interest and readiness** - Did JGI have a presence in the area? Did communities trust JGI?
- **Accessibility and logistics** - Could staff and partners provide ongoing support? Are there accessible roads to the village?
- **Presence of trusted partners** - Were agricultural extension officers or local leaders already engaged with us?



Isubangala farmers working together to prepare a compost heap. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/ Michael Pandisha



Isubangala farmers covering compost heap. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Piloting was not just a practical choice; **it was an essential step in the behavior change design process**. Even the most promising ideas look different in real life than they do on paper. Piloting our initiative in three carefully-selected villages allowed us to:

Piloting is an essential step in the behavior change process

- **Learn and adapt** - By testing composting in a few villages first, we could uncover obstacles, refine strategies, and avoid costly mistakes later. This helped us manage risks more effectively.
- **Build evidence** - Pilots generated real-world examples of what worked (and what didn't), giving us the confidence to scale up to more villages later on. This helped us use our resources wisely, focusing our time, energy, and budget on strategies that showed the greatest promise early on.
- **Create champions** - Early adopters, people eager to try composting, became trusted voices to their neighbors, showing that composting was both possible and worthwhile.

Piloting also laid the groundwork for monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL). By starting small, we could track rates of composting (rates of people adopting the new behavior), test assumptions, answer our learning questions, and adapt strategies before expanding to more villages. All of this ensured that our next steps were guided by evidence and feedback.

Bringing It All Together

The preparation stage of our composting initiative shows what careful groundwork can achieve. Each step — building a shared foundation within the team, identifying root causes, gathering baseline insights, weighing solutions, and starting small with pilot villages — followed the same principles outlined in this chapter.

This stage was not about rushing to action. It was about making deliberate choices that are informed by data, grounded in community realities, and flexible enough to adapt as we learned. Piloting gave us early wins and, just as importantly, space to test, refine, and prepare for scaling up.

As you move into your own initiatives, the lesson is clear: **strong preparation doesn't slow you down. It sets you up for lasting impact**.



Farmer proudly posing on her farmed land. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

CHAPTER FOUR

Community Engagement & MEL



Two community members discussing at event. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Annolbert Alexander

Community Engagement: The Essential First Step

In Chapter 3, we focused on preparation: building clarity, aligning your team, and creating the conditions for success. Now we turn to the first stage of the theory of change that guides this book: **community engagement**. This is where preparation meets people (community members, including your 'target audience'), and where the real work of collaboration begins.

When we collaborate intentionally with communities early in the process, we tap into their unique knowledge and perspectives on conservation challenges. These are insights that we, as outsiders, may not possess. Acknowledging community members as experts in their lived experiences, especially when working with cultures different from our own, unlocks the potential for co-creating initiatives that are both impactful and effective.

Meaningful community engagement also helps avoid mistakes that might otherwise undermine a project. Consider one initiative to improve access to clean water: wells were installed in villages but went unused. Only later did the project team discover that the wells had flat, concrete bases, while villagers' traditional water vessels had rounded bottoms that tipped and spilled. Early dialogue with community members could have prevented this oversight.

Engagement matters for both ethical and practical reasons. Ethically, people deserve a voice in decisions that shape their lives and livelihoods. Practically, strategies co-created with communities are more likely to succeed, spread, and last. As Dr. Jane Goodall said, *"Only if we understand can we care. Only if we care will we help. Only if we help shall all be saved."*

"Only if we understand can we care. Only if we care will we help. Only if we help shall all be saved."

—Dr. Jane Goodall, DBE

When community members are part of co-creating solutions, they often become early champions of the initiative. Their support and advocacy can build trust, encourage buy-in, and expand your reach within their **social networks**. By involving communities from the very beginning, you not only save time and resources but also amplify the impact of your efforts long before the official launch.

Behavior change initiatives should put communities at the center of the solution and meet them exactly where they are, rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all approach. This principle shapes every stage of the process, from the first conversations to the design of strategies and the way success is measured.

At this stage, your role is not to arrive with all the answers, but to listen, learn, and build trust. By doing so, you lay the foundation for every step that follows: awareness, intention, action, and maintenance. Done well, community engagement makes all of it possible. Done poorly, or skipped altogether, it can undermine even the best-intentioned plans and risk weakening your entire initiative.



A group of women engaged in discussion. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Shawn Sweeney

What Meaningful Engagement Looks Like

At the Jane Goodall Institute, community engagement is guided by our **Tacare** approach to community-led conservation. This name comes from the *Lake Tanganyika Catchment Reforestation and Education program*, TACARE, which JGI began in 1994 as an innovative approach to conservation. This program placed communities at the heart of solutions by ensuring they own and lead development and conservation decisions in their landscapes.

Tacare's foundation rests on the premise that lasting environmental solutions can only be built through meaningful and thoughtful engagement with communities. Its key principle is simple yet powerful: Tacare is *offered, never imposed*. Communities choose whether to participate, and if they do, they own the solutions and drive the change.

Tacare follows a five-phase process that illustrates what meaningful engagement looks like in practice:

1. Engage. Begin dialogue with community members and local governments early in your process. If communities are not ready, step back and wait — sometimes for years — until they are interested in moving forward.

> *For example, you can meet with influential community leaders, seek required government approvals to work in a community or conduct data collection, and follow cultural protocols for introductions. Taking these steps early shows respect and helps establish legitimacy for your work.*

> *In western Tanzania, our first step was meeting with village leaders to seek permission and build trust. We then moved on to meet with the communities themselves for the same purpose. Their input shaped every stage of the composting initiative. In these meetings, we shared the goals and intentions of the project, answered questions, and worked to build relationships. Since village leaders represent their communities, establishing genuine rapport with them specifically was a top priority.*

2. Listen. Use active listening to understand not only needs and concerns but also local insights, values, and traditional ecological knowledge.

> *For example, you can hold informal conversations, workshops, focus groups, surveys, or key informant interviews to learn about daily realities, aspirations, and the community's understanding of the problem you hope to collaboratively solve. Community mapping exercises can also help people describe how they use and value their environment in their own words and images.*

> *In western Tanzania: Through focus groups and interviews, farmers told us what they most wanted to know about composting, issues they were experiencing, and how they preferred to learn. They also shared the beliefs and values that shaped their views on composting, which we worked to clarify as the project unfolded. This input shaped the language and slogans we eventually used in initiative messaging.*

3. Understand. Combine traditional, social, and technical knowledge to develop a shared picture of problems and potential solutions.

For example, you can use maps and other data to show how human activities, wildlife, and the environment are connected, while also gathering information on local priorities such as health, education, and food security through surveys or conversations. Combining biological data with community knowledge creates a strong foundation for monitoring, evaluation, and learning.



Farmers feeding their pigs. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

In western Tanzania: Baseline surveys of over 800 households revealed how families were farming, where they got information, and what daily challenges they faced. Paired with soil testing, deforestation mapping, and agriculture expert consultation, this gave us a fuller understanding of both community realities and ecological pressures.

4. Facilitate. Support communities in implementing their chosen solutions. The role of outside organizations is to provide resources and technical support, not to dictate choices.

For example, you can provide access to training, materials, or technical expertise; create spaces for peer-to-peer learning and collaboration; or help coordinate with government agencies and other partners. The goal is to lower barriers and build confidence, while keeping ownership of the solution in community hands.

In western Tanzania: We selected ambassador farmers, with village leadership support, to receive hands-on composting training and tools. Their demonstration plots showed neighbors what was possible, making composting feel tangible and achievable. We also remained available to agricultural extension agents to support them in collaborating with farmers. During this process, we learned that farmers needed some additional resources to implement composting with their neighbors — such as uniforms, cell phone data, wheelbarrows, and tools — which we were able to provide to help them work more efficiently.

5. Step Back. Maintain local ownership by stepping back when communities are ready to lead. If communities choose not to engage, withdraw respectfully while leaving the door open for future participation.

For example, you can maintain trust by following through on commitments, keeping communication open and clear, and recognizing community achievements publicly. Stepping back shows confidence in community leadership and reinforces long-term ownership.

In western Tanzania: As ambassador farmers gained confidence, they trained others in their villages. Our role shifted from direct implementers to providing technical support and celebrating their leadership publicly in community events and competitions.

The composting initiative you'll see throughout this book was built on these same principles. By engaging communities early, listening to their realities, and facilitating solutions they could own, the initiative followed the Tacare approach of putting people at the center of lasting conservation change.

To help you apply this approach in your own context, you will find the **Building Community Partnership: JGI Tacare Checklist in the Practitioner's Toolkit**.

Strong engagement creates the relationships and shared understanding needed to move forward, but it is only the beginning. To turn collaboration into meaningful progress, practitioners also need to set clear and measurable goals. Both partners — the organization and the community — must be open to learn from one another. The next section explores how to define goals that reflect both conservation priorities and community values, and how these goals guide every stage of a behavior change initiative.



Training participants on practical compost making session. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Rusanganya Lameck

Setting Clear Goals and Why It Matters

Once you have laid the groundwork through community engagement, the next step is to set clear goals for your initiative. Goals are more than aspirations — they are guideposts that align your team, community partners, and decision makers around what success looks like at every stage. Without them, initiatives drift, priorities multiply, and energy gets wasted.

Clear goals serve three purposes:

- **They focus effort.** When everyone knows what the initiative is trying to achieve, it becomes easier to design strategies that are realistic and relevant.
- **They build accountability.** Goals allow progress to be tracked, shared, and celebrated, both within your team and with the communities you serve.
- **They create connections.** Goals that reflect both conservation priorities and community needs signal that the initiative is about shared benefits, not outside agendas.

These purposes only hold true if goals are developed transparently and owned by all involved. It is also essential that your team is united behind the goal before moving forward — not as a nice-to-have, but as a foundation for everything that comes next.

We have all seen initiatives stumble because team members were working toward different visions of success. The biologist thinks success means species recovery. The community organizer focuses on stronger local leadership. The communications lead measures success through social media engagement. Each of these may matter, but without a shared goal connecting them, the initiative loses the focus needed to drive lasting change.



Aerial image of community members on a discussion around a map of their community.
Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Stephano Lihedule



Farmers in jovial mood during the BCC Close Out Event. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

The good news is that taking time to build consensus up front makes every subsequent decision easier. A clearly articulated conservation goal becomes your guide — a foundation for developing strategies, testing messages, choosing partners, and allocating resources.

A clearly articulated conservation goal is a foundation for developing strategies, testing messages, choosing partners, and allocating resources

Effective goals are:

- **Specific.** They describe the exact behavior or outcome you hope to influence, aligned with both conservation priorities and community values.
- **Impact-oriented.** They focus on desired long-term outcomes, not only short-term activities.
- **Measurable.** They can be tracked through data, whether quantitative or qualitative.
- **Achievable.** They are realistic given the time, resources, and support available.

Just as importantly, goals should be shaped with direct input from communities you work alongside. When communities help define what success looks like, they see their values reflected in the initiative, turning a goal into a shared vision rather than an external agenda. We will return to how you measure and learn from that progress in the MEL section, but from the very start, it is worth asking: *How will we know if this is working?*

The **Audience Segmentation Worksheet in The Practitioner's Toolkit** will help you build a clearer picture of who you are designing for and what matters most to them as you work through this process.

From Goals to Action: A Path to Preserving Riverine Forests

Setting clear goals naturally leads to the next question: *How exactly will you get there?* This is where a Theory of Change becomes essential.

A Theory of Change (ToC) makes your path forward explicit. It links actions to results, surfaces your assumptions, and creates a shared roadmap for your team and partners. In behavior change initiatives, specifically, a ToC also helps articulate a hypothesis for change — not only how you will ultimately achieve the conservation goal, but how specific behavioral shifts will contribute to achieving it. Think of it as both a map and a compass: the map shows the key steps between where you are and where you want to go, and the compass helps you check whether you are still on course. A good ToC does not need to be complicated — it just needs to be clear.

In this guide, we use Impact by Design's Theory of Change that draws on decades of behavioral science and earlier models of how people adopt new behaviors, both as individuals and as members of a community. What sets this ToC apart is how it connects the two. Most behavior change frameworks focus on the individual — how a person moves from awareness to action. Fewer make explicit how that individual shift becomes a collective one. This ToC treats that transition as central, not incidental.

Rather than treating individual and collective adoption as separate processes, this ToC weaves them into a single pathway. It begins with Community Engagement, Creating Change Awareness, and Fostering Intention — stages rooted in individual psychology. From there, it moves into Action and **Action Maintenance**, where new behaviors take hold. The critical shift happens at **Social Diffusion**: this is where individual adoption becomes collective practice, as early adopters influence their networks and new behaviors spread organically through communities. Only once behaviors are sustained at scale can they drive meaningful Threat reduction and, ultimately, progress toward the Conservation Goal.

Community engagement: This is where everything begins. Building trust and listening to communities creates the relationships and shared understanding you will need for the rest of the process. It is also the stage for gathering baseline information — through surveys, focus groups, or observations — that helps clarify the problem, explore opportunities for change, and identify the barriers and benefits people will weigh as they consider new behaviors.

Creating change awareness: People need to know what the behavior is before they can try it. This stage is about raising awareness of the specific behavior you want people to adopt, using examples and messages that make sense in their daily lives. The messenger matters as much as the message - trusted, familiar voices often carry more weight than outside experts. You may not always be the best messenger for your audience, and that is okay.

Fostering intention: Awareness alone is not enough. At this stage, people begin to feel motivated and ready to act. Focus on lowering barriers, connecting the behavior to what matters most in people's lives, and building their confidence that they can succeed. Strategies may include live demonstrations, incentives, free trials, or skill training.

Action: Intention needs to be followed by opportunity. Once people clearly understand what they are being asked to do and feel motivated, they are more likely to take action — as long as the obstacles they face are not too daunting. This stage is about creating the conditions that make action feasible in a supportive environment.

Action maintenance: A single attempt does not make a habit. Sustaining a new behavior requires reinforcement, feedback, and recognition over time. This stage focuses on helping people turn one-time actions into routines through strategies like reminders, community recognition, or ongoing support.

Social diffusion: Behaviors spread most effectively through social networks. When people maintain a behavior, they often begin sharing their experiences with others, creating momentum. This stage emphasizes celebrating successes, showcasing visible examples, and creating opportunities for change to spread organically from person to person.

Threat Reduction and Conservation Impact: The ultimate aim is not just individual behavior change but measurable impact for people and nature. When behaviors are adopted at scale, they reduce pressures on ecosystems and help communities and conservation goals thrive together.

Each of these stages has a dedicated chapter where we explore how it unfolds in practice. To help you visualize and adapt this framework for your own initiative, you will find the **Theory of Change Overview in The Practitioner's Toolkit**.



Image: Impact by Design's Theory of Change, developed in 2019

Learning Together

Community engagement and goal setting are not one-time steps. They are the beginning of an ongoing partnership. To create lasting change, practitioners must continue learning alongside the communities they serve.

Learning together means keeping dialogue open, revisiting assumptions, and adapting as circumstances shift. It means treating community members not only as participants but as co-researchers and advisors, whose feedback actively shapes the initiative as it unfolds.

This is where progress **monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)** become central. MEL is not just a reporting requirement for funders; it is, first and foremost, a process that allows communities and practitioners to ask together: *Is this working? What should we adjust? What can we celebrate?*

For example, feedback from **ambassador farmers** in western Tanzania revealed that early compost training unintentionally created a barrier by emphasizing calcium sources, such as eggs or bones, which can be hard to find in the quantities the training said they needed. Farmers' input led us to revise the training and messaging to clarify that calcium was helpful but not essential. This small but important adaptation lowered barriers and made composting more accessible to more households.

Participatory learning like this makes MEL practical and relevant. When communities see that their observations and concerns influence real changes, trust deepens. When teams share results openly — whether through community meetings, reflection sessions, or simple feedback loops — **motivation** grows to keep going. When we use this information to adapt strategies, initiatives stay responsive to real-world needs.

Learning together transforms MEL from a compliance exercise into a shared culture of reflection, accountability, and growth.

Looking Ahead

Community engagement, goal setting, and shared learning form the foundation of any successful behavior change initiative. They ensure that conservation goals reflect community values, that strategies are realistic, and that adaptation is built into the process from the start.

In the next chapter, we move to the second stage of our theory of change: **creating change awareness**. This is where you begin promoting the specific behaviors you want to see adopted, using trusted voices and culturally relevant messages. The composting initiative in western Tanzania offers practical lessons here as well, showing how early engagement with farmers shaped initiative messaging and ensured it resonated with daily realities.

By building on the trust, clarity, and shared ownership developed in this chapter, you set the stage for awareness that inspires action.

(Opposite page) Wild chimpanzee profile. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Stephano Lihedule





Two cercopithecus monkeys. Photo by Jane Goodall Institute RoC/Fernando Turmo

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL): A Practical Guide for Behavior Change Initiative

We have explored how to engage communities, set clear goals, and build a theory of change. Now we turn to the system that holds all of it together: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL). It may not be the most exciting part of the work, but it is one of the most important, deserving dedicated resources and a thoughtful approach.

Your MEL system serves as your initiative's navigation tool, helping you test assumptions, course-correct when things are not working, and adapt your approach to achieve the change you hope to see. It is not just about accountability to funders, though that matters too; it is about creating a feedback loop that makes your initiative stronger and generates valuable insights for current and future work.

WHY MEL IS DIFFERENT IN BEHAVIOR CHANGE WORK

Conservation behavior change initiatives are fundamentally different from traditional conservation projects, and your MEL approach needs to reflect that difference.

In traditional conservation projects, progress is visible: the workshop gets delivered, the materials get distributed, and the awareness campaign reaches its target audience. Behavior change is different. It is often invisible until it reaches a tipping point. A traditional monitoring system asks: *"Did we make people aware, as we said we would?"* Behavior change asks: *"Are people actually changing, and why, or why not?"* You might spend months building trust and shifting attitudes before seeing any measurable change in what people actually decide to do.

That is why an effective behavior change MEL system must be **participatory, iterative, and dual-tracked**.

- **Participatory** because communities must see themselves as partners in defining success, sharing feedback, and adapting strategies — not just subjects of measurement.
- **Iterative** because decisions need to be informed in real time, not just after the fact. Many traditional conservation projects check in at the beginning, middle, and end. Behavior change initiatives require ongoing monitoring, especially at the very start, when you are testing your assumptions and getting to know the communities you will be working with. If message testing shows your communication is not resonating, you pivot immediately. If pilot activities reveal unintended consequences, you course-correct before full launch. Once your strategies are well-tested and fully launched, you can usually settle into a simpler MEL schedule.
- **Dual-tracked** because you need to measure both the process of change — knowledge, attitudes, intentions, barriers — and the outcomes —adoption, **social norms**, and environmental impact. In practice, this means capturing the nuanced human journey alongside the bigger picture. *How are people feeling about the new behavior? Are they trying it? What barriers are they hitting? Are we hitting the intermediate steps in our theory of change, and are we ultimately achieving our conservation goal?* And because behavior change spreads through social networks, your MEL system also needs to capture how behaviors diffuse through communities, which influencers are most effective, and how social norms are shifting; it is not enough to just count individual adopters. This means tracking change at every level: *individual behavior, household practices, community norms, and ultimately environmental outcomes*.

Your MEL framework needs to be designed from day one to capture both the journey and the destination — this is not something you can add on later. When done right, behavior change MEL does not just tell you **if** your initiative worked; it tells you **why** it worked. That makes all the difference when it comes to launching after piloting and replicating your results.



Infant chimpanzee on a tree. Photo by Jane Goodall Institute RoC/Fernando Turmo

BUILDING MEL INTO YOUR INITIATIVE AND TEAM STRUCTURE

The biggest mistake teams make is treating MEL as an add-on activity handled by one team member for reporting purposes. In behavior change initiatives, MEL needs to be embedded in your team's structure from day one. This means designating a specific MEL budget, workflow, and responsibilities during team formation, not after your initiative is already running.

Why does this matter? Because behavior change is inherently unpredictable. Your carefully crafted goal might be perfect, but the path to achieving it will almost certainly require course corrections based on what you learn along the way.

DEVELOPING YOUR MEL PLAN

There are many robust technical MEL resources available, so here we focus on the specific steps and tips that proved most critical to our work.

Step 1: Determine Your MEL Budget

Allocate resources for all MEL activities upfront before finalizing your initiative plan. MEL is not an add-on; it needs its own line in the budget from day one. Your proposal to a funder, for example, will likely ask you to estimate a MEL budget before you have a full picture of the work ahead, so this early number will only be as good as your current understanding of the initiative. A good MEL budget process, though, follows a clear sequence: first clarify what you most want to learn, then identify the indicators and methods that will get you there, then figure out what each will actually take, and only at this point prioritize based on what you can afford.

Step 2: Clarify What You Want to Learn

Before collecting any data, get clear on your questions: *What assumptions are embedded in your theory of change? What do you need to understand about the community's values, behaviors, or barriers? What conservation outcomes must you track to demonstrate whether or not the strategy is having a desired impact?*

Taking time to answer these questions before designing your data collection saves significant time and resources later and keeps your MEL focused on learning that actually informs decisions.

KEY TAKEAWAY FOR PRACTITIONERS

If you don't know what you want to learn, you'll end up with piles of unused data and a significant waste of resources.

Step 3: Define Your Indicators

Indicators tell you what to measure and what success looks like across three dimensions. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Conservation indicators** that capture changes in environmental outcomes — e.g., forest cover, species abundance and distribution, dissolved oxygen, soil nutrients.
- **Behavior change indicators** that capture adoption progress — e.g., percentage of people trying a new practice, community belief that behavior is achievable, the number of conversations people had with others about the behavior.
- **Social diffusion indicators** that capture the spread of a new desired behavior — e.g., conversations people are having about it with others, the belief that the behavior is or will become a social norm, and adoption happening through channels beyond the initiative's own outreach.

Step 4: Develop Your Learning Agenda

A **learning agenda** outlines **what** you want to learn during your initiative, **when** you'll learn it, and **how** you'll use those insights. It's your roadmap for gathering actionable knowledge and a critical part of your monitoring plan. Rather than just measuring outcomes, you're actively investigating why certain approaches work in specific contexts, which is critical for making timely adaptations and planning for future scaling.

Your learning agenda will have three distinct threads:

- **Theory of Change questions** track whether your hypothesis is holding up: *Are the intermediate outcomes happening as expected? Are the right conditions in place for change to occur?*
- **Behavior Change questions** focus on the human side of adoption: *What barriers are households facing to maintain the new practice? What's driving early adopters, and what's holding others back?*
- **Community questions** connect the behavior to people's broader lives: *Does this behavior align with household priorities like food security or income? How is it being received within families and social networks?*

KEY TAKEAWAY FOR PRACTITIONERS

Before finalizing your learning agenda, test each question against four criteria:

- Is it **Relevant** to your goals and current context?
- Is it **Useful**, meaning will the answer actually inform decisions?
- Is answering it **Feasible** within your timeline and MEL resources?
- And is it **Focused** enough — specific about the who, what, and where?

If a question can't pass all four, refine it before it shapes your data collection.

Step 5: Choose Your Data Collection Methods

Methods will vary, but may include **surveys and interviews** (structured or semi-structured approaches that gather self-reported attitudes and experiences), **focus groups** (facilitated discussions that offer deeper insight into attitudes and barriers), **direct observation** (observation of behaviors and practices without intervening with the target audience), **participatory methods** such as community mapping or ranking exercises (activities that engage community members directly in generating and interpreting data), and **biological data** such as soil testing, remote sensing, or wildlife surveys (direct measures of environmental and ecological conditions).

KEY TAKEAWAY FOR PRACTITIONERS

Always mix methods; triangulating data across multiple sources gives you a much richer picture than any single approach alone.

Step 6: Build Your MEL Team

- **MEL Lead:** someone whose primary job is ensuring data collection happens consistently and that findings get translated into meaningful actions. This person doesn't need to be an evaluation expert, but they do need to be detail-oriented and have the authority to pause activities when data shows something isn't working.
- **Data Collection Team:** staff, consultants, or community partners who can gather information without disrupting the natural flow of behaviors you're trying to observe. These are often one of your most valuable team members because they spot changes and resistance that outsiders miss entirely.
- **Community partners:** ambassadors or leaders who collect feedback and share findings back with their networks.
- **Decision makers:** who will act on MEL results.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Ensure decision makers are part of the MEL process from day one; findings only drive change if the right people are already invested in the questions.
- Don't let limited internal MEL capacity stop you from starting. A consultant or external advisor can fill these roles just as effectively, so building a MEL team doesn't have to feel like an impossible task if your organization doesn't have this expertise in-house.

Step 7: Establish Your MEL Rhythm

Set your MEL calendar and treat these as non-negotiable meetings. A typical rhythm includes:

- **Monthly** check-ins on adoption rates and community feedback indicators.
- **Quarterly** structured reflection on behavior change results and initiative adjustments.
- **Semi-annual/annual** broader reviews of progress toward your conservation goal.

KEY TAKEAWAY FOR PRACTITIONERS

Beyond the regular schedule, prepare for **adaptive management** moments. If pilot results or message testing show red flags, pivot immediately rather than waiting for the next scheduled review.

Step 8: Build a Learning Culture

Set the expectation early: unexpected results are data, not failure. In behavior change work, your first approach won't always land perfectly, and that's normal. That is why conservation behavior change initiatives require consistently testing your ToC's hypotheses. Your goal stays fixed; how you achieve it should remain flexible based on what you learn.

In practice, this means:

- **Budget for adaptation from the start:** plan for the likelihood that your approach will need to shift, not just the possibility.
- **Treat course corrections as progress:** teams that normalize adjustment adapt faster and achieve better outcomes.
- **Celebrate learning along the way:** when a community ambassador identifies a barrier, frame it as a win, not a problem.

WHAT THIS LOOKED LIKE IN PRACTICE: WESTERN TANZANIA

In our initiative in Western Tanzania, continuous learning guided initiative decisions in real time, with each learning phase informing the next.

As soon as the conservation goal, target, and geographic scope had been agreed upon and the most viable behavior identified, we began drafting our MEL Plan. From the start, we made sure it was designed around our **Theory of Change, performance indicators, and learning questions**. This framework kept us focused on both measuring impact and continuously learning what worked, what did not, and why.

Monitoring our Theory of Change progression focused on six core results: community willingness to participate in composting activities; farmers building and maintaining compost heaps; evidence of improved soil quality; composting being adopted as common practice; farmers choosing to improve existing plots rather than cultivating new ones in riverine forests; and whether those changes were contributing to measurable conservation outcomes.

A set of carefully crafted learning questions explored the human side of adoption. Each was drawn from one of three learning threads — Theory of Change, Behavior Change, or Community — and tested against four criteria: was it relevant to current goals and context, useful enough that the answer would shape a real decision, feasible within the team's timeline and resources, and focused enough to specify the who, what, and where. Most were built into formal Mid and Endline Evaluations; a smaller set was deliberately reserved for internal learning sessions, surfacing unexpected results before they ever reached a report.

The table on the next page shows a sample of these questions, the thread and criteria behind each, and the decisions they ultimately shaped.

Learning thread	Sample question	The decisions they shaped	Data source
Behavior change	Do farmers feel that composting can be sustained over time and become a common practice? If not, why?	Relevant and useful: tested whether the ToC's end-state goal - composting as common practice - was realistic, directly informing Action Maintenance support decisions.	Mid and Endline Evaluations
Behavior change	What are the key barriers for those who chose not to use compost?	Useful: surfaced practical barriers early enough to revise our approaches and support adoption.	Post-Pilot, Mid and Endline Evaluations
Community	Are men or women more likely to support the adoption of composting? Why?	Relevant: tested the equity assumption built into the ToC from the start, and later helped explain why women emerged as key drivers of social diffusion.	Mid and Endline Evaluations
Theory of change	Are there any unintended consequences?	Relevant and feasible: revisited the risk question raised during the Preparation stage, checking that the ToC's pathway wasn't producing unplanned negative effects.	Internal learning sessions
Theory of change	What was the least expected finding (positive or negative)?	Useful: put the Learning Culture principle into practice - treating surprises as information that could update the ToC's assumptions, not as failures to manage around.	Internal learning sessions

Table 4.1: Example of Learning Questions from the western Tanzania Initiative.



Group of chimpanzees walking in a line. Photo by Jane Goodall Institute RoC/Fernando Turmo

PHASE-BASED MEL APPROACH

The MEL plan was implemented through distinct phases, each building on previous learnings to inform the next. This was done not as a reporting requirement, but as an active decision-making tool throughout the life of the initiative.

The Baseline Study (2019) established our foundation, helping us understand community practices, motivations, social dynamics, and the economic and environmental context. A key discovery was that soil fertility concerns ranked much higher on farmers' priority lists than we had initially assumed, which completely shifted our messaging strategy.

Baseline Study: 28 villages, 813 households

The Pilot Phase launched in three villages with baseline soil testing, built around a straightforward hypothesis: soil infertility drives farmers into forests. Pre-pilot focus groups tested messaging and training materials, revealing that farmers responded far more positively to messages about improving harvests than to abstract conservation messaging. After 11 months, a comprehensive post-pilot evaluation assessed lead farmers' needs, perceptions around soil fertility, composting challenges, and message relevance. This uncovered implementation barriers we had not anticipated, like compost preparation time conflicting with seasonal farming activities.

Post-Pilot Evaluation: 3 treatment villages, 3 control villages, 373 trained farmers



Image of forest vegetation. Photo by Andre Zacher

The Scale-Up Phase expanded from the original 3 pilot villages to a total of 11. Following baseline soil testing in new villages, we tracked progress through midline evaluation that focused on harvest results, peer-to-peer communication patterns, and spontaneous adopters — farmers who were teaching neighbors without our direct involvement.

Midline Evaluation: 4 treatment villages, 2 control villages, 279 trained farmers

The Endline Evaluation (December 2023) combined end-of-project soil testing with spatial analysis to capture the initiative's full impact and long-term landscape changes, measuring final adoption rates, sustained behavior change, and environmental outcomes.

Endline Evaluation: 5 treatment villages, 3 control villages, 327 trained farmers

Throughout the initiative, a simple farmers' database, maintained in Excel by our volunteer network, tracked harvests, crop varieties, and yield improvements across all participating communities. Volunteers collected real-time data while simultaneously providing technical support to farmers, ensuring we captured accurate information while sustaining the adoption of composting practices.

KEY LEARNING INSIGHTS

What makes this kind of MEL approach successful is that each stage builds directly on the previous one, and every data collection effort serves a specific purpose. The goal is not just to gather information — it is to actively use it to strengthen the initiative in real time. Building a MEL framework with equal focus on conservation outcomes and the gradual process of behavior change allows teams to test the assumptions they started with while staying close to how communities are actually progressing.

A well-structured MEL system does not just measure success — it creates the conditions for success, by ensuring the team is constantly learning and adapting based on real community feedback and real conservation outcomes. This is what separates initiatives that achieve lasting behavior change from those that see early momentum fade before it becomes a habit.

When MEL is built into the team structure from the beginning, it becomes more than a measurement tool. It becomes the foundation for a genuine partnership with communities — one that responds to what people actually need, adapts when circumstances change, and keeps the initiative honest about whether it is truly achieving the change it set out to create.

You will find the **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan Template** at the back of this book.



Two chimpanzees looking into the camera. Photo by Jane Goodall Institute RoC/Fernando Turmo

CHAPTER FIVE

Creating Change Awareness



Billboard of a happy farmer with BCC branding and messaging. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

The Role of Awareness in Behavior Change

In the previous chapters, we focused on preparation and community engagement: clarifying the problem, aligning teams, building trust, and listening deeply to the people whose lives and livelihoods are connected to the conservation challenge you hope to address.

Creating change awareness is the stage at which the insights you have gained from the community become an invitation for your target audience to take action.

What Creating Change Awareness Is (and Is Not)

At this point in the process, raising awareness has a very specific job to do. You are now asking people to notice a particular behavior, understand why it matters to them, and consider whether it is worth trying. That means moving beyond general conservation messaging about species or habitats and toward clear, motivating communication about a specific action and its value to your target audience.

In behavior change initiatives, "raising awareness" does not usually mean "teaching people about a conservation problem." It means helping people understand what you're inviting them to do, why it should matter to them, and how it fits their everyday priorities.

The goal is not to share lots of facts, which can overwhelm people, or to persuade with fear or guilt. Instead, we're here to **make a new or different behavior visible, relevant, and appealing**.



The BCC Netball Tournament and mascot in Ubinza. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

This distinction matters. Many conservation initiatives stop at awareness-raising, assuming that once people know about an issue, they will care about it, and taking action will naturally follow. However, decades of behavioral science research show that knowledge alone does not necessarily lead to sustained behavior change.

What awareness-raising efforts can do, when designed well, is open the door to action. It creates the conditions for people to say, "This seems worthwhile," or "I might be willing to try that."

In western Tanzania, creating change awareness was not about explaining deforestation or chimpanzee conservation. It was about clearly communicating a simple, motivating idea: *farmers already had what they needed to improve their soil, strengthen their harvests, and reduce the need to clear new land to find fertile places to farm*. That message did not remove every barrier or guarantee people would try composting, but it sparked curiosity and interest. It gave people something specific to think about.

This chapter focuses on how to design awareness in this way. You will learn how to define the behavior you are inviting people to try, translate that invitation into clear, compelling messages without overpromising, and choose messengers and channels people trust.

Creating change awareness is not the end of the journey. It sets the stage for what comes next as people consider whether or not to try the new behavior. We'll start with the simplest requirement of all: people can't consider a new behavior if they don't clearly understand what it is.



Creating change awareness sets the stage for what comes next as people consider whether or not to try the new behavior.

Be Clear About What You Are Inviting People to Do

Creating change awareness only works when people are clear about what, exactly, they are being asked to try or change. Vague calls to action make it difficult for people to picture themselves taking the next step. A bumper sticker that says "Save the Ocean!" might spark feelings, but it doesn't spark action. **Clear, specific calls to action make it easier to imagine trying something new.**

In behavior change initiatives, the "behavior" is not a broad aspiration like *'protect forests'* or *'care about wildlife.'* It is something concrete that someone can recognize, try, and talk about with others. **Clarifying your ask is one of the most critical tasks in this stage.**

A clear message that invites people to take action has three key qualities:

1. **It is specific.** People should be able to describe the behavior in simple terms. If you asked someone, "What is this campaign encouraging people to do?" they should be able to answer without hesitation or confusion.
2. **It is doable in people's real lives.** The behavior should reflect what you already learned during community engagement about time, resources, skills, and constraints. If the behavior requires tools, materials, or knowledge that people do not have access to, awareness alone will not move things forward.
3. **It is clearly connected to benefits people care about.** At the awareness stage, people are not yet committing to long-term change. They are deciding whether the behavior seems relevant and worth paying attention to.



Farmers show a branded bucket as part of BCC incentives provided. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha



Compost inspection by compost farmers. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

In western Tanzania, the behavior promoted was not framed as *"protect chimpanzee habitat"* or *"reduce deforestation."* It was defined more concretely: *making and using compost to improve soil fertility on existing farms*. Farmers could picture what composting could do for them and why it might benefit their families in the next harvest cycle.

Defining the behavior clearly also helps you avoid a common pitfall at this stage: overwhelming people by asking them to do too much at once.

Once you have defined the behavior you want to invite people to try, **the next step is to translate that behavior into messages that build awareness about the change you hope to see**.
As you begin drafting awareness messages, be sure to test them with questions such as:

- After hearing the message once, can someone clearly describe the behavior they are being invited to try?
- Does the behavior, as described in the messaging, feel realistic within people's daily lives and existing routines?
- Can they explain why trying the new behavior might benefit them?

If your messaging does not pass these tests, the issue is often not motivation or resistance — it is confusion.

Best Practices for Designing Clear and Credible Messaging

Start with what people already value. During community engagement, you learned about your target audience's values and priorities. Use what you learned, rather than introducing new ideas or external agendas. **When messages align with what people already care about, they feel relevant.**

The **Psychographic Profile Worksheet in The Practitioner's Toolkit** will help you capture and organize these insights about your audience so your messaging stays grounded in what matters most to them. This does not mean avoiding conservation goals altogether. It means leading with what matters most to your audience and allowing conservation benefits to emerge naturally or through supporting messages.



Natural scenery with wild chimpanzee in the far distance. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute

In a composting initiative in western Tanzania, this meant:

- Emphasizing family well-being, food security, safety, time savings, and pride in our core messaging, rather than saving forests and chimpanzees.
- Using language people already use to describe their own challenges and goals, such as caring for their families or improving harvests.
- Avoiding technical or conservation-specific jargon unless it was already familiar to farmers. This meant steering away from terms like 'deforestation' and not discussing soil in terms of specific nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus, or potassium.

Use emotion carefully. Emotion plays a role in awareness, but it should be grounded in people's lived experiences, when possible, in a positive way. Messages that rely on fear, guilt, or shame may get attention in the short term, but they risk turning off your audience if these emotions are triggered too often. Instead, focus on emotions that support agency and curiosity, such as pride, hope, relief, or a sense of possibility.

In our composting initiative, messages emphasized confidence and capability. Farmers were reminded that they already had what they needed to improve their soil and harvests. This framing reinforced a sense of competence rather than highlighting loss or blame.

Show, don't explain, whenever possible. Awareness messages do not need to explain everything. In fact, too much explanation can make a behavior feel complicated or intimidating. Simple visuals, demonstrations, or short statements often communicate more effectively than detailed descriptions.

Images and examples should reflect your target audience - who they are, what they do, and how they spend their time. When people see someone like them doing the behavior, it becomes easier to imagine trying it themselves. This might mean using photos of local people, familiar tools, or everyday settings rather than polished or idealized images.

Keep messages simple and consistent. Awareness messaging should reinforce a small number of ideas repeatedly, rather than introducing many concepts at once. Repetition is not a weakness here. It is how new behaviors become recognizable and memorable. And, when people see and hear the same simple message over and over again, it begins to 'stick.'

Organizing Your Messages: Using a Messaging Matrix

Once teams begin designing awareness messages, a common challenge emerges: too many messages, aimed at too many audiences, without a clear organizing structure. Without intention, messaging can become inconsistent, confusing, or diluted, especially as campaigns grow, partners get involved, or new audiences are added.

A **messaging matrix** is a simple tool that helps teams organize, align, and test their messages before sharing them publicly. At its core, a messaging matrix clarifies which messages should always remain the same and which can be adapted for different audiences. Rather than writing messages in isolation, the matrix ensures that all communication across audiences, messengers, and channels connects back to a shared main idea.

Typically, a messaging matrix includes:

1. **A core campaign message:** the 'big idea' you want your target audience to recognize and remember. It should clearly reflect the behavior you are inviting people to try and the primary benefit that makes it worth considering.
2. **Supporting messages:** a set of reinforcing messages that explain, clarify, motivate, or add detail to the core message.
3. **Audience-specific messages:** tailored versions of messages that speak directly to the priorities, language, and realities of different groups that influence your target audience.
4. **Internal messages.** Messaging is not only for your target audience. Teams often overlook the need to clearly articulate the campaign's purpose and logic to other staff, funders, or partners. Internal messages help ensure everyone involved can explain the initiative consistently and confidently. Plus, it helps maintain consistent communication when team members change roles.

Using a messaging matrix does not mean scripting every word in advance. It is not a script. Instead, it provides guidance and boundaries. It helps you avoid drifting into vague or conflicting messages and makes it easier to test, refine, and scale your communication over time.

In western Tanzania, our messaging matrix was one of our most valuable tools for maintaining consistent messaging across all our strategies as the campaign evolved. A single core message about improving soil and harvests anchored all communication, while supporting and audience-specific messages were adapted for farmers, extension agents, community leaders, and partners. This structure made it easier to test messages during the pilot phase, refine them based on feedback, and maintain consistency as the campaign scaled.



You will find a simple **Messaging Matrix Template in the Practitioner's Toolkit** to help you organize and test your own campaign messages. Once messages are clearly organized and aligned, the next decision is how and through whom they will be shared.

Turning Messages into Awareness Strategies

Effective strategies do more than transmit information. They make a behavior visible, socially recognizable, and easy to talk about. This often requires using multiple, reinforcing approaches rather than relying on a single strategy.

In western Tanzania, awareness of composting was built through a combination of strategies that worked together:

- **Radio programming**, a popular source of information, helped introduce composting consistently. Programs provided timely information on composting and other agricultural activities, and featured trusted, skilled local farmers.
- **Community theater events and sports tournaments** created highly visible opportunities for sharing composting information and samples. We provided players with branded uniforms and equipment, and enlisted local theater groups to perform during breaks, turning composting education into entertainment.
- **Visual identity and branded materials**, including a campaign mascot and simple visual cues like billboards, helped people quickly recognize and remember the initiative.
- **Hands-on tutorials and demonstrations** reinforced awareness by showing what composting looked like in practice. Tutorials were designed to be accessible for farmers with lower literacy levels, primarily with cartoons.
- **Gender-inclusive communication training** for ambassador farmers ensured messages reached and resonated with both women and men, acknowledging differences in roles, time, and access to information.

Individually, none of these strategies may have been enough. **Together, they created repeated exposure to the core message through different formats, settings, and messengers.** People encountered the idea of composting at demonstration sites near home, in public spaces, on the radio, and through peers, making it harder to overlook and easier to discuss.

At the awareness stage, the goal is not immediate behavior change. It is recognition and peer-to-peer discussion. People should begin to notice the behavior, understand what it is, and associate it with positive, relevant outcomes. Well-designed awareness strategies make it easier for people to discuss the behavior change with one another.



At the awareness stage, the goal is recognition and peer-to-peer discussion

Tunza Udongo Tunza Familia

CARE FOR THE SOIL, CARE FOR THE FAMILY

You have everything you need around your farm to create your own natural fertilizer [compost] to improve the soil on your farm for bountiful crops next season.



A couple in Kajeje celebrates a best compost performing trophy. Photo by Jane Goodall Institute/Michael Pandisha



Theatre group acrobatic performance. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha



Kigoma farmers in Sigunga village sing compost related song. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/ Michael Pandisha



Image of dancer at theatre event. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha



BCC soccer team. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Choosing Messengers and Channels People Trust

In any behavior change initiative, WHO delivers the message — and HOW — matters just as much as the message itself. Even the clearest message may fall flat if it comes from a source people do not trust or through a channel they do not use.

Trust is shaped by relationships, social roles, history, local customs, culture, and everyday experience. Outsiders, no matter how well-intentioned or skilled, are simply unlikely to replicate the legitimacy and familiarity that comes from respected community members.

During community engagement, we learned who people listen to, who they turn to for advice, and where they find trusted information. Those insights guided all of our choices at this stage.

Whether it's elders, local leaders, teachers, farmers, or faith figures, these trusted messengers have the power to bridge the gap between messages and the community's values. They make new behaviors feel acceptable, relevant, and actually achievable rather than imposed from the outside.

TIPS FOR CHOOSING MESSENGERS

Effective messengers are not always the most visible or formal leaders. You should use caution when making assumptions about who people will trust, as you may be surprised by where trust lies with your target audience.

Trusted messengers often include:

- Community leaders or elders - formally elected, or more organically recognized and seen as credible
- Peers who share similar livelihoods, values, religion, interests, or experiences
- People who are already seen as knowledgeable or successful in a specific field, sport, skill, or content area
- Respected groups, such as women's associations or youth leaders

In the composting initiative in western Tanzania, awareness messages were not delivered solely by outside experts. Farmers were more receptive when messages came from fellow community members considered highly skilled at farming, radio hosts they regularly listened to, and trusted local partners, such as agriculture extension agents. These messengers did not need to be perfect role models. They needed to feel familiar, credible, and relatable.

When selecting messengers, ask:

- Who does this audience listen to, especially about the topic at hand (like farming, in our case)?
- Who feels relatable rather than simply authoritative?
- Who can speak naturally about the behavior without sounding scripted?

Different segments of your audience may trust different messengers. That is normal. **It is often better to work with several messengers than to rely on a single voice.** That is where a messaging matrix can help you tailor messages for different messengers.

CHOOSING CHANNELS

'Channels' are the places where people will encounter your messages in their daily lives. These may include podcasts, billboards, radio, events, social spaces, print materials, demonstrations, or informal conversations.

Effective channels share some essential characteristics:

- **They are already part of people's routines.**
- **They are accessible**, given time, language, location, and literacy.
- **They allow for repetition**, not one-time exposure.

For example, in western Tanzania, radio programs played an important role because they were widely used and trusted, and could be repeated at key times that aligned with local agricultural activities, such as planting and harvesting. But radio alone was not enough. Awareness was reinforced through events, demonstrations, and visual cues that people encountered repeatedly over time. Seeing the same idea show up in different places helped normalize the behavior and made it easier to talk about.

When choosing channels, consider:

- Where do people get information?
- When are they most likely to notice and pay attention?
- Which channels allow messages to be shared and discussed, not just received?



Moses Mashishanga preparing his compost piles on his farm. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Matching Messengers and Channels

Messengers and channels work best when they reinforce each other. A trusted voice using an unfamiliar channel may still struggle to gain attention. Likewise, a familiar channel carrying a message from an untrusted source may be ignored.

The goal is not to maximize how many people you reach. It is to ensure that your priority target audience encounters your messaging in ways that feel natural, credible, and relevant to them — not to the general public. In behavior change campaign design, you cannot be everything to everyone**. You must focus on and tailor your messaging to the people you believe can have the greatest impact on achieving your conservation goal.**



Robert Mkosamali on TBC Radio attending farmers questions. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

From Pilot to Scale: Testing and Refining Awareness Strategies

Even the clearest messages and most trusted messengers need to be tested in practice. **Creating change awareness is not a one-time task.** It is an iterative process that requires paying close attention to how people respond and being willing to adapt based on what you learn.

Piloting your awareness strategies allows you to move beyond assumptions and see how messages actually land in people's daily lives. What feels compelling in a planning meeting may fall flat in 'real life.' Pilots give you a chance to learn early, adapt quickly, and avoid scaling strategies that do not work.

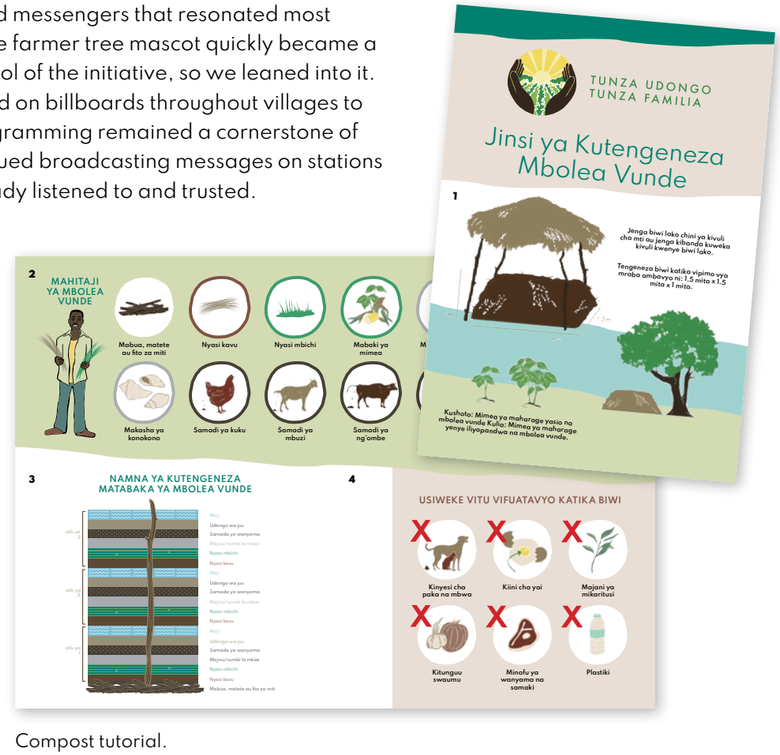
In western Tanzania, insights from baseline research and community engagement guided our initial messages, messengers, and channels. These early ideas were developed collaboratively with the Tanzanian team and local designers, then tested through informal conversations and focus groups with farmers and agricultural extension agents. This early testing helped us identify what made sense, what felt confusing, and where messages were most likely to be seen or heard.

We then piloted our awareness strategies in three villages for several months. During this phase, we observed how messages spread, which messengers were trusted, and which channels people paid attention to. Post-pilot discussions and evaluations focused on how community members first heard about the initiative, how they felt about the information they received, and whether it influenced their thinking or actions.

This learning had directly shaped how we adapted and scaled our awareness strategies.

We amplified the messages and messengers that resonated most strongly. For example, a female farmer tree mascot quickly became a recognizable and trusted symbol of the initiative, so we leaned into it. Popular slogans were displayed on billboards throughout villages to reinforce key ideas. Radio programming remained a cornerstone of communication, and we continued broadcasting messages on stations that community members already listened to and trusted.

Some strategies proved especially effective at making the behavior recognizable. Demonstration farms helped people see composting in practice, so we expanded their presence across villages. To support learning beyond in-person visits, we distributed cartoon-style infographics and calendars that clearly illustrated the composting process and timelines in a simple, approachable way.



Compost tutorial.



BCC netball tournament. Photo by Jane Goodall Institute/Michael Pandisha

We also adapted awareness strategies to better reach different groups within the community. Community events became more central, and netball tournaments — a popular women's sport — were added to ensure messages reached all genders. These events created social spaces where awareness messages could be shared without feeling instructional or imposed.

Not everything was launched more broadly; some ideas were revised or dropped entirely when they did not resonate as expected. For example, we learned that explanations of soil fertility needed to be clearer for trusted messengers to explain. In response, we developed metaphors comparing soil care to caring for the human body, emphasizing that both need rest, nutrients, and water. These metaphors were incorporated into training materials for ambassador farmers and extension agents, making the concept easier to understand and explain.

By refining and scaling what worked, the initiative built visibility and momentum. Awareness increased, messages became clearer and more familiar, and community members began seriously considering whether they could try composting themselves. This set the stage for the next phase of the theory of change, where awareness begins to translate into intention.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Our experience showed that raising awareness requires far more than sharing information through a single message or channel.

Effective change awareness is about **building trust, recognition, and connection** with your community. It is about making a new behavior feel familiar and acceptable, not foreign or imposed. Rather than relying on a single message or channel, we learned the importance of weaving awareness into the fabric of everyday community life over time.

This multi-layered approach mattered because people do not engage with new ideas in just one way. A farmer might hear a message on the radio, see it reflected on a neighbor's farm, notice it on a branded kanga fabric a woman is wearing at the market, or encounter it at a community event. Each interaction reinforces the others, helping the behavior feel more relevant and worth considering.

The broader lesson is this: when you invest in understanding a community's values and meet people in places they already love and trust, **your message becomes part of their world rather than an interruption to it.**

That foundation of comprehensive, community-centered awareness is what makes everything that follows possible. It allows subsequent stages of the campaign to focus on reducing barriers, building confidence, and supporting people to act, because the idea itself already has a place in people's daily lives and conversations.

(Opposite page) Wild mother and infant chimpanzees. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Bill Wallauer

CHAPTER SIX

Fostering Intention



Farmer inspecting the quality of maize on her farm. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Why This Stage Matters: Moving from Awareness to Readiness

Raising awareness is essential, but it doesn't automatically translate into action. People may know what to do, and even why it matters, yet still hesitate to try something new. This **"intention gap"** is one of the most common stumbling blocks in behavior change initiatives.



That's where fostering intention comes in. Intention is the bridge between knowledge and action. It's the point when people begin to feel ready and motivated to take the first step. **At this stage, the goal is not to get people to act yet (if they do, great!), but to help them feel ready, capable, and confident enough to try when the opportunity arises.**

Importantly, rules or enforcement alone rarely create lasting change. People may comply out of obligation, but once the external pressure is gone, so is the behavior. **Real change sticks when people connect to the behavior change ask, see the value in taking action, and feel capable of doing it.**



Here are two broad types of motivation to keep in mind:

- **Intrinsic motivation:** doing something because it feels meaningful, rewarding, or aligned with personal values.
- **Extrinsic motivation:** doing something for external rewards, recognition, or to avoid negative consequences.

Both can play a role, but intrinsic motivation — when people feel that a new behavior makes sense for their lives — is what sustains action over time.

Best Practices for Fostering Intention

As you design strategies for this stage of your initiative, the key is to make the new behavior feel both *desirable* and *achievable*. **At the intention stage, motivation shifts from *"Does this matter?" to "Can I do this, and is it worth the effort?"*** The most effective strategies at this stage share a set of common qualities that build confidence, reduce perceived risk, and create social permission to try.

- **They connect to values.** Effective strategies ask, *"What does your audience care about most?"* and frame the behavior so it aligns with what matters to them, whether that's feeding their family, gaining respect as a skilled farmer, or caring for their land.
- **They show clear benefits.** Good strategies highlight the advantages of the new behavior while being honest about the downsides of old practices.
- **They lower barriers.** Rather than assuming readiness, they provide tools, training, or low-stakes trials that allow people to experiment without fear of failure, loss, or social judgment.
- **They rely on trusted messengers.** People are more likely to act when they see peers or respected leaders modeling the behavior — not just being told about it.
- **They use incentives carefully.** Rewards and recognition can spark interest, but the strongest strategies use them to complement — not replace — intrinsic motivation.
- **They offer multiple pathways.** Because different people are convinced by different things, they make room for proof, personal experience, and community recognition alike.

These are not a checklist to complete — they are qualities to look for as you evaluate whether your strategies are likely to move people from awareness to action.



As you think through which approaches make sense for your own initiative, the **Brainstorming Ways to Foster Intention Worksheet in The Practitioner's Toolkit** will help you work through your options systematically.

From Pilot to Scale: Testing and Refining Strategies that Motivate

In Western Tanzania, the Pilot phase allowed us to experiment with different ways to motivate farmers to try composting; and, just as importantly, to see what would and wouldn't work at scale.

Throughout the life of the campaign, 605 farmers were formally trained using a custom-designed curriculum. The purpose of this training was not immediate adoption, but confidence. Farmers needed to believe they could succeed before they would try.

Custom training became one of the cornerstones of fostering intention. **The purpose of this training was not immediate adoption, but confidence. Farmers needed to believe they could succeed before they would try.** We partnered with local agricultural extension agents and developed a multi-layered training program beginning with a five-day course for **Lead Farmers**. These leaders then each recruited and trained ten additional farmers, extending the reach of the program well beyond our initial sessions. The training included modules on composting technology, compost application, and, later, pest and disease control — topics the farmers requested. Lead Farmers also received communications training (described in Chapter 5), so they were prepared not only to compost but to teach others. The message running through it all was empowerment: **"You can do this yourself, and we'll help you learn how."**

REACH WITHOUT DEPENDENCY

In western Tanzania, Lead Farmers were the initiative's multiplier. Each completed a five-day training covering composting, compost application, and how to teach others, then recruited and trained ten more farmers themselves. Branded gear, expertise, and public recognition gave them credibility in their communities. The goal was never for farmers to need the project team. It was for them to need each other.

We provided Lead Farmers with branded gear such as hats, shirts, and buckets. These visible signs of recognition aligned with their professional aspirations and amplified their credibility. Because extension agents already had trusted relationships with farmers, their involvement helped normalize composting as part of standard agricultural practice rather than as an external intervention.

Demonstration plots were another highly effective strategy. Farmers could see the difference for themselves: crops grown with compost consistently outperformed those without. This side-by-side comparison in high-visibility areas transformed composting from an abstract idea into something tangible and persuasive. **Seeing results firsthand reduced uncertainty and made composting feel less risky.** Based on this success, we expanded the number of demonstration plots during the full campaign and equipped Lead Farmers with the resources they needed to showcase results in their own villages.



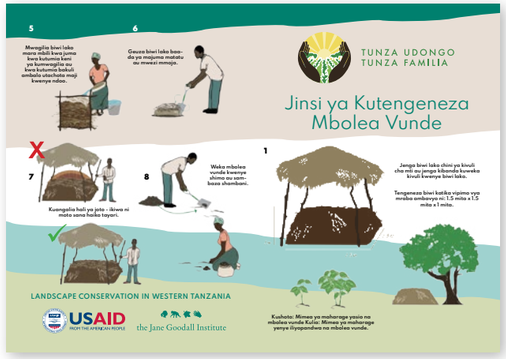
18.8 tons of compost manure samples were distributed across the three pilot villages

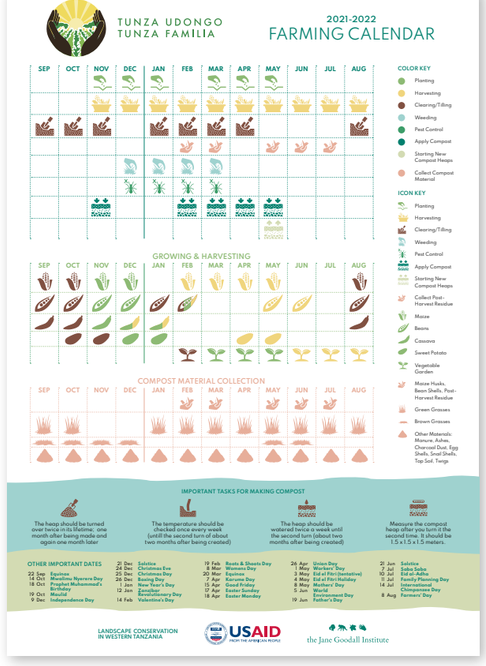
Participants in the KATAVI Exchange Learning Visit observe agroforestry practices. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Giving away compost samples at community events also played a big role in the pilot. Having compost in hand meant farmers didn't have to wait months to create it themselves before seeing results, giving them a quick and easy way to test the practice. **This lowered the threshold for trying composting without committing time or labor upfront.**

However, we soon realized that providing samples to every farmer was not practical as the initiative grew. Instead, we shifted toward helping farmers build their own compost heaps and reinforced this with soil testing. The testing provided farmers with evidence of compost's benefits, further building confidence that the practice was worth the effort.

Radio programming proved to be another powerful motivator. Farmers trusted the voices they heard, particularly when ambassador farmers shared their own stories on the air. These peer accounts combined practical advice with personal pride, showing listeners that composting was both achievable and respected. Seeing this impact, we increased the frequency of broadcasts and added content timed to a graphically designed **agricultural calendar and composting tutorial** given away at community events.





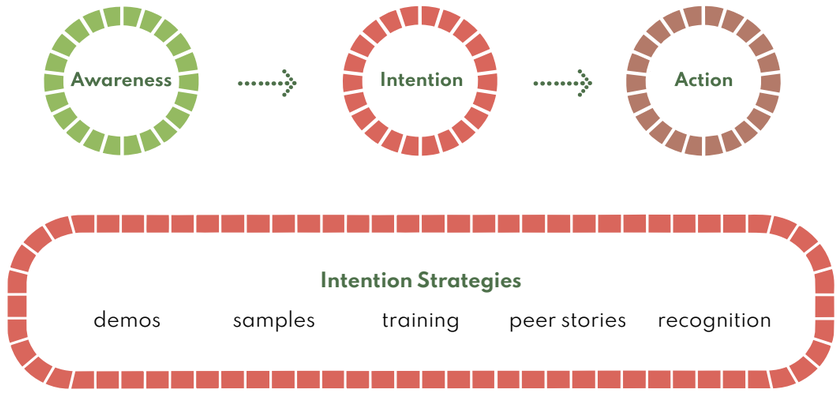
(Above) Farming Calendar.
(Left) Compost tutorial.

By moving from pilot to scale, we learned that fostering intention requires multiple strategies ***to meet people where they are***. Some farmers were persuaded by training that boosted their confidence, others by seeing composting work in practice, still others by hearing about it from trusted peers or by the recognition that came with community competitions. Together, these pathways created momentum that carried farmers from curiosity to genuine readiness for change.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- The intention stage is fragile — many campaigns lose momentum here if they rely only on raising awareness or policy enforcement.
- Readiness comes from a mix of proof, practice, and peer influence.
- Multiple pathways work better than a single strategy; people need different ways to say "yes."
- Incentives succeed when they tie into pride, identity, and recognition — not just material rewards.
- Fostering intention is about designing many small "yeses" that eventually add up to one Big Yes: trying the new behavior.

Fostering intention creates the conditions for action, but it does not guarantee it. People may believe a new behavior makes sense and still hesitate to do it. That hesitation is normal and expected in behavior change.



In the next chapter, we turn our attention to action itself. Chapter 7 explores how initiatives can support people as they take their first real step, design low-risk opportunities to try something new, and respond thoughtfully when effort meets reality.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Action



Farmer proudly showcasing her produce after applying compost. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Why This Stage Matters: When Intention Meets Reality

By the time a behavior change initiative reaches this stage, much of the hard work has already been done! People are aware of the behavior you are inviting them to try. They understand why it matters and how it connects to their own lives. Many are hopefully motivated and genuinely interested in trying something new.

And yet, this is often where initiatives falter because the gap between intention and action is one of the most fragile points in any behavior change process.

People may want to act but still hesitate, delay, or abandon the idea when the moment to act arrives. Competing demands on your target audience's time, uncertainty about whether they are doing it "right," fear of failure, or the effort required to get started can all derail even the strongest intentions.

This is why the action stage matters so much. It is the point where good ideas meet real life.

From a distance, action can look straightforward. If someone understands the behavior and feels motivated, shouldn't they just do it? In practice, taking the first step often requires far more support than we expect. This is what you began planning for in Chapter 6: Fostering Intention. **The conditions surrounding that first attempt (tools available, clear instructions, social context, perceived risks) can determine whether a behavior feels possible or overwhelming.**

Importantly, **action is not yet about commitment to habits or long-term adoption. It is about trying.** It is about creating safe, supported opportunities for people to take an initial step without fear of embarrassment, loss, or irreversible consequences. **When that first experience is positive, people are far more likely to continue.** When it is frustrating, confusing, or risky, even highly motivated individuals may decide the behavior is not for them.



Group of farmers wearing branded Kangas at BCC event. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha



Farmer and BCC specialist proudly posing next to compost heap. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Behavior change initiatives that succeed at this stage recognize a simple truth: people do not fail to act because they lack motivation alone. They fail to act when the moment to try something new is poorly designed, unexpected barriers arise for your target audience, or other circumstances change beyond your control.

In this chapter, we focus on how to design as best we can for this moment. You will learn what "action" actually means in the context of behavior change, what people need when they attempt a behavior for the first time, and how to support early action in ways that build confidence rather than resistance. **By treating action as a carefully designed stage instead of an automatic outcome, you create the conditions for sustained change to begin.**

What "Action" Means in Behavior Change

In behavior change work, action refers to the moment when intention meets reality—when someone actually tries to do the thing you have been inviting them to try. This might be a single decision made once, or it might be the first step in a longer process that unfolds over time, creating habits that last.

Not all actions are the same. Some behaviors may be one-time actions, such as voting for a specific policy, enrolling in a program, or making a single purchasing choice. In these cases, action is both the first and only attempt. There is no habit to build, but the stakes may feel higher because there is no opportunity to "try again."

Other behaviors involve routine practices or habits, such as composting, washing hands, or not texting while driving. Here, action begins with a first attempt, but success ('full adoption') depends on whether people can repeat the behavior, adapt it to their routines, and sustain it over time.

This distinction matters because **the support people need at the action stage looks different depending on the type of behavior**. One-time actions require good timing, clarity, confidence, and low friction at the moment of decision. Habitual behaviors require those same conditions, plus tools, reinforcement, and opportunities to learn through doing.

What unites both is this: action is not about persuasion anymore. By this point, people are no longer asking *"Why should I do this?"* They are asking, *"Can I actually do this—right now, in my real life?"* Chapter 7 focuses on how behavior change initiatives answer that question by designing for action itself.

Designing for Action: What People Need at the Moment of Trying a New Behavior

Designing for action means shifting your focus from why people should act and *how to motivate them to what they need to act and have a positive experience.* Even when intention is present, action can still stall if the moment of doing feels confusing, risky, inconvenient, or unsupported.

At this stage, behavior change initiatives succeed or fail based on how well they reduce barriers that cause friction and increase confidence at the exact point where action is expected. People need to know what to do, how to do it, and whether they can do it safely and successfully in their real circumstances.



Farmers using branded wheelbarrow to show their produce. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Across many initiatives, a few needs consistently show up at the action stage:

- **Clarity at the moment of action.**
  People need simple, concrete guidance when it is time to act, not abstract explanations. This includes clear steps, timing, and expectations so they are not forced to guess or improvise.

In Western Tanzania, this meant providing step-by-step composting guidance through visual manuals and calendars, radio reminders aligned with agricultural activities and seasons, and in-person explanations from Lead Farmers so other farmers knew exactly what to do and when.

- **Practical support and tools.**
  Good intentions can dissolve quickly if people lack materials, skills, or access. Providing tools, demonstrations, templates, or hands-on guidance removes common points of failure and signals that the initiative is designed to help, not test, participants.

In Western Tanzania, farmers received hands-on training and support to share knowledge with other farmers, access to demonstration plots, composting toolkits to share, and support from extension agents and Lead Farmers to reduce practical barriers to composting.

- **Low-risk opportunities to try.** Many people hesitate because they fear failure, wasted effort, or social judgment. Action is more likely when people can try something once, in a supported or low-stakes way, before fully committing — especially for new or unfamiliar behaviors.

Giving away small compost samples at community events allowed farmers in Western Tanzania to test compost on their fields without first investing time and labor in making their own (since making compost from scratch can take months).

- **Visible proof that action is possible.** Seeing others take action, especially peers, helps people believe they can do it too. Demonstrations, examples, and shared experiences turn action from an abstract idea into something tangible and achievable.

In western Tanzania, demonstration farms showing side-by-side results of composted and non-composted plots made the benefits of composting visible and credible.

- **Reinforcement at the right moment.** Encouragement, recognition, or timely feedback during early attempts can make the difference between following through and giving up. At this stage, reinforcement is not about persuasion; it is about reassurance.

Support from Lead Farmers, public recognition, follow-up visits to farms, and feedback during early composting attempts helped farmers feel confident enough to continue. The JGI Tanzanian project team also made themselves available via WhatsApp to answer questions from Lead Farmers, supporting them as issues arose for their fellow community members.

Designing for action means anticipating where people might hesitate or get stuck and addressing those moments directly. When initiatives are built this way, action becomes less of a leap of faith and more of a supported next step, setting the conditions for learning, confidence, and, hopefully, lasting change.

It is important to note that some strategies may appear across multiple stages of the behavior change process. A single intervention, such as a demonstration plot, training session, or public recognition, can help raise awareness, foster intention, support first action, and later encourage social diffusion. This overlap is intentional; it reflects the reality that behavior change is not linear, and that well-designed strategies often serve multiple purposes as people move at different speeds and enter the process at various points.

From Pilot to Practice: What We Learned When People Tried

The most crucial learning often happens once people actually try the behavior—when intentions meet real constraints, habits, and social dynamics. This stage revealed not only whether farmers *could* compost but what encouraged them to persist, helped them adapt, or led them to walk away after their first attempt.

These insights were grounded in a structured pilot across three villages, combining farmer surveys, focus groups, observation, and soil testing to understand what happened when people actually tried composting.



One farmer briefs other farmers about the benefits of composting. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

In western Tanzania, early action during our pilot taught us several critical lessons.

First, **people didn't follow a "perfect" path from intention to sustained action**. Farmers experimented. Some tried composting on a small portion of land. Others combined new practices with old ones. A few abandoned composting temporarily and returned later when conditions felt right. Treating these early attempts as learning moments, rather than failures, helped us refine support without discouraging participation.

Second, **clarity was essential at the moment of doing**, not only during earlier messaging or training. Even farmers who felt motivated sometimes stalled when it came time to build a compost heap or apply compost correctly. This reinforced the importance of just-in-time guidance: visual manuals, demonstrations, and follow-up conversations that addressed questions *as they arose*, not weeks earlier.

Third, **confidence grew through visible progress, not persuasion**. Seeing compost improve soil or crop performance, even if just a little, was more motivating than any message about long-term benefits. Demonstration plots and early success stories became reference points that helped farmers interpret their own results and decide whether to continue.

Fourth, **social support shaped persistence**. Farmers were more likely to continue composting when they felt supported by peers, Lead Farmers, or extension agents who normalized learning through trial and error.



Farmer working the land. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Finally, **not every supportive strategy was scalable after the pilot**. Some pilot approaches, such as distributing compost samples, were effective at lowering the risk of trying composting at first, but impractical at scale due to the costs of procuring enough compost samples. Similarly, providing buckets, boots, and other tools helped farmers new to composting, but it was not feasible to offer them to every farmer in the entire landscape. Rather than abandoning the underlying need, we adapted the strategy by strengthening training, demonstration, and peer support so farmers could produce and test compost themselves and share tools with one another, which also helped with social support.

Together, these lessons shifted our focus from simply getting people to *try* composting to helping them learn through doing. **Action was no longer a single step to complete, but a process to support — one that required flexibility, feedback, and continued adjustment** as the initiative expanded from three villages to 11.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- **Action is where intention is tested.** Even when people understand and value a behavior, the moment of trying can still feel risky, confusing, or inconvenient. Designing for action means anticipating those moments — reducing friction, providing clarity and practical tools at the right time, and creating low-risk opportunities to try rather than assuming motivation alone is enough.
- **The first attempt matters more than perfection.** Early action is about creating safe, supported opportunities to try, not expecting flawless execution or immediate habit formation. Learning through doing is part of the process. Piloting your strategies — and learning from your pilot through rigorous evaluation — can help you take people past the first attempt by adapting to their reality.
- **People act when friction is low and support is high.** Clear guidance, practical tools, visible examples, and timely reassurance reduce hesitation and make action feel possible in real life.
- **Different behaviors require different kinds of action support.** One-time actions depend on timing and low friction, while ongoing behaviors require repeated opportunities, reinforcement, and adaptation.
- **Social context shapes persistence.** Peers, mentors, influencers, and trusted local figures help normalize trial and error, making people more willing to continue after imperfect first attempts.
- **Not everything that works in a pilot will scale.** When tools or giveaways cannot be sustained, look for scalable ways to meet the same needs through training, social support, and shared resources.
- **Action is a process, not a checkbox. Take your chance to pilot strategies seriously and learn from them.** Successful initiatives treat early attempts as moments to learn, adjust, and strengthen support. This lays the groundwork for confidence, habit formation, and long-term change.

In the next chapter, we turn to what happens after people have taken action. Chapter 8 explores how behavior change initiatives support maintenance: helping people repeat, adapt, and sustain new behaviors over time. This stage focuses on reinforcing action, strengthening habits, and supporting the social and structural conditions that lead to lasting change.

(Opposite page) Close-up of hand checking soil quality. Photo by Jane Goodall Institute DRC/Franck Kasilamu



CHAPTER EIGHT

Action Maintenance



Farmer mixing up a compost pile. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Why This Stage Matters: From Trying to Continuing

Trying a new behavior is an important milestone. However, it is not the same as sustaining it over time, especially when what you are inviting people to do goes beyond a one-time action.

Many behavior change initiatives celebrate early attempts to try the behavior, only to see progress slow or disappear once initial support fades. This is not because people were insincere or unmotivated. It is because **continuing a behavior over time presents different challenges than trying it once**.

At this stage, the question shifts. People are no longer asking, *"Could I do this?"* They are asking, *"Can I keep doing this?"* That question is shaped by daily routines, competing priorities, fatigue, seasonal changes, social expectations, whether their first attempt went well, whether the behavior still aligns with their values and priorities, and whether it feels worth the effort once the novelty wears off. In a nutshell, many may try the behavior, but even fewer will continue to maintain it.

This is why action maintenance matters. **Without intentional design for supporting people in maintaining their new behavior, even well-supported first attempts can erode under real-life pressures.** Tools break, time gets scarce, incentives end, and attention moves elsewhere. If the behavior remains complicated or socially isolated, people may revert to old practices, not necessarily because the new behavior failed, but because it may not have been designed to last for them. This **relapse** is a common and expected pattern in behavior change, but there are ways to reduce it.

Importantly, **maintenance does not require constant motivation or enthusiasm. What it needs is to be a good fit with everyday life**. Behaviors that endure are those that become easier, more familiar, and more compatible with everyday life over time. They are supported just enough to remain possible without needing continuous intervention from your project team. **At this stage, the goal is to design strategies that help your target audience engage in the behavior *on their own*.**



Compost farmers collaborate on storing their harvest. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Rusanganya Lameck

This chapter focuses on that transition — from action as a deliberate effort to action as a routine practice. We explore what "maintenance" means in behavior change initiatives, what people need to continue a behavior once initial project support tapers off, and how to recognize whether behaviors are truly being sustained. Designing for maintenance is what turns short-term success into lasting impact, and it sets the stage for the social diffusion that follows in the next phase.

Designing for Maintenance: What People Need Over Time

Designing your initiative to support action maintenance means shifting from helping people try a behavior to helping it *fit* into everyday life. At this stage, success is no longer defined by enthusiasm or initial participation; it is determined by whether the behavior remains possible, beneficial, and socially supported once initial project support begins to taper. The strategies that follow focus on what helps behaviors continue without requiring constant motivation, inputs, or project oversight.

At this stage, success is determined by whether the behavior remains possible, useful, and socially supported once initial project support begins to taper.

Across behavior change initiatives, the most impactful strategies include the following qualities:

- **Reduce ongoing effort and friction.** Behaviors are more likely to continue when they require less time, fewer resources, or less mental effort as people gain experience. If a behavior remains complicated or burdensome, people may abandon it even if they believe it is beneficial.

In western Tanzania, this meant adapting composting practices as we learned from the pilot to fit farmers' realities: encouraging above-ground compost piles near homes for easy access, simplifying materials by not emphasizing the need for some hard-to-find inputs like eggshells, and reinforcing techniques that farmers found easiest to sustain during busy agricultural seasons.

- **Support their routines.** Behaviors last when they fit naturally into existing routines rather than feeling like an added task. Maintenance design focuses on helping people embed the behavior into what they already do.

In western Tanzania, small nudges reduced this friction over time. Composting calendars aligned reminders with planting cycles, and radio segments reinforced key steps when farmers were most likely to be in their fields.



Farmer working on her composted maize farm. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Over the course of the initiative, the Tanzania team produced and transmitted 35 radio programs — 29 recorded episodes and 6 live Q&A sessions across 4 community radio stations, reaching farmers across 11 villages in Western Tanzania.

- **Ensure access to continued support.** Maintenance does not mean people no longer need support; it means the type of support changes. Ongoing access to peers, local leaders, or trusted intermediaries helps people troubleshoot challenges without relying on project staff.

In Tanzania, Lead Farmers, project volunteers, and extension agents played this role, providing informal advice, reassurance, and problem-solving long after initial training ended. Because Lead Farmers told us they enjoyed the social recognition they received for their role, they continued supporting their fellow farmers.

- **Reinforce social normalization.** Behaviors are more likely to stick when they feel socially acceptable or even expected. Maintenance strategies often focus less on persuasion and more on making the behavior visible, ordinary, and respected.

In western Tanzania, a radio question-and-answer section was added, in which farmers could hear common questions discussed publicly. This served as a nudge by normalizing uncertainty and reinforcing that composting challenges were shared, solvable, and expected.

- **Allow flexibility and adaptation.** Sustained behaviors are rarely practiced exactly as taught. People adapt behaviors to their circumstances, constraints, and preferences. Maintenance design allows for variation without framing adaptation as failure.

In western Tanzania, farmers modified composting methods based on material availability, labor capacity, and farm layout. Supporting these adaptations, rather than enforcing rigid standards, helped the practice endure.

Many of these strategies for sustained action function as **nudges**: small, timely prompts or reinforcements that help people continue a behavior without requiring constant motivation or oversight.

As you think through what maintenance might look like in your own initiative, the **Brainstorming Ways to Maintain Behavior Worksheet in The Practitioner's Toolkit** will help you identify the right strategies for your context.



Lead farmer emphasizes a point during the BCC Community Close-Out Event. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

From Pilot to Practice: What We Learned About Keeping Action Going

Once people begin continuing a behavior, the question for practitioners becomes: *how do we know it's lasting?*

In western Tanzania, we found that knowing whether a behavior was being sustained required a different kind of monitoring than knowing whether it had been tried. The question shifted from *"Did people try the behavior?" to "Are people still doing it and why?"* For us, that meant extending data collection well beyond the pilot through midline and endline evaluations, but also through ongoing, lighter-touch check-ins: field observations, conversations with Lead Farmers and extension agents, and simple tracking of key indicators like number of active compost heaps, consecutive harvests using compost, and yield improvements over time. Qualitative data mattered just as much—farmers' own accounts of what was working, what was getting harder, and what had changed in their routines often revealed what numbers alone could not. Our goal was not just to confirm that the behavior was happening, but to understand whether the conditions that supported it were still holding.

We relied on a combination of post-pilot, midline, and endline evaluation data to understand whether composting remained part of farmers' routines over time. Rather than presenting those findings as a technical report, the following pages highlight what sustained behavior looked like in practice through trends, milestones, and, most importantly, in farmers' own words.

How We Knew Behavior Was Being Maintained

The question we kept returning to across four years was not whether farmers had tried composting; it was whether they were still doing it and whether the conditions we had built were strong enough to outlast our presence.

Our post-pilot, midline, and endline evaluations gave us three windows into that question. Together, they told a story of a behavior that not only held, but deepened.

13
BAGS OF YIELD
from 11 acres before composting

14
BAGS OF YIELD
from 3/4 of an acre with composting

Same harvest. One fifteenth of the land.

"I don't use commercial fertilizers. I make my own compost. I sold my surplus to buy building materials for my new house."

—Moses Mashishanga

SUCCESS STORY

Moses Mashishanga, Vikonge village, Katavi region

Before composting, Moses farmed 11 acres on infertile soil, barely producing enough to get by. After JGI training, he applied compost to three-quarters of an acre — a fraction of what he had farmed before.

"We plan together and work as a team to build the same kingdom."

—Moses Mashishanga

"Soil infertility leads to shifting cultivation, which is detrimental to our environment."

—Moses Mashishanga

BEYOND THE FARM

Moses now trains neighbors and farmers from surrounding villages. He introduced agroforestry on his farm and plans to plant diverse tree species across 10 acres by 2025. His wife Mbuke, also a Lead Farmer, works alongside him.

"Mashishanga is a dedicated leader who puts agricultural policies into practice and encourages his community to be self-reliant and responsible for their well-being."

—Stephen Msome
Village Executive Chairperson, Vikonge



2020 - Pilot

100%

of farmers who tried composting said they would continue.

First harvest improvements visible. Trained farmers produced more maize and beans than their neighbors.

"Utafauti ni mkubwa sana." The difference is enormous. Community farmer, western Tanzania

Key adaptation:
Extended training to 4–6 days. Shifted start to May. Simplified inputs.

2022 - MIDLINE

70%

of trained farmers used compost for 3 or more consecutive harvests.

Trained farmers harvested 20% more maize and 31% more cassava than untrained.

Compost heaps grew from 1,496 to 5,240 — a 250% increase. In Kajeje Village, it was a 600% increase.

What sustained motivation:
39% of farmers cited proof of soil fertility. 54% of farmers said proof was needed to motivate others.

2023 - FINAL

92%

of trained farmers composted for 3 or more seasons.

39% of spontaneous adopters (untrained farmers) also sustained for 2+ seasons. 26,950 total compost heaps.

Kajeje soil fertility score: 15.55/21 — highest of all villages, statistically significant.

Barriers addressed:
Access to manure, organic materials and water near the pile — addressed through peer support.

Farmer Moses Mashishanga showing his produce after the compost application. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha



Mascot surrounded by children during the BCC soccer competition. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Sustaining a behavior requires different design choices than motivating a first attempt. While early action depends on confidence and support at the moment of trying, maintenance depends on whether a behavior continues to fit into people's everyday lives once novelty, incentives, and project presence begin to fade.

Our experience showed that action **maintenance is not about keeping people motivated indefinitely**. It is about making the behavior easier, more familiar, and less fragile over time. Small supports — such as nudges, social reinforcement, timely information, and peer support — can play an essential role in helping behaviors endure without constant intervention.

Monitoring and evaluation are essential at this stage, but their role shifts. Rather than asking *"Did people try the behavior?"* the focus becomes *"Are people still doing it, and if so, why?"* This requires looking beyond pilot results and continuing to learn as conditions change, routines evolve, and new barriers emerge. Monitoring and evaluation that extends past the pilot and into later stages provides the insight needed to adapt strategies before participation quietly declines.

Maintenance is also a signal of readiness for what comes next. When a behavior persists without heavy project support, it becomes visible to others and easier to share. That durability creates the foundation for social diffusion: when behaviors spread through observation, conversation, and social norms rather than direct project intervention.

For practitioners, the takeaway is simple but powerful: **design for maintenance from the beginning, learn continuously beyond the pilot, and be willing to adapt support as people move from trying the behavior to continuing it**. This is how short-term action becomes lasting change and how individual behaviors begin to travel through communities.

CHAPTER NINE

Social Diffusion



Uvinza the BCC Netball Tournament. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Robert Mkosamali

Why This Stage Matters: When Change Becomes Social

Social diffusion is the heart of any behavior change initiative. The ultimate goal is not just to introduce a new idea or help a few people change what they do; it is to create the conditions for change to spread—for a movement to spark—so the behavior takes on a life of its own within the community and long after the project concludes.

When a new behavior moves beyond early participants and is adopted by others, something important has shifted. The behavior is no longer tied only to a campaign, a training, or an organization. It becomes socially visible, talked about, and increasingly normalized. Over time, it can reshape cultural expectations within a community about what people "like us" do, slowly replacing old habits with new, more sustainable ones.

This is how lasting change takes root. Not when every action is facilitated or incentivized by a project, but when community members begin to encourage, model, and reinforce the behavior themselves. **Social diffusion is the mechanism that allows a behavior to outlive the campaign that introduced it.**

At this stage, the focus moves from supporting individual action to designing for longevity. The question is no longer just, *"Can people do this?"* or even, *"Will they keep doing it?"* It becomes, *"Will this behavior spread without us?"* That requires intentional strategies and a different mindset.

Social diffusion does not happen automatically. It must be intentionally supported by making the behavior visible, socially rewarding, and easy to learn from peers. **It requires creating opportunities for people to see one another succeed, talk about their experiences, and feel that the behavior belongs to their community rather than an outside initiative.**

In this chapter, we explore what social diffusion means in behavior change work and how to design conditions that allow behaviors to spread through social networks over time. We look at how influence works, how norms begin to shift, and how initiatives can support diffusion without over-controlling it. This is the stage where behavior change moves from individual effort to collective momentum and where conservation outcomes begin to scale.

What Social Diffusion Means in Behavior Change

Social diffusion describes how new ideas and behaviors spread through a community over time. Rather than moving all at once, change tends to travel through social networks in recognizable patterns, shaped by trust, visibility, relationships, and perceived risk. Decades of behavioral science, applied across public health, agriculture, technology, and social change, consistently show that people adopt new behaviors at different times and for different reasons. Five broad patterns tend to emerge, not fixed identities, but tendencies that help explain why the same initiative can spark enthusiasm in one person while another waits and watches:



A village in the Greater Gombe Ecosystem on the shore of Lake Tanganyika. Photo by Rob Sassor



Two farmers working the land with BCC branded materials. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

1. **Innovators** are willing to experiment early, even when outcomes are uncertain. They usually have more social connections to hear about the new idea or more resources (time, money, etc.) to try it out with lower risk.
2. **Early adopters** are respected and influential; others watch what they do before deciding.
3. **Early majority** members adopt once they see proof that something works for people like them.
4. **Late majority** members tend to be cautious and often adopt a behavior only when it feels normal or expected.
5. **Laggards** are the most resistant to change and may adopt only when alternatives disappear or not at all.

While innovators and early adopters can help make a behavior visible quickly, diffusion accelerates more equitably when initiatives intentionally involve people across different adoption categories early on. This helps prevent diffusion from becoming driven only by those with the most time, confidence, or resources. Seeing "people like me" try and adapt a behavior often matters more than seeing the first people try it.

As you design for social diffusion, consider what social proof and trusted messengers each group will need to see. Different people need different signals before they are willing to change. Some are motivated by experimentation, others by proof, others by social norms. Designing for diffusion means recognizing these differences and planning for them.

This is also why social diffusion is more than ideas spreading by "word of mouth" alone.
Behaviors are more likely to spread when people:

- See trusted peers trying something new
- Observe visible benefits or social recognition
- Hear consistent messages across multiple settings
- Feel that the behavior is becoming normal

Social diffusion is the process through which a behavior moves from something new to something expected. It is how individual actions begin to influence group norms and how conservation initiatives move from isolated success stories to broader, self-sustaining change that feels organic, credible, and durable.



Community member proudly holding savings. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha



Farmer proudly posing on her farmland. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Designing for Social Diffusion: Creating Conditions for Spread

Designing for social diffusion means shifting your focus from supporting individual behavior change to shaping the conditions that allow a behavior to spread beyond your project team's involvement. At this stage, the behavior no longer belongs to the project—it begins to belong to the community.

Importantly, social diffusion does not happen automatically once people start acting. Even effective behaviors can remain isolated if they are done in private, socially awkward, or perceived as "for certain kinds of people." Designing for diffusion means intentionally making the behavior easier to see, talk about, share, and adapt across social networks in a way that makes it feel as normal as possible.

Several design principles consistently support this process.

- **Make the behavior public and visible.** Behaviors spread when they can be observed. Visibility helps people notice that something new is happening and begin to reassess what is normal or expected.



In western Tanzania, composting became more visible through demonstration plots in high-traffic areas, consistent use of campaign branding, and recognizable symbols such as branded materials and the mascot. These cues helped people connect individual composting efforts to a broader, shared initiative rather than seeing them as isolated experiments.

- **Support peer-to-peer learning.** Diffusion accelerates when people learn from one another rather than from outside experts alone. Peer learning allows people to see how a behavior works in practice, how others adapt it, and how challenges are handled in real life.



In Tanzania, learning exchanges and informal visits among farmers enabled participants to observe composting techniques on neighboring farms, compare results, and discuss challenges. These interactions reinforced that composting did not require perfection and that adaptation was both normal and acceptable.

- **Lower the social risk of adoption.** One of the biggest barriers to diffusion is not technical difficulty, but social risk. People may hesitate to adopt a behavior if they fear judgment, failure, or standing out.



Public recognition of Lead Farmers on radio and at gatherings, and at community events where composting was openly discussed, and shared activities like composting competitions and awards helped reduce this risk. When farmers saw peers being respected — not scrutinized — for trying composting, the perceived social cost of participation dropped.

- **Align with existing social structures.** Behaviors spread more easily when they move through structures that already exist, such as farmer networks (groups of farmers that already existed and met regularly), extension systems (services offered by the government to support agriculture), or community leadership channels (e.g. churches or mosques).



Rather than creating new social groups, the composting initiative worked through trusted agricultural extension agents and existing farmer relationships. This allowed information, encouragement, and problem-solving to flow along familiar pathways, increasing credibility and reach. One example of this was encouraging trained farmers to bring fellow farmers to future events and training opportunities.

- **Reinforce through consistency, not control.** At the diffusion stage, consistency matters, but rigidity does not. Shared language, recognizable visuals, and repeated cues help people connect individual actions to a broader movement. At the same time, local flexibility is essential.



In Tanzania, unified branding made composting recognizable across villages, even as farmers adapted techniques based on available materials, land size, and seasonal conditions. Continued presence through radio programming, text messaging support for Lead Farmers, and — toward the end of the initiative — community close-out celebrations helped reinforce composting as a shared, valued practice rather than a temporary project. Close-out celebrations meant formally recognizing the project's closure while allowing the project team to celebrate alongside the community. This allowed the team to formally transfer ownership of the initiative to the community while avoiding the impression that the team had abandoned or stopped the project without notice.

When these design principles are in place, diffusion strategies focus on enabling communities to carry the behavior forward themselves. The initiative's role shifts to supporting momentum.



The **Brainstorming Social Diffusion Strategies Worksheet in The Practitioner's Toolkit** will help you think through which strategies are most suited to your own context and communities.

From Pilot to Practice: How Composting Spread in Western Tanzania

By the time composting began spreading beyond pilot villages, the question was no longer whether farmers could compost, but whether the behavior was spreading organically from person to person. Social diffusion shows up when people begin learning from one another, adapting practices independently, and encouraging others without direct prompting from a project team. In western Tanzania, monitoring and evaluation data (combined with on-the-ground stories) helped us see when composting was moving from a supported practice to a shared norm.

How We Knew Social Diffusion Was Taking Place

This is how lasting change takes root — not when every action is facilitated by a project, but when community members begin to encourage, model, and reinforce the behavior themselves.

We tracked diffusion across three evaluation periods, watching composting move from something new to something expected.

"JGI training on composting and environmental conservation was a turning point in my life. With compost, I can provide food for my family and cover education expenses for all my children."

—Lucy Elias Fidos

872

farmers started composting through peer influence alone

More people were reached organically than through formal JGI training. 605 farmers were formally trained. The behavior had found its own momentum.



Farmer posing next to her compost heap. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Diffusion is not scale delivered by a project. It is scale generated by a community

COMMUNITY VOICES

In western Tanzania diffusion did not rely on a single messenger or moment. It emerged through overlapping social networks — farmer groups, radio broadcast, village leadership, demonstration plots, and informal peer relationships. Here are some of the voices that carried it forward.

Lucy Elias Fidos, Lead Farmer, Isubangala village

Lucy trains small groups on her demonstration plot, visits neighboring farms, and promotes composting and tree planting through village meetings. Through Lucy, farmers who were hesitant could see results firsthand in a familiar, trusted setting.

Oristina Augustine Moses, Farmer, Mishamo Settlement

Oristina began composting after training and listening regularly to radio programs. Her strategically located demonstration farm allowed passersby to observe composting in action.

Radio reached farmers who never attended a training, reinforcing composting as a shared norm.

"I never miss the BCC radio programs. They help me learn more and inspire others to stop shifting cultivation and adopt composting."

—Oristina Augustine Moses

2020 - Pilot

50%

of farmers had not even heard of composting when the pilot launched.

Lead Farmers each trained 10 additional farmers, extending reach immediately beyond formal training.

Neighboring villages were already asking questions, drawn by what they could observe on nearby farms.

Making it visible: Theater performances, a welcoming mascot, and community sport events made composting feel like it belonged to the community.

2022 - MIDLINE

92%

of participating farmers believed composting would become common agricultural practice.

85% of treatment farmers knew others who were composting. 27% said friends and family were already doing it. Women were leading adoption: 86% vs 76% of men.

72% of spontaneous adopters — farmers who never attended training — were influenced by lead farmers alone.

Radio reaches where we cannot: Radio Q&A programs gave farmers a dedicated space to call in with real challenges and hear lead farmers respond on air, making peer troubleshooting accessible across the entire region.

2023 - FINAL

39.5%

of participating farmers knew someone who had stopped farming in forests entirely after composting.

At post-pilot, 39% had heard of people farming in forests. By mid-campaign, 33% knew farmers who had stopped. By endline, 57% knew farmers who had reduced forest farming.

26,950 compost heaps across 11 villages. The more engaged the campaign in a village, the more likely farmers made the connection that they did not need to farm elsewhere.

Ownership transferred: Close-out celebrations publicly honored lead farmers, recognized village achievements, and formally transferred ownership to communities. Composting now belonged to them — not to JGI.

Naomi Gedeon, Farmer, Sunuka village

After replacing chemical fertilizers with compost, Naomi began sharing what she learned with neighbors and with members of her church choir, showing how diffusion can extend through youth and informal social networks.

"Now I understand the importance of conserving forests for chimpanzees and future generations. Let's work together to make sustainable farming a reality."

—Naomi Gedeon

When Farmers Become the Messengers

As composting began to spread beyond the initial pilot villages, it became clear that diffusion was being driven not by the project team, but by farmers themselves — particularly women who had adopted the practice early and began sharing it through their everyday roles and networks.

One such farmer is **Lucy Elias Fidos**, a mother of ten and vice-chairperson of Isubangala village. Lucy uses compost on her five-acre farm to grow beans, groundnuts, tomatoes, and maize. What began as a supported trial quickly became a visible example for others. As a Lead Farmer, Lucy now trains small groups on her demonstration plot, visits neighboring farms to offer advice, and promotes composting and tree planting through village meetings.

"JGI training on composting and environmental conservation was a turning point in my life," Lucy shared. "With compost, I can provide food for my family and cover education expenses for all my children."

—Lucy Elias Fidos

Lucy's farm became more than a training site; it became a reference point. Farmers, especially women, who were hesitant to try composting could see the results firsthand and ask questions in a familiar, trusted setting. Her leadership role gave legitimacy to the practice, helping composting feel both acceptable and achievable.

Other women reinforced this diffusion through different pathways. **Oristina Augustine Moses**, a mother of eleven from Mishamo Settlement, began composting after attending training and listening regularly to radio programs. Her strategically located demonstration farm allowed passersby to observe composting in action, while radio programming helped reinforce her credibility and motivation.

"I never miss the BCC radio programs. They help me learn more and inspire others to stop shifting cultivation and adopt composting."

—Oristina Augustine Moses

Meanwhile, **Naomi Gedeon**, a 22-year-old farmer and the youngest composter from Sunuka village, demonstrated how diffusion can extend through youth and social networks. After replacing costly chemical fertilizers with compost, Naomi began sharing what she learned with neighbors and even with members of her church choir.

Together, these stories illustrate how composting spread through overlapping social networks: farmer groups, radio audiences, village leadership, churches, and informal peer relationships. Diffusion did not rely on a single messenger or moment. It emerged as farmers adapted the practice, talked about it, and made it visible in ways that felt credible and relevant within their communities.

"Now I understand the importance of conserving forests for chimpanzees and future generations. Let's work together to make sustainable farming a reality."

—Naomi Gedeon



BCC team on the radio answering questions from community members about composting. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Social diffusion is how behavior change efforts move beyond individual success stories and become part of everyday community life. **It is the stage where change outlives the campaign itself.**

Effective diffusion does not happen by accident. It is shaped by visibility, trust, social proof, and shared meaning. Behaviors spread when people see others like them trying, adapting, and benefiting from the change in ways that feel credible and attainable.

Designing for diffusion means planning for diversity in how people adopt new behaviors. Some will experiment early, others will wait for proof, and many will only act once a behavior feels normal. **Initiatives that support multiple pathways across genders, ages, roles, and social networks create more equitable and resilient spread.**

Finally, diffusion is sustained when ownership shifts. When community members become the teachers, role models, and advocates through peer learning, public recognition, and shared success, the behavior no longer belongs to the project — it belongs to the community.

Diffusion is not scale delivered by a project; it is scale generated by a community. This is how behavior change initiatives move from introducing an idea to supporting a socially normal behavior and how lasting conservation outcomes take root.

CHAPTER TEN

From Behavior Change to Conservation Impact



Community members selling produce at market. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

What Does "Success" Look Like in Behavior Change for Conservation?

Defining success in behavior change initiatives with a conservation goal requires a different lens than that of more traditional conservation projects. **Success is rarely a single number, a short-term ecological outcome, or a moment when a project can declare victory. Instead, it is often a pattern of change that unfolds gradually through behaviors that stick, shifting social norms, and pressures on ecosystems that begin to ease over time. Above all, it requires patience.**

Success is a pattern of change that unfolds gradually through behaviors that stick, shifting social norms, and pressures on ecosystems that begin to ease over time.

When behavior change is the primary strategy, conservation impact may be more indirect. We are not asking people to "save a species" or "protect a forest" as an isolated act. We are inviting them to adopt behaviors that improve livelihoods, solve everyday problems, and meet people's needs while also reducing harm to nature. Conservation outcomes emerge in response and shift as behaviors are sustained over time.

This means that early signs of behavior change initiative success often appear long before you will see positive change in ecological indicators. In western Tanzania, improved soil health and sustained composting practices showed up well before any measurable change in forest loss trends. That is not a failure of the approach — it is how complex systems work. Forests regenerate slowly. Watersheds respond over years. Long-lived species, such as chimpanzees, may not show population-level changes for decades. This can be one of the most frustrating parts of behavior change initiatives in conservation: the outcomes we want to see can take a long time to appear.

For practitioners, this requires patience and clarity. **Behavior change initiatives should be evaluated**



Farmer at her compost bean plot. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha



Village soccer fans celebrating Kajeje Village Team in the BCC Soccer Tournament. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

based on whether they are progressing along their theory of change, not whether they immediately deliver final conservation outcomes. *Are people continuing to practice the behavior without constant project support? Are new participants adopting it through peer influence? Are social norms beginning to shift so that the behavior feels expected rather than exceptional?* Setting expectations around these questions and realistic deliverables early with both teams and funders is essential to sustaining support over time.

Success also looks different when ethics are core to your planning process. It is not just about high adoption rates or impressive social media reach. It is about whether behaviors are sustained voluntarily without coercive tactics, whether they provide real benefits to participants, and whether communities are genuinely included in design. **In many cases, conservation becomes a co-benefit rather than the primary motivator for communities, and that is often a sign of strength, not weakness.** Don't let this discourage you — it is okay if people act for reasons that are different from our own.

Ultimately, success in behavior change initiatives for conservation is not defined by how much a project controls outcomes, but by how effectively it creates the conditions for change to continue without it. When behaviors endure, norms evolve, and pressure on ecosystems begins to lessen — even slowly — that is when conservation impact is taking shape.

How We Knew Change Was Happening

Our Theory of Change suggested that individual behavior would shift first, then social norms, and only hen environmental outcomes. We tracked change continuously at all three levels. Here is what we found.

INDIVIDUAL

Behavior change indicators: Capturing adoption progress

93%

of participating farmers believed composting was worth the time and effort.

77%

believed they had everything they needed around their farm to make natural fertilizer.

92%

believed they would compost in the future.

Individual change created the conditions for social change



The farmer proudly demonstrates how she uses compost to grow healthy tree seedlings. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/ Michael Pandisha

What we were looking for:

Did trained farmers develop the confidence and sense of self-efficacy to sustain composting independently, believing their own knowledge and resources were sufficient?

Even farmers who named specific challenges to composting still agreed they had everything they needed to create their own natural fertilizer and that it would become a common practice in their community. *End Line Evaluation, 2023*

Confidence that outlasts difficulty is what makes a behavior truly sustainable. These farmers believed in their ability to compost not because everything had gone smoothly, but because the practice had become genuinely theirs.

COMMUNITY

Social diffusion indicators: Capturing the spread of the desired behavior

What we were looking for:
Was composting becoming a shared community norm—spreading beyond those directly trained, into broader social networks and everyday practice?

Villages engaged in the Pilot and the Initiative launch
Most confident composting will become common

Pilot Villages Most likely to be unsure

Control Villages Least likely to believe it will become common

The depth of engagement, how long a community had been involved and how many strategies had been used, directly predicted the strength of the norm shift. More time, more strategies, and more trust led to stronger belief.

What this shows:
The more present we were in a village, with multiple strategies, over more time, and with deeper trust, the stronger farmers' belief that composting would become a normal part of community life. Even among those who had not yet tried it themselves.

83%

of farmers in engaged villages using compost by 2022. In control villages, 88% were still relying on chemical fertilizers.

49%

of engaged farmers believed friends and family who did not yet compost would try it in the future.

36%

of engaged farmers named Lead Farmers as their primary source of knowledge and support. Composting had moved from an outside initiative into the fabric of everyday community life.

Robert Mkosamali explains to a group of children messaging around composting. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

Shift in social norms created the conditions for environmental impact



CONSERVATION INDICATORS

Capturing environmental outcomes

4

villages showed statistically significant soil score improvements over time.

Spatial analysis showed less riverine forest loss in villages engaged in full initiative launch compared to control villages once the campaign began.

What we were looking for:
Were individual and collective behavior changes translating to measurable landscape outcomes?

What this shows:
Forest recovery takes decades. What the data shows is not an endpoint. It is the beginning of a trajectory made possible by people choosing, season after season, to compost rather than to clear.

We saw changes in behavior and norms before we saw changes in forests, and that is exactly what our Theory of Change predicted.

End Line Evaluation, 2023



Village soccer fans during the BCC Soccer Tournament. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha



Farmer caring after her compost pile. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/ Michael Pandisha

VILLAGE SPOTLIGHT

Kajeje was the only village engaged in the pilot and full initiative launch — four years of sustained, multi-method support. What happened there shows what depth of engagement can achieve across all three levels of the Theory of Change.

INDIVIDUAL
What farmers experienced

Kajeje farmers had more seasons to practice, refine their techniques, and build confidence than any other village. With sustained training and peer support across both pilot and full initiative periods, the results on their farms were visible not only to them, but to their neighbors. Most farmers said leaves were greener and yields had increased.

What began as a supported trial became a self-reinforcing practice.

COMMUNITY
What changed socially

In Kajeje, the initiative built layer upon layer of trust and social proof. Farmers who were trained became Lead Farmers. Lead Farmers became community voices. Composting became visible, talked about, and expected across the village. People work at the speed of trusted information.

Kajeje showed what happens when trust is built consistently over time through multiple channels and relationships.

CONSERVATION INDICATORS
What the data showed

Kajeje recorded the highest mean soil score of any village across all years, a statistically significant result. It also recorded the highest soil clay content, meaning better water retention and a healthier foundation for crops hat had no need to push into the forest.

More clay. More fertility. More reasons to stay on the land already farmed.

The most telling finding:
Kajeje farmers were the least likely to say they would clear forest land for farming, regardless of how productive it was. That is not just a behavior change. It is a changed relationship to land. Composting had not only improved their farms. It had changed what they believed was possible on them.



Lead farmer with daughters proudly posing next to compost piles. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/ Michael Pandisha

Conservation as a Co-benefit: When Conservation Becomes a Community Choice

Moments like this provided qualitative evidence that conservation values were beginning to surface through everyday community decisions:

When an elephant wandered into Kirando village, compost farmer Ahmad Ramadhan recognized that the situation could quickly become dangerous for both people and the animal. After the elephant injured a motorcyclist in the village, fear and tension spread, and some community members began calling for the elephant to be killed for meat.

With guidance, Ahmad contacted the village forest monitor to help keep people at a safe distance. He later explained that the situation required responsible action, both to protect people and to avoid unnecessary harm to the animal.

"The elephant had attacked someone on a motorbike, and I knew we needed to act responsibly."

—Ahmad Ramadhan

As the elephant moved between Kirando and neighboring Sanuka village, damaging crops and homes, fear and frustration grew. When the disoriented animal became trapped in Lake Tanganyika, the situation escalated further. Fisherman Seleshi Ezra joined the rescue effort, organizing boats and working with others to try to guide the elephant back to shore.

"Animals have their place in our lives just like humans. We need to respect and protect them."

—Seleshi Ezra

Village game scout Honda Issaya helped coordinate the response with district authorities and Jane Goodall Institute staff. When a boat engine failed during the rescue attempt, other villagers stepped in to help tow the elephant to safety. The elephant was eventually released near a river mouth and survived.

For months afterward, the elephant remained in the area, and community members continued to monitor the situation until it could be safely relocated. Despite ongoing challenges and pressure from some to harm the animal, villagers worked together with authorities to protect it.

"Where many saw an opportunity to hunt, our community saw a chance to help."

—Honda Issaya

This incident did not result from a single campaign message or training session. Instead, it illustrated a broader shift in how community members approached wildlife, risk, and collective responsibility. **While composting was the focal behavior of the initiative, moments like this suggested that conservation had become an accepted co-benefit of everyday decision-making**, something communities were willing to act on even when it required restraint and coordination under pressure.

WHAT BEHAVIOR CHANGE CAN (AND CANNOT) DO FOR CONSERVATION

Behavior change is a powerful tool in conservation, but it is not a perfect solution to all conservation problems. Understanding both its strengths and its limits is essential for designing effective initiatives, setting realistic expectations, and maintaining trust with communities, partners, and funders.

At its best, behavior change addresses the human drivers behind environmental pressures. Rather than focusing solely on outcomes such as deforestation rates or species counts, it targets the everyday decisions that shape impacts on nature over time.

Behavior change initiatives can:

- **Reduce pressure on ecosystems and species by replacing harmful practices with sustainable alternatives that meet the same needs.** By shifting destructive behaviors that drive habitat loss, overexploitation, or pollution, behavior change can ease the underlying pressures on natural systems. In western Tanzania, composting addressed declining soil fertility — one of the drivers pushing farmers into riverine forests — by offering a viable alternative rather than a restriction to stay out of the forest



Farmer caring for her compost piles. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha

- **Improve livelihoods in ways that support conservation goals.** When behaviors solve real problems for people — such as improving crop yields, saving money, or saving time — they are more likely to be sustained. These gains often create the conditions that make conservation-compatible choices possible, rather than burdensome.
- **Shift social norms over time.** Perhaps most importantly, behavior change can influence what feels normal, acceptable, or expected within a community. When a practice becomes socially reinforced — shared, discussed, and modeled by peers — it can persist long after a project ends.

In many cases, conservation becomes a *co-benefit* rather than the primary motivator. People may adopt and maintain behaviors because they work for their lives, not because they identify as conservationists. This is not a weakness of behavior change; it is often its greatest strength, because it means we are 'meeting people where they are' rather than struggling to move them to where we want them to be.

People may adopt and maintain behaviors because they work for their lives, not because they identify as conservationists. This is not a weakness of behavior change; it is often its greatest strength.

At the same time, it is important to be clear about what behavior change cannot accomplish on its own. Behavior change initiatives cannot:

- **Deliver immediate ecological outcomes.** Behavior change works on human systems first; ecological outcomes may come later.
- **Overcome structural scarcity or systemic constraints alone.** In many cases, supportive policies, infrastructure, or market conditions are also required.
- **Replace policy, governance, or enforcement where these are necessary.** Effective conservation often requires a combination of voluntary behavior change, institutional support, and fair enforcement.
- **Force or guarantee results.** Ethical behavior change relies on voluntary participation and informed choice. People are complicated, and initiatives that promise guaranteed outcomes risk oversimplifying complex systems and undermining credibility.



Theatre masked actor performance. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Michael Pandisha



Community member points area of interest on a map. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/Stephano Lihedule

For practitioners, **the goal is not to choose between behavior change and other conservation strategies, but to understand how behavior change fits within a broader system**. It is most effective when paired with supportive policies, local leadership, and long-term investment.

Although behavior change does not always deliver instant conservation results, **it can create pathways for conservation by aligning human well-being with environmental outcomes**. When designed ethically and evaluated thoughtfully, it offers a way to address conservation challenges at their roots, not just their symptoms.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Conservation impact follows a sequence. And that sequence takes time. **Individual confidence shifts first, then social norms, and only then do environmental signals begin to move**. So if your conservation indicators are not yet showing change, check your behavioral and social ones first.

Evaluate progress against your Theory of Change, not against conservation endpoints. The most honest question is not *"Has the forest recovered?"* but *"Are people still doing this without us, and are others joining them?"* Setting that expectation early with funders and leadership is one of the most practical things you can do.

Conservation as a co-benefit is not a compromise. It is a sign the initiative is working. Do not let it discourage you if people act for reasons other than conservation. The outcomes still count.

Depth of engagement produces stronger results than breadth alone. **More time, more strategies, and more trust do not just add up. They compound.** When resources are limited, sustained engagement with fewer communities often delivers more than light-touch coverage across many.

Be clear about what behavior change can and cannot do, with your team, your funders, and yourself. It is most effective when paired with supportive policies, local leadership, and long-term investment, and initiatives that are honest about this build more durable partnerships than those that overpromise.

Looking Forward: Why This Approach Matters for the Field

Conservation is increasingly being seen as a social challenge as much as an ecological one. Human decisions, livelihoods, institutions, and norms profoundly shape the pressures facing species and the habitats they call home. As a result, many conservation practitioners are asking new questions. **They are asking not only what needs to change, but how change can realistically happen in people's everyday lives.**

Behavior change approaches offer one response to that shift. They move conservation beyond a focus on compliance or awareness toward a deeper understanding of how people make decisions, adapt practices, and sustain change over time. Rather than asking, *"How do we get people to comply?"* behavior change invites a different framing: *"How do we create conditions where sustainable choices make sense, feel achievable, and can last?"*

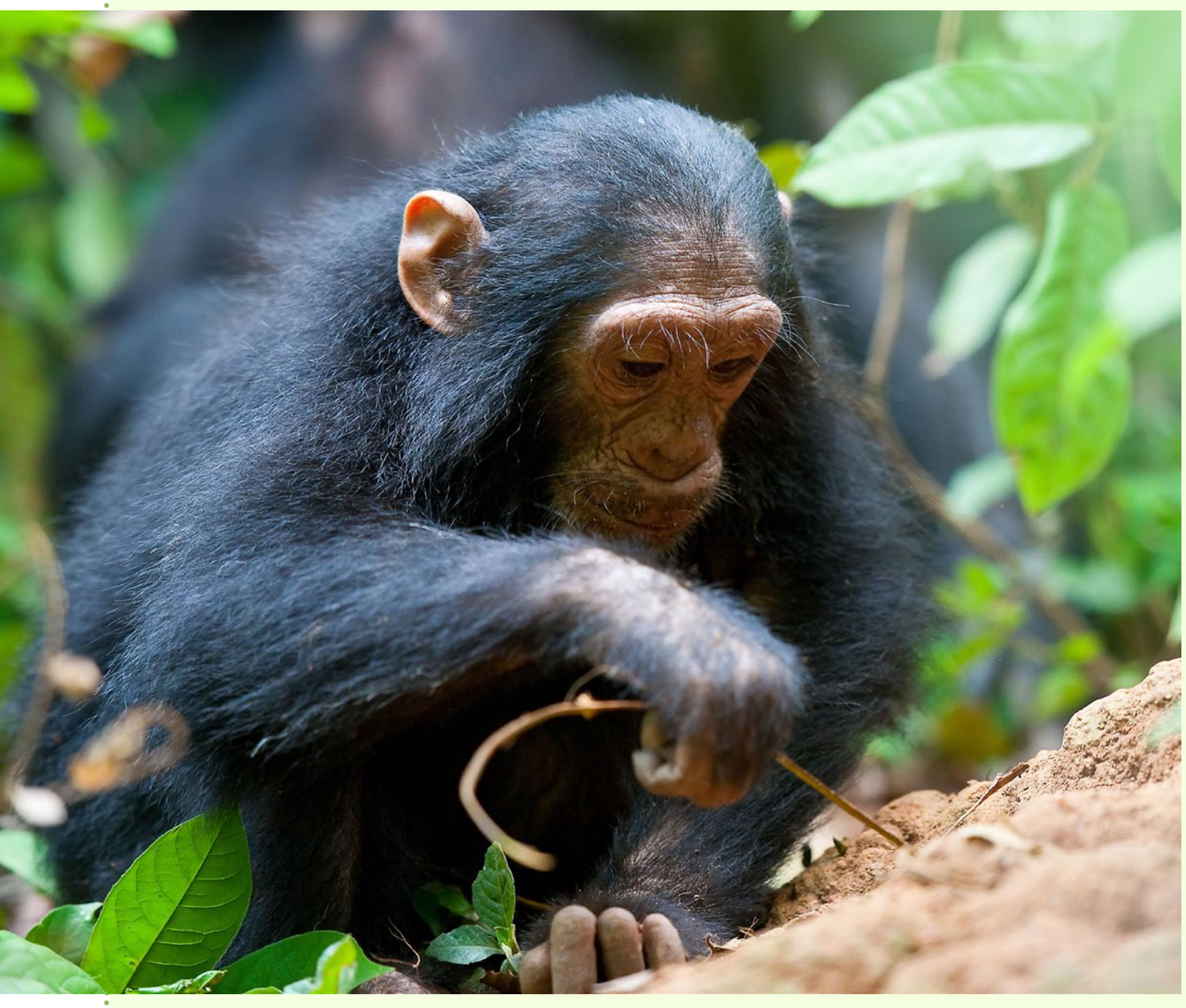
A defining strength of behavior change when applied to conservation challenges is that it **centers people as partners rather than obstacles**. Initiatives that are co-created with communities, grounded in local knowledge, and attentive to power dynamics are more likely to build trust and legitimacy. This is especially important in contexts where conservation has historically been experienced as exclusionary, externally imposed, or misaligned with local priorities. When people see their realities reflected in the design of an initiative, they are more likely to invest in its success.

Behavior change approaches also bring humility into conservation practice. They require practitioners to articulate assumptions and test them in real-world situations. They also require listening carefully to feedback, and adapting when things do not work as expected. This is not a weakness of the approach; it is one of its greatest strengths. By embedding monitoring, evaluation, and learning throughout the process, behavior change initiatives raise the bar for accountability to both communities and to funders while improving the quality and credibility of conservation work.

Finally, this approach helps the field grapple honestly with complexity. Environmental challenges rarely have single causes or linear solutions. Strategies grounded in behavior change do not promise quick fixes or guaranteed outcomes. Instead, they recognize the beautiful complexity of human behavior, provide tools for navigating uncertainty, and support progress that unfolds over time. It acknowledges that meaningful conservation impact is often cumulative, relational, and adaptive.

For conservation practitioners, behavior change approaches represent an opportunity. They offer a way to design initiatives that are more ethical, more grounded, and more resilient. When conservation efforts invest not only in outcomes, but in the people and systems that sustain them, they lay the groundwork for change that continues long after a project ends.

This is not a departure from the core mission of conservation. Behavioral science allows us to expand on it by recognizing that protecting nature and supporting human well-being are deeply intertwined, and that lasting solutions emerge when communities shape the future they want to live in.



Baby chimpanzee fishing for termites with a twig. Photo by Nick Riley Photography

The Work Continues

In 2019, we asked ourselves: What if we could do better?

The journey from that question to this book hasn't been linear. There were moments of breakthrough when we watched communities embrace new practices with enthusiasm we'd never seen before. There were also moments of humility.

What we've discovered is that behavior change science isn't about manipulation or clever tricks. It's about deeply understanding the people we serve and designing interventions that fit their lives, their values, and their realities.
The question changes from: *"How can we get them to do what we want?"* to *"How can we support them in achieving what they want?"*

The tools and insights in this book represent our best understanding today, but they are not the destination; they are the beginning of your journey. Every community is different. Every conservation challenge is unique. What works in Western Tanzania may need adaptation in your context, and that's exactly as it should be.

We've shared this guidance because the conservation community is stronger when we learn together. Your innovations, adaptations, and even failures contribute to an ever-growing understanding of how to create meaningful change. The communities you serve deserve approaches that work. And so do you.

The future of conservation lies not just in protecting the landscapes we care about, but in understanding the people who depend on them. *Who are they? What matters to them? What are their successes and struggles?* When we understand the community, we deepen our understanding of how to protect the land.

That understanding grows stronger every time someone like you takes these ideas and makes them work in the real world.

Thank you for being part of this journey. The work continues.

Stella, Lauren & Robert

THE PRACTITIONER'S TOOLKIT

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Before You Begin: A Preparation Checklist

You do not need everything figured out before you begin—but you do need the right foundation. Use this checklist alongside Chapter 3. Preparation to ensure your team has the right essentials in place before launching your initiative. Check off each action as it is completed and use the notes column to record context specific to your initiative.

THE ESSENTIALS

Focus on what matters most before moving forward.

Action	Done	Notes
Leadership support has been secured—decision makers understand and support the behavior change approach		
A dedicated team is in place		
A basic level of funding, materials, or staff time is available to begin		
A problem statement and a Theory of Change have been drafted to connect planned activities to desired outcomes		
A MEL framework is in place—even a basic system for collecting data and reflecting on progress		

DEFINE THE PROBLEM

Be honest about what you do not know, and seek answers from community members and technical experts before moving forward.

Action	Done	Notes
The specific conservation problem the initiative is trying to address has been clearly identified		
Workshops or conversations have been held to map local perceptions of the problem alongside science data		
Key assumptions about the problem and its causes have been identified and documented		
The specific behavior or behaviors the initiative will focus on have been defined		
The team is clear on what the initiative is and what it is not—scope has been agreed upon		

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SECURE LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

Having the support of decision makers makes it easier to align priorities and keep momentum—especially when behavior change approaches are new or when leaders want faster results.

Action	Done	Notes
Community leaders have been identified and engaged early in the process		
If applicable, relevant government officials or authorities are aware of and supportive of the initiative		

BUILD THE RIGHT TEAM

You do not need a large team, but you do need the right mix of skills and perspectives.

Action	Done	Notes
Team members with local knowledge and community trust have been identified		
Technical expertise relevant to the conservation problem has been identified		
Team members are willing to problem-solve together and embrace trying something new		
Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood by everyone		
The team reflects a diversity of perspectives, including community voices		

ESTABLISH COMMUNICATION AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Clear roles, expectations, and ways of working together help prevent misunderstandings later on—especially when teams are spread across offices, field sites, and time zones.

Action	Done	Notes
Regular check-in team meetings have been established		
Shared notes and documentation systems are in place		
A project calendar with key activities and milestones has been created		
A task tracking tool or system is being used consistently		
Points of contact for each workstream are clearly defined		
Communication is frequent and accessible to maintain buy-in and cohesion		
Decision-making processes are clear—everyone knows who decides what and when		

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PLAN FOR RESOURCES

Be realistic about what you have and transparent with partners about what is possible. Communities often bring their own ideas and resources once they feel invested.

Action	Done	Notes
A realistic budget has been developed based on available resources		
Partners and community members have been consulted about what resources they can contribute		
Resource constraints have been communicated transparently with all partners		
Creative alternatives have been explored where resources are limited		
A plan is in place for scaling resources as the initiative grows		
MEL activities have their own dedicated budget line from the start		

CREATE CLARITY ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO DO

The clearer and more focused the call to action, the more likely it will succeed. Avoid packing in too many behaviors at once—it dilutes impact and makes it harder for any single behavior to stick.

Action	Done	Notes
The initiative's focus and expected outcomes have been clearly defined and communicated		
The specific positive behavior the initiative is promoting has been identified		
The Theory of Change clearly connects the target behavior to the conservation goal		
Scope has been agreed upon and communicated to all partners and stakeholders		
The initiative is framed around what people can do, not what they should stop doing		

REFLECTION PROMPTS

Return to these questions before moving into implementation:

- Do we have leadership support that will hold through slow progress and unexpected results?
- Is our team set up to problem-solve together, or are roles and responsibilities still unclear?
- Are we being honest about what we do not know, and do we have a plan for finding out?
- Is our focus clear enough—one behavior, one call to action, one shared theory of change?
- Have we built MEL into the foundation, or are we still treating it as something to add later?
- Are we prepared for the work to take longer and feel more uncertain than traditional approaches?

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Running Your Initiative: A Coordination Checklist

Good organization is not about having perfect systems—it is about having systems that work for your team and that everyone actually uses. Use this checklist to keep your team aligned and your initiative on track. Work through each section, start simple, and adjust as you learn what works best for your context and team.

SET UP YOUR COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

Choose your tools and commit to them before the initiative begins. Switching platforms mid-initiative creates confusion and wastes time. Test all tools with field team members before launch to ensure everyone can access them.

Action	Done	Notes
A document sharing platform has been chosen and set up (e.g. Google Drive or similar cloud platform)		
A meeting platform accessible to all team members, including field staff with limited internet, has been selected		
A day-to-day communication channel has been agreed upon (e.g. Slack, WhatsApp, or email)		
All tools have been tested before the initiative launches		
Everyone on the team knows which tool to use for which purpose		

KEEP EVERYONE ENGAGED

Regular team updates ensure everyone knows what is happening and what is coming next. Do not forget leadership updates—they maintain organizational alignment and prevent surprises when you need to make changes or request additional resources.

Action	Done	Notes
A schedule for regular team updates has been agreed upon (bi-weekly or monthly works for most campaigns)		
Updates consistently include progress on key activities, upcoming deadlines, changes to the plan, and wins worth celebrating		
A process for leadership updates is in place to maintain organizational alignment		
The person responsible for sending updates has been identified and confirmed		

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ESTABLISH YOUR MEETING RHYTHM

Agree upfront on when your team will check in and block the time now. Make it realistic—consider time zones, field schedules, and other commitments when setting your rhythm.

Action	Done	Notes
Meeting frequency has been agreed upon by the entire team		
Recurring meetings have been added to everyone's calendar from the start		
Meeting times account for time zones, field schedules, and other team commitments		
The meeting rhythm is predictable enough that people can plan around it		

CREATE STANDARD MEETING AGENDAS

A ready-to-go agenda template ensures all topics get covered and decisions actually get made. Set time limits for each section and stick to them. If something needs in-depth discussion, schedule a separate focused meeting.

Action	Done	Notes
A standard meeting agenda template has been created and shared with the team		
The agenda consistently covers: quick wins and progress updates, challenges and roadblocks, decisions that need to be made, next steps and who is responsible, and a timeline check-in		
Time limits are set for each agenda section		
Every meeting ends with clear next steps and named owners		

USE RACI TO CLARIFY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

For each major task, clarify who is Responsible (doing the work), Accountable (ensuring it gets done right), Consulted (providing input), and Informed (kept in the loop). Spending five minutes on this at the start of each major activity saves hours of confusion later. A full RACI matrix template is included on the page 144.

Action	Done	Notes
RACI assignments have been completed for all major initiative activities		
All team members understand their roles and know who is accountable for each area		
RACI is reviewed and updated at the start of each new initiative phase		

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SCHEDULE DEDICATED LEARNING MEETINGS

Learning meetings are different from regular project management meetings. While project meetings focus on tasks and timelines, learning meetings focus on impact and discovery—stepping back to ask whether the initiative is actually working. For more information on other MEL-related activities, refer to Chapter 4.

Action	Done	Notes
Learning meetings have been scheduled for the full initiative duration before launch		
Learning meetings are clearly separate from regular project management meetings		
Each learning meeting will include monitoring data, field observations, and community feedback		
Key questions for learning meetings (i.e. Learning Agenda) have been agreed upon		
A process is in place for documenting lessons learned and using them to inform next decisions		
Wins are being celebrated in learning meetings, not just problems discussed		
Learning meeting frequency has been set—quarterly works for most initiatives, more frequently during launch or testing phases		

REFLECTION PROMPTS

Return to these questions at each major initiative milestone:

- Are our communication systems actually being used by everyone, including field staff?
- Are team updates happening consistently, or are they the first thing dropped when things get busy?
- Do team members know who is responsible for what, or are there gaps and overlaps in ownership?
- Are our learning meetings genuinely focused on impact, or have they become project management meetings?
- Are we using what we learn in meetings to make real decisions, or just documenting and moving on?
- Is our organizational system still working for us, or does it need to be simplified or adjusted?

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RACI Matrix Template

Use this matrix to assign roles and responsibilities across all major activities. Use names or titles that reflect your team structure. Review and update at the start of each new initiative phase.

		Names & Roles					
Phase	**Task / Activity**	**Responsibilities**					

R = Responsible (doing the work) | A = Accountable (ensuring it gets done right)
C = Consulted (providing input) | I = Informed (kept in the loop)

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		Names & Roles					
Phase	**Task / Activity**	**Responsibilities**					

R = Responsible (doing the work) | A = Accountable (ensuring it gets done right)
C = Consulted (providing input) | I = Informed (kept in the loop)

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Consequences Table Template

Use this template alongside Chapter 3. Preparation to systematically compare potential target behaviors before selecting the focus of your initiative. The template has two parts: a Criteria Reference that defines what Low, Medium, and High mean for each criterion, and a Scoring Table where you rate each potential behavior. The Tanzania column shows how each criterion was applied in practice when selecting composting as the target behavior. Work through the criteria together as a team—the goal is a transparent, shared understanding of the trade-offs, not a perfect score.

PART 1: CRITERIA REFERENCE

Refer to this table as you complete the Scoring Table in Part 2. The Tanzania example column shows how each criterion was considered when evaluating composting as a potential target behavior

Criterion	Low	Medium	High	Example
What are you assessing?	**Least favorable**	**Somewhere in between**	**Most favorable**	**How Tanzania composting was applied in practice**
Conservation Impact (Weight: HIGH)	Little connection between this behavior and the conservation goal.	Indirect connection—takes longer to address the conservation problem.	Directly and measurably reduces pressure on the ecosystem or species you are trying to protect.	HIGH—Improving soil fertility through composting directly reduces the need to clear new riverine forest land.
Feasibility (Weight: HIGH)	Households cannot realistically adopt this behavior with available resources, skills, or infrastructure.	Adoption is possible but requires significant support, adaptation, or resource investment.	Households can realistically adopt this behavior with the time, skills, and resources currently available.	HIGH—Composting uses locally available materials and can be done on any farm size without specialized equipment.
Time to Benefits (Weight: HIGH)	Benefits take a very long time to materialize—too slow to keep people motivated.	Moderate wait for benefits. Achievable but may require sustained encouragement.	Benefits are visible quickly enough to reinforce motivation and encourage continuation.	HIGH—Composting shows improved soil and harvest results within one farming season.
Cultural Fit (Weight: HIGH)	Conflicts with deeply held community values, traditions, or social norms.	Somewhat aligned with community values but may require attitude shifts or adaptation.	Aligns well with existing community values, traditions, and ways of life.	MEDIUM—Initial skepticism existed. Required careful framing around family wellbeing and food security to align with values.

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Criterion	Low	Medium	High	Example
Equity (Weight: HIGH)	Benefits or participation would be unequally distributed—likely to exclude women, youth, or marginalized groups.	Mostly equitable with some gaps. Additional design effort needed to reach all groups.	Both women and men, across different ages and roles, would have equal opportunity to participate and benefit.	MEDIUM—Early training was male-dominated. We deliberately recruited and trained Lead Farmers of both genders to address this.
Risks and Trade-offs (Weight: HIGH)	High risk of unintended consequences—could harm livelihoods, relationships, or conservation outcomes.	Some risks exist but are manageable with careful design and monitoring.	Low risk of unintended consequences. Trade-offs are well understood and acceptable.	MEDIUM—Composting requires time and labor investment. We mitigated this by simplifying methods and aligning with seasonal rhythms.
Ease of Monitoring (Weight: HIGH)	Very difficult to track whether people have adopted the behavior or measure its conservation impact.	Monitoring is possible but requires significant data collection effort or complex methods.	Adoption and conservation outcomes can be tracked simply and reliably over time.	HIGH—Compost heaps and crop yields are observable and measurable. Farmer volunteers tracked adoption through a simple database.
Support from Partners (Weight: HIGH)	Technical experts and local leaders are not positioned or willing to reinforce the behavior.	Some partner support available but gaps exist in reach, trust, or capacity.	Technical experts, extension agents, and local leaders are ready and able to reinforce and promote the behavior.	HIGH—Agricultural extension agents were already trusted by farmers and became key partners in training and follow-up support.
Ease of Monitoring (Weight: HIGH)	Very difficult to track whether people have adopted the behavior or measure its conservation impact.	Monitoring is possible but requires significant data collection effort or complex methods.	Adoption and conservation outcomes can be tracked simply and reliably over time.	HIGH—Compost heaps and crop yields are observable and measurable. Farmer volunteers tracked adoption through a simple database.
Support from Partners (Weight: HIGH)	Technical experts and local leaders are not positioned or willing to reinforce the behavior.	Some partner support available but gaps exist in reach, trust, or capacity.	Technical experts, extension agents, and local leaders are ready and able to reinforce and promote the behavior.	HIGH—Agricultural extension agents were already trusted by farmers and became key partners in training and follow-up support.

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Criterion	Low	Medium	High	Example
Policy Alignment (Weight: HIGH)	Conflicts with current government policy or requires new legislation to be viable.	Some supportive policies exist but gaps remain.	Supportive policies are fully in place. No legal or policy barriers exist.	HIGH—Government agricultural policy supports soil improvement practices. No legal barriers to promoting composting.
Budget (Weight: LOW—lower cost is better)	Most expensive—requires additional funds beyond current budget.	Moderately expensive—manageable if resources are shifted.	Least expensive—easily covered within current project budget.	LOW (favorable)—Composting uses locally available organic materials at no cost. Training and samples are the primary investment.
Data Confidence (Weight: HIGH)	Little data on current behaviors or audience attitudes. Many assumptions to test.	Some data available. Key assumptions can be tested with community input.	Strong data available. Few assumptions needed. Other projects to learn from.	HIGH—Baseline data from 813 households, focus groups, and soil testing provides a rich foundation for campaign design.
Climate Resilience (Weight: HIGH)	Uncertain whether this behavior will remain viable under likely climate changes.	Reasonable expectation the behavior will hold under likely climate conditions.	Will remain effective and beneficial even with changes in rainfall and temperature.	HIGH—Composting improves soil water retention, making it more effective, not less, under variable rainfall.
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	Not a Fit—Move On	Maybe—Needs Further Investigation	Best Fit—Move Forward	BEST FIT—High scores across all weighted criteria. Composting selected as the primary target behavior.

Note: Criteria marked HIGH carry the most weight in your final decision.
For Budget, a lower score is actually more favorable—lower cost is a positive.

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PART 2: SCORING TABLE

Rate each potential behavior against the criteria using Low, Medium, or High. The two example columns show how composting (Best Fit) and zero-grazing for manure (Maybe) were scored during the Tanzania initiative.

Criterion	e.g. Composting	e.g. Zero-grazing for manure	Behavior		
Rate each: Low / Medium / High	Tanzania example—Best Fit	Tanzania example—Maybe	Your behavior		
Conservation Impact (Weight: HIGH)	HIGH	HIGH			
Feasibility (Weight: HIGH)	HIGH	MEDIUM			
Time to Benefits (Weight: HIGH)	HIGH	MEDIUM			
Cultural Fit (Weight: HIGH)	MEDIUM	HIGH			
Equity (Weight: HIGH)	MEDIUM	HIGH			
Risks and Trade-offs (Weight: HIGH)	MEDIUM	MEDIUM			
Ease of Monitoring (Weight: HIGH)	HIGH	HIGH			
Support from Partners (Weight: HIGH)	HIGH	HIGH			
Policy Alignment (Weight: HIGH)	HIGH	LOW			
Budget (Weight: LOW—lower cost is better)	LOW	MEDIUM			
Data Confidence (Weight: HIGH)	HIGH	HIGH			
Climate Resilience (Weight: HIGH)	HIGH	HIGH			
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	BEST FIT	MAYBE			

Once all behaviors are scored, compare the patterns across columns. The behavior with the most High scores on HIGH-weighted criteria—particularly Conservation Impact, Feasibility, Cultural Fit, and Data Confidence—is your strongest candidate. Use this as a starting point for team discussion, not as a final answer.

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Building Community Partnership: A Checklist

BASED ON THE JGI TACARE APPROACH

Meaningful engagement is not a one-time step—it is the foundation of everything that follows. Use this checklist alongside Chapter 4. Community Engagement to guide your process from first contact through to stepping back and supporting community-led implementation. Check off each action as it is completed and use the notes column to record context specific to your initiative.

ENGAGE

Begin dialogue with community members and local governments early. If communities are not ready, step back and wait until they are interested in moving forward.

Action	Done	Notes
Initial meetings have been held with influential community leaders to seek permission and build trust		
Required local authority approvals to work in the community or conduct data collection have been sought		
Cultural protocols for introductions and engagement have been identified and followed		
The goals and intentions of the initiative have been shared openly with community leaders		
Questions from community leaders have been answered honestly and transparently		
Genuine rapport is being built with leaders who represent their communities		
Communities have been given the choice to participate—engagement is offered, never imposed		

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LISTEN

Use active listening to understand not only needs and concerns, but also local insights, values, and traditional ecological knowledge.

Action	Done	Notes
Informal conversations have been held with community members before introducing project ideas		
Focus groups or interviews have been conducted to understand daily realities, aspirations, and values		
Surveys with open-ended questions have been used to learn about community challenges		
Community members have been asked how they perceive the conservation problem		
Community mapping exercises have been used to help people describe how they use and value their environment		
Local insights, values, and traditional ecological knowledge are being documented and respected		
Community members' preferred ways of learning and receiving information have been identified		
Community input is actively shaping the language and messaging of the initiative		

UNDERSTAND

Combine traditional, social, and technical knowledge to develop a shared picture of problems and potential solutions.

Action	Done	Notes
Baseline surveys have been conducted to understand community members and their priorities (health, food security, income, education) have been mapped		
Science data (soil testing, deforestation mapping, wildlife surveys) has been collected and reviewed		
Biological data has been combined with community knowledge to create a fuller picture		
The connection between human activities, wildlife, and the environment has been explored with communities		
Key barriers and benefits that community members will weigh when considering a new behavior are known		
The team has a shared understanding of both community realities and ecological pressures		

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FACILITATE

Support communities in implementing their chosen solutions. The role of outside organizations is to provide resources and technical support, not to dictate choices.

Action	Done	Notes
Community members have been supported to identify and implement solutions they have chosen		
Access to training, materials, or technical expertise has been provided where needed		
Spaces for peer-to-peer learning and collaboration have been created		
Coordination with government agencies and other partners has been facilitated where helpful		
Barriers to participation have been identified and addressed, including practical resources like tools or materials		
Community ownership of the solution is being actively protected throughout implementation		
Community champions have been identified with community and leadership support		
Demonstration opportunities have been created to make the new behavior feel tangible and achievable		
Mechanisms for equitable benefit sharing were developed		

STEP BACK

Maintain local ownership by stepping back when communities are ready to lead.

Action	Done	Notes
Community members and champions are taking on leadership roles without prompting		
The team's role has shifted from direct implementation to technical support and facilitation		
Commitments made to communities are being followed through consistently		
Communication with communities remains open, clear, and honest		
Community achievements are being recognized and celebrated publicly		
If communities have chosen not to engage, withdrawal has been respectful with the door left open		
Long-term local ownership of the solution is being reinforced at every opportunity		

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PARTICIPATORY LEARNING

Community engagement does not end at implementation. Continue learning alongside communities throughout the initiative.

Action	Done	Notes
Community members are being treated as co-researchers and advisors, not just participants		
Regular feedback loops are in place to gather community observations and concerns		
Community feedback is visibly influencing real changes to the initiative		
MEL findings are being shared openly with communities through meetings or reflection sessions		
Communities can see that their input matters and is shaping how the initiative adapts		

REFLECTION PROMPTS

Return to these questions at each stage of community engagement:

- Have we genuinely listened to communities, or have we arrived with the answers already in hand?
- Are community members seeing themselves as partners in this work, or as subjects of it?
- Are we respecting local knowledge, values, and cultural protocols at every stage?
- Is community feedback visibly shaping the initiative, or just being collected and filed?
- Are we stepping back at the right moments, or holding on to control longer than we should?
- When communities push back or disengage, are we listening to what that is telling us?

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Theory of Change Summary

1. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Before designing solutions, work closely with the community, experts, and collaborators to understand the problem, audience needs, and cultural context. Co-create solutions to build trust, ensure relevance, and foster shared ownership.

2. CREATING CHANGE AWARENESS

Raise awareness about the specific behavior you want to promote. Share messages that reflect the local culture and values, using trusted messengers and channels. Remember, awareness is just the first step toward change!

3. FOSTERING INTENTION

Help people feel motivated and ready to try the new behavior by making it easy and rewarding, highlighting social acceptability, and offering resources, training, incentives, nudges, and support.

4. ACTION!

When people understand what to do and feel supported, they will try the new behavior—if obstacles aren't too great. The goal is not just action, but continued practice and sharing with others.

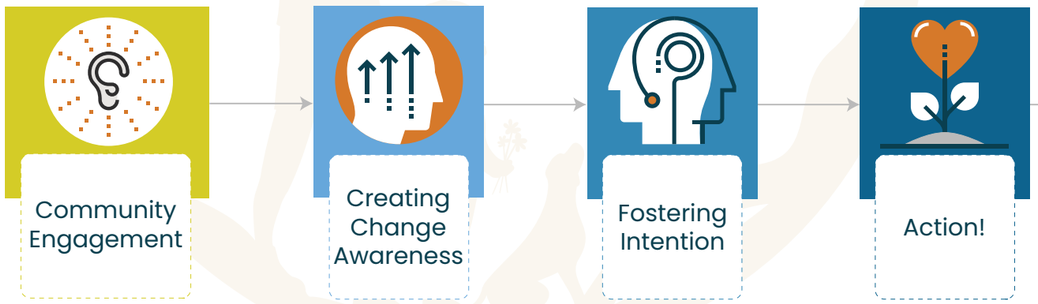

Image: Impact by Design's Theory of Change, developed in 2019

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5. ACTION MAINTENANCE

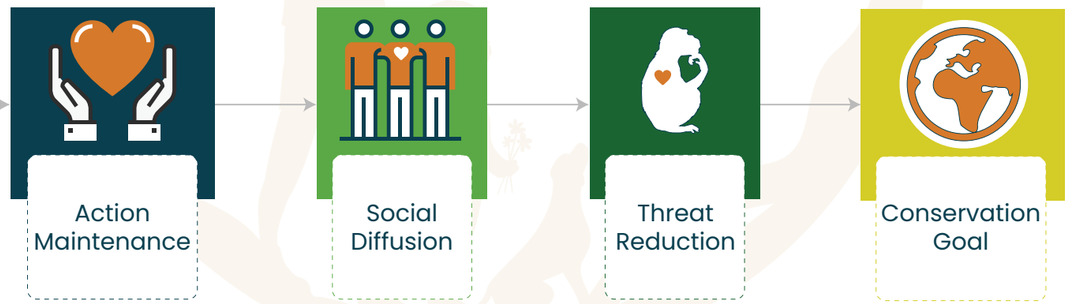
Support people in making the behavior part of their routine by reinforcing benefits, offering timely reminders, incentives, nudges, and support, and monitoring and adapting to challenges early.

6. SOCIAL DIFFUSION

Encourage the spread of the behavior across the community so it becomes the norm. Promote visibility, public commitments, trusted champions, and shared successes.

7. THREAT REDUCTION & CONSERVATION IMPACT

Monitor your efforts to see if threats to species, habitats, or people are reduced. Collect and compare data (before, during, after) and document success stories. Use this evidence to strengthen future work and secure support.



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Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan Template

A well-structured MEL system does not just measure success—it creates the conditions for success. Rather than a one-time planning exercise, treat this template as a living document that tracks both the human journey and the conservation outcomes and that actively informs decisions throughout the life of your initiative. Use it alongside the MEL Chapter, complete each section in order, and adjust to reflect the communities, context, and conservation goals you are working with.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Initiative Name _____

Geographic Scope _____

Conservation Goal _____

Lead Organization _____

Target Behavior _____

MEL Lead _____

Initiative Start Date _____

Initiative End Date _____

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MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL) PLAN TEMPLATE

STEP 1: MEL TEAM

Define roles and responsibilities before the launch of the initiative.

Role	Name/Organisation	Responsibilities	Notes
MEL Lead			
Data Collection Team			
Community Partners			
Decision Makers			
(Other)			

STEP 2: MEL BUDGET

Allocate resources for all MEL activities upfront.

MEL Activity	Estimated Cost	Responsible	Notes
Baseline Study			
Pilot Phase Evaluation			
Mid-Campaign Evaluation			
End of Campaign Evaluation			
(Other)			
TOTAL			

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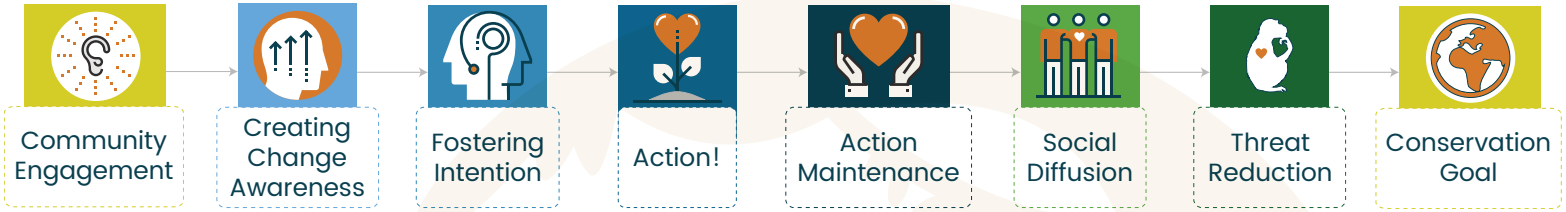
STEPS 3 & 4: THEORY OF CHANGE INDICATORS AND TARGETS

Develop your Theory of Change and define what success looks like across all three indicator dimensions —conservation outcomes, behavior change progress, and social diffusion.



Theory of Change Intermediate Result	Conservation Indicator	Behavior Change Indicator	Social Diffusion Indicator	Baseline	Target	Data Collection Methods	Responsible
What intermediate result are you tracking?	Environmental outcomes (forest cover, soil fertility, species sightings)	Adoption progress (% households trying new practice, self-reported confidence)	Spread of behavior (peer-to-peer exchanges, social norm shifts)	Current status	End-of-initiative goal	Surveys, observation, focus groups, scientific data	Who is responsible?

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STEP 4: LEARNING AGENDA

Design your learning agenda to investigate why certain approaches work, not just whether they worked. Test each question against four criteria: Relevant, Useful, Feasible, and Focused.

Learning Thread	Learning Question	When Will We Learn This?	How Will We Collect Data?	Findings & Observations	How Will This Inform Decisions?
Theory of Change Questions	Are the intermediate steps happening as expected?				
	Are the right conditions in place for change to occur?				
Behavior Change Questions	What barriers are households facing to maintain the new practice?				
	What is driving early adopters, and what is holding others back?				
Community Questions	Does this behavior align with household priorities like food security or income?				
	How is it being received within families and social networks?				

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STEPS 5 & 6: PHASE-BASED MEL SCHEDULE

Set up your MEL calendar.

MEL Phase	Focus and Key Questions	Data Collection Methods	Responsible	Planned Date	Findings & Decisions
Baseline Study					
Pilot Phase (Pre-Pilot)					
Pilot Phase (Post-Pilot)					
Scale-Up (Baseline)					
Mid-Campaign Evaluation					
End of Campaign Evaluation					
Monthly Check-in Meetings					
Quarterly Reflection Meetings					
(Other)					

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Audience Segmentation Worksheet

Audience segmentation helps you see the diverse groups that influence or are affected by the issue, focus on who you can engage realistically and ethically, and conserve time and resources by tailoring strategies to the right audiences.

WHY AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION MATTERS

Once you understand the root causes of the problem you are trying to address, you need to understand the people connected to it. Not all audiences are the same— different groups have different values, motivations, trusted messengers, and barriers to change. Segmenting your audience helps you design strategies that are realistic, targeted, and effective.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKSHEET

Step 1: After choosing the root cause you hope to influence, write this cause in one sentence in the center of your audience segmentation map.

Step 2: Brainstorm all of the various audiences connected to this root cause. Write these audiences around your central root cause.

Step 3: Use the guiding questions below to get more specific about who factors into your problem and how.

Questions to Guide Your Brainstorm

- Who does your audience trust?
- What is the supply chain like?
- Where do they get information?
- Who influences their decisions?
- Where do they buy things?
- Who is affected by or connected to this root cause?

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EXAMPLE: AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION MAP

This example shows how the team in Western Tanzania mapped the audiences connected to their root cause—small scale farms being established in riverine forests. Use the format that best suits your context.

Option 1

Male small-scale farmers	**Small scale farms are being created in riverine forests.**	Female small-scale farmers
Vendors selling forest products		Market sellers
Agriculture extension agents		Agro dealers
Village chiefs and elders		Religious leaders
NGOs and conservation groups		

Option 2

Male small-scale farmers	**Priority Root Cause** Small-scale farms are increasingly being established in riverine forests because soils on existing farmland have become infertile after years of continuous cultivation without being replenished.	Female small-scale farmers
Vendors selling forest products		Market sellers
Agriculture extension agents		Agro dealers
Village chiefs and elders		Religious leaders
NGOs and conservation groups		

CREATE YOUR OWN AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION MAP

Write your priority root cause in the center and add all connected audiences around it. Add as many audiences as are relevant to your context.

The goal of audience segmentation is not to reach everyone at once—it is to understand who matters most, who influences your primary audience, and how to tailor your approach to each group. Use your segmentation map to inform your messaging matrix and community engagement strategy.

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Psychographic Profile Worksheet

Once you determine who you want to engage, you will collect data on your target audiences to get to know them more deeply. Use modal data—the most common answers or patterns from your research, and write them next to each criterion. Select two distinct audience groups to compare their differences and identify the best ways to engage each through tailored messaging and campaign strategies. If data is not yet available, you can use this tool to brainstorm what you know and don't know about your audience.

HOW TO CREATE AN AUDIENCE PROFILE

Step 1: Look at the modal data from your audience research—the most common answers or patterns you found—and write them next to each criterion listed in the profile.

Step 2: Select two distinct audience groups so you can compare their differences and identify the best ways to engage each through tailored messaging and campaign strategies.

Note: *Modes are the most common response in a data set and display what you are most likely to encounter when interacting with a group of people. Although averages are interesting, they are less likely to represent actual people's experiences. Modes display real commonalities.*

EXAMPLE: AUDIENCE PROFILE

Profile	Small-Scale Farmer	Agriculture Extension Agent
Education level	Primary School	University
What do they think and know about the issue?	Growing enough food can be difficult. Having food is more important than conserving forests.	People are forest farming because it is most productive. People need help growing food. Agents are too spread thin to help every individual ag issue.
How do they spend their time?	Women: raising the children, setting up and maintaining the farm, harvesting, preparing meals and cleaning. Men: attending community meetings, making household and financial decisions.	Traveling around to various villages and offering agricultural support.
Who do they trust?	Village chiefs, religious leaders, radio programming	Universities, other agricultural experts, agro dealers
What do they love?	Feeling proficient for caring for their farm, their families and children, God, football	Being proficient at their job, family
What resources do they have? Where do they get information?	Radio, agricultural extension agents, advice from village leaders	Universities, other agricultural experts, agro dealers

Why did we choose a small-scale farmer? They are the key person we can engage, we know where they are and how to connect with them, and they are eager to learn how to farm better.

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Why did we choose an agriculture extension agent? They are a key ally in the implementation of the project. Farmers know them and their support can increase the project's reach.

CREATE YOUR OWN AUDIENCE PROFILE

Fill out the criteria based on your existing data. Add more criteria in the blank rows if they're relevant to your project, and note anything you still wish you knew about your audience.

Use your completed profiles to inform your messaging matrix. Different audience profiles often call for different messengers, channels, and message framings.

Profile	Target Audience #1	Target Audience #2
Education level		
What do they think and know about the issue?		
How do they spend their time?		
Who do they trust?		
What do they love?		
What resources do they have? Where do they get information?		

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Messaging Matrix Template

Use this template alongside Chapter 5. Creating Change Awareness to develop consistent, values-based messaging across all initiative audiences and channels. Grey italicized text shows illustrative examples drawn from a composting behavior change initiative in Western Tanzania—replace with content specific to your initiative. Complete the Brand Foundation section first, as it provides the framework for all other messaging decisions.

BRAND FOUNDATION

Define the core brand elements that will guide all initiative messaging. These should remain consistent across all materials and audiences.

Value Proposition	What is the core benefit your initiative offers to the target audience? *e.g. Improve and simplify all aspects of your life with low cost, productive composting to grow bountiful crops and resources for yourself and your family.*
Personality and Tone	How should the initiative feel and sound? *e.g. Reliable, wholesome, joyful, and authentic. An initiative that improves communities' wellbeing and supports conservation goals.*
Big Idea (Internal)	A clear statement of the initiative's purpose for your team and stakeholders. *e.g. A data-driven behavior change initiative based on behavioral science, going beyond awareness to shift how farmers use and manage their land.*
Big Idea (External)	A compelling statement of the initiative's purpose for your audience. *e.g. Composting is a powerful, affordable way to improve soil fertility, support healthier crops, and better support your family's livelihoods—while protecting the forests your community depends on.*
Tagline / Slogan	A short, memorable phrase that captures the initiative's spirit. *e.g. Tunza Udongo, Tunza Familia (Take care of the soil, Take care of the family)*
Target Behavior	The specific behavior the initiative is designed to promote. *e.g. Farmers adopt composting as a regular practice to improve soil fertility on their own land, reducing pressure on riverine forests.*
Conservation Goal	The environmental outcome the behavior change is designed to achieve. *e.g. Reduce encroachment into riverine forests by increasing soil fertility on designated farmland.*
Primary Audience	Who is the main target audience for the campaign? *e.g. Small-scale farmers who may be driven to farm in riverine forests due to low soil fertility on their own land.*

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PRIMARY AUDIENCE MESSAGING

All messages should forge an emotional connection between the target behavior and the positive outcomes your audience will experience. Make the audience the hero of the story.

Overarching Theme Message	A single sentence that provides direction and structure for all other messaging. It will be repeated constantly throughout the campaign.
Overarching Theme	Write your overarching theme message here. *e.g. You have everything you need around you to create your own natural fertilizer to improve the soil on your farm for bountiful crops next season.*

Topic	Key Subtheme / Message	Storylines and Supporting Messages	Channels	Messengers / Influencers
Target Behavior	Key message about the behavior itself. *e.g. You can produce crops you can be proud of by enriching your soil with compost.*	*e.g. Did you know you can make your own natural fertilizer?* *e.g. Materials used to make compost are affordable or free, and near you.* *e.g. You can learn to create your own compost at a training held in your village.*		
Benefits	Key message about the personal benefits of adopting the behavior. *e.g. Fertile soil is essential for bountiful crops. Composting will help you grow a bountiful, nutritious harvest for your family.*	*e.g. Your family can enjoy the benefits of composting as soon as the next farming season.* *e.g. Composting allows farmers to increase their crops and improve their family's nutrition and wealth.* *e.g. Farmers who created their own natural fertilizer saw maize and beans grow taller and more abundant.*		
Community and Social Norms	Key message connecting the behavior to community values and social identity. *e.g. Composting is easier when communities work together to gather materials and create piles.*	*e.g. When people work together to create compost heaps, they can create larger piles faster.* *e.g. Teams and communities can share compost-making duties and then share compost heaps with one another.* *e.g. As part of an important community of skilled composting farmers, you will be in control of a better future.*		

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Topic	Key Subtheme / Message	Storylines and Supporting Messages	Channels	Messengers / Influencers
Conservation Connection	Key message connecting the behavior to the conservation goal. *e.g. Communities that value and protect their forests will benefit from them for many generations.*	*e.g. When soils on designated farms are more fertile, people can depend less on farming in forests.* *e.g. Protected forests provide long-term benefits such as water, protection from climate change, and erosion control.* *e.g. When you compost, you are improving the health of your farm, family, community, and forests.*		
Barriers and Motivations	Key message that addresses barriers and connects to what motivates your audience. *e.g. Adding natural fertilizer to your farm's soil will restore its fertility and allow you to farm closer to your home.*	*e.g. Farming closer to your home on fertile soil saves you time from traveling far from home.* *e.g. Traveling to farm in more fertile soil can be difficult and time-consuming—composting solves this.* *e.g. Farming on your own land is safer and easier when you add natural fertilizer to the soil.*		

Channels: e.g. Radio, community events, training program, peer-to-peer communication, cell phones, drama/ music groups. Messengers / Influencers: e.g. Ambassador/lead farmers, project staff, agriculture extension agents, religious leaders, government officials, community leaders.

OTHER AUDIENCES

Identify all audiences that have influence with your primary audience. Tailor messages to connect with each audience's values, motivations, and trusted messengers.

Audience	Goals with this Audience	Key Messages	Channels	Barriers	Motivations
Children	*e.g. Knowledge gain on composting. Positive attitudes toward the behavior. To influence parents.*	*e.g. You can help your family make compost to apply to your vegetable gardens. You can be a champion of change for your family by encouraging them to compost.*	*e.g. Roots and Shoots, community events, drama and theater.*	*e.g. Teachers may not know about composting. Not enough time at school to learn and try it out.*	*e.g. Learning something new. Fun gathering materials. Nutrition.*

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Audience	Goals with this Audience	Key Messages	Channels	Barriers	Motivations
Adult Family Members	*e.g. Positive attitudes toward the behavior. Knowledge gain. To support their farming family members.*	*e.g. Composting is simple and easy to do. It is easier when done as a collective family effort, from gathering materials to building a compost pile.*	*e.g. Community events, drama and music, radio.*	*e.g. Lack of knowledge about composting. Concern about the work and time required to create compost.*	*e.g. Extra income from selling crops. Traveling less to farm. Nutrition of community.*
Religious Leaders	*e.g. Build support and positive attitudes toward the program. Encourage congregation to learn more and to compost.*	*e.g. Community members have confidence and high respect for you. You can use this to influence them to try composting and improve family incomes and livelihoods.*	*e.g. Intentional meetings with JGI. Radio. Community events.*	*e.g. Lack of existing collaboration between religious leaders and the project. Lack of trust in JGI.*	*e.g. Supporting people in being stewards of the land and forests. Community nutrition.*
Extension Agents	*e.g. Positive attitudes toward composting. Encouraging them to work with farmers and build their skills.*	*e.g. Farmers trust you as a knowledgeable person in agriculture. Because they trust you, you can change farmers' attitudes toward agriculture through composting.*	*e.g. Intentional meetings. Community events. Radio.*	*e.g. Lack of sufficient support. Some agents lack commitment as they have contracts with other organizations.*	*e.g. Teaching people new and better skills for farming. Collaborating with JGI.*
Government Officials	*e.g. Positive attitudes toward composting and the initiative. Increase interest in supporting the campaign.*	*e.g. Communities have confidence in you and rely on your guidance. Because they are confident in your leadership, they will trust you if you promote composting.*	*e.g. Presentations and reports. Peer-to-peer communication with JGI project leaders.*	*e.g. Low interest of some officials in composting. Misunderstanding between district officials and extension agents.*	*e.g. Community nutrition. Potential new livelihood security and options over time.*

Strong messaging connects the behavior to what the audience already values. Make the community the hero of the story, and keep every message grounded in real insights from your baseline research and community engagement.

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Brainstorming Ways to Foster Intention

Fostering intention means moving your audience from awareness to motivation—helping them feel ready and confident enough to try the new behavior. Use this worksheet to brainstorm the strategies, nudges, and incentives that will work best for your audience.

EXAMPLE: STRATEGIES USED TO FOSTER INTENTION IN SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

Removing Barriers	Nudges	Incentives
Lead farmers checked in on newly trained farmers to offer guidance and encouragement. Lead farmers were given composting kits with tools that make composting easier to share with other farmers.	Demonstration farms showing visible success of composting were created in busy areas of villages. Radio programming at specific times of the farming season with supportive reminders.	Free compost samples were given out to people attending campaign events. Composting competitions with prizes were held for villages and farmers who created the most compost piles.

Value Nudges = Small prompts or cues that guide behavior without forcing it.
Incentives = Tangible rewards that motivate action.

YOUR TURN: BRAINSTORM WAYS TO FOSTER INTENTION

Use the space below to brainstorm ways you can motivate your audience to take aligned action with your behavior change goals.

Social Support	Nudges	Incentives

HELPFUL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What would make this behavior feel easy and doable?
- How can I show that this behavior is socially acceptable or desirable?
- What would make them feel confident enough to try?

The most effective strategies connect the behavior to what your audience already values. Use your psychographic profiles and audience research to inform the approaches most likely to resonate.

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Brainstorming Social Diffusion Strategies

Behaviors spread most effectively through social networks. When people maintain a behavior, they often begin sharing their experiences with others, creating momentum.

EXAMPLE: STRATEGIES THAT ENCOURAGED SOCIAL DIFFUSION AMONG SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

#	Strategy
1	Peer-to-peer influence was crucial. We ensured that farmers were the face of the initiative so other farmers could be inspired by people like themselves.
2	We engaged ambassador farmers to recruit and train 10 additional farmers each, making sure both male and female lead farmers were included, as mixed-gender learning was discouraged.
3	Community events played a key role in sharing information and keeping people engaged. We organized contests, sports activities, theater performances, and close-out celebrations to reinforce our messages.
4	We used consistent branding and imagery that resonated with our audiences, helping to build recognition and trust in the initiative.

YOUR TURN: BRAINSTORM WAYS TO ENCOURAGE SOCIAL DIFFUSION

Use the space below to brainstorm ways you can encourage your target behavior to spread and remain integrated in your target audience's communities.

#	Your Strategy

HELPFUL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How can I make the new behavior visible in the community?
- How can I help the behavior spread beyond my initial audience?
- What would make others feel that this is the new social norm?

Social diffusion is where individual behavior change becomes community-wide transformation. The strategies that work best celebrate visible success, empower trusted voices, and make the new behavior feel like the natural choice.

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Brainstorming Ways to Maintain Behavior

A single attempt does not make a habit. Sustaining a new behavior requires reinforcement, recognition, and ongoing support over time. Use this worksheet to brainstorm the strategies that will help your audience turn a one-time action into a lasting routine.

EXAMPLE: STRATEGIES WE USED TO MAINTAIN BEHAVIOR AMONG SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

Hosting community events where information and announcements were given	**Strategies we used to maintain behavior among small-scale farmers**	Putting on sporting events that were very enjoyable to villagers
Producing apparel, posters, sports gear, and many other objects with the composting campaign branding		Ambassador farmers each recruiting 10 people for training
		Putting things in high visibility areas such as demo plots and billboards

YOUR TURN: BRAINSTORM WAYS TO MAINTAIN BEHAVIOR

Use the space below to brainstorm ways to encourage your audience to maintain their behavior after action has been taken!

HELPFUL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How can I help people stay motivated over time?
- What support systems could help people stick with the behavior?
- How can I encourage sharing and spreading the behavior?
- How will I check on sustained action through data collection?

Behavior maintenance is where lasting conservation impact is created. The strategies that work best are those that are visible, social, and tied to what people already value in their daily lives.

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GLOSSARY

The following terms appear throughout the book. Where a term is introduced in a specific chapter, it is explained in context. This glossary provides a quick reference for all key concepts in one place.

Action
The stage in the Theory of Change when intention becomes reality — when someone actually tries the behavior being promoted. Action is not about persuasion; it is about creating safe, supported opportunities for people to take an initial step without fear of failure or irreversible consequences.

Action Maintenance
The stage focused on helping people sustain a new behavior over time, moving it from a deliberate effort to a routine practice. Maintenance is not about keeping people motivated indefinitely — it is about making the behavior easier, more familiar, and more compatible with everyday life.

Adaptive Management
An approach to decision-making that treats unexpected results as data rather than failure. In behavior change initiatives, adaptive management means building in regular moments to review what is working, course-correct when needed, and adjust strategies based on real evidence rather than waiting until a project ends.

Attitudes
The way a person thinks or feels about a behavior, issue, or group — typically reflected in how they act. In behavior change initiatives, understanding existing attitudes helps teams design messages and strategies that connect with what people already believe rather than working against it.

Awareness
Having knowledge that a behavior, problem, or opportunity exists. Awareness is often the starting point of a behavior change journey, but on its own it is rarely enough to drive action. People can be aware of something and still not change what they do.

Barrier
Anything that prevents a person from adopting or maintaining a behavior. Barriers can be practical, such as lack of time, money, or materials. They can also be perceived, such as when someone believes something will be harder or riskier than it actually is. Identifying and reducing barriers is central to behavior change design.

Baseline Study
Research conducted before an initiative launches to establish a clear picture of existing community practices, attitudes, behaviors, and environmental conditions. Baseline data provides the foundation for measuring change over time and ensures strategies are grounded in community realities rather than assumptions.

Behavior
A specific, observable action a person takes. In behavior change initiatives, the focus is always on concrete behaviors — things people actually do — rather than broad attitudes or general intentions. The more specifically a behavior is defined, the easier it is to design strategies that support it.

Behavior Change
A strategic approach that goes beyond raising awareness to support people in adopting specific, sustainable behaviors. Rather than asking how to get people to comply, behavior change asks how to create conditions where sustainable choices make sense, feel achievable, and can last.

Benefits
The positive outcomes a person gains by adopting a behavior. Effective behavior change initiatives identify and communicate benefits that matter to the target audience — not just to conservation goals. When people experience real benefits from a new behavior, they are far more likely to continue it.

Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM)
A framework for designing behavior change initiatives that focuses on removing barriers, building benefits, and using community-based strategies to motivate and sustain new behaviors. CBSM emphasizes direct engagement with the target audience rather than relying on mass media or information campaigns alone.

Consequences Table
A structured planning tool used to systematically compare potential target behaviors against a set of weighted criteria. It makes trade-offs visible and helps teams make a transparent, evidence-informed choice about not just which behavior could work, but which behavior is most likely to succeed in their specific context.

Demonstration Plot
A visible, accessible area where a new behavior or practice — such as composting — is shown in action. Demonstration plots make a new behavior tangible and achievable, allowing people to see results firsthand and ask questions in a trusted, familiar setting before committing to trying it themselves.

Extrinsic Motivation
Doing something for external rewards, recognition, or to avoid negative consequences. Extrinsic motivation can spark initial interest in a new behavior, but it is unlikely to sustain action once external incentives are removed.

Goals
Clear, specific, and measurable statements of what a behavior change initiative is trying to achieve. Effective goals focus on long-term impact, are aligned with both conservation priorities and community values, and are developed transparently with input from all stakeholders.

Incentives
Tangible or intangible rewards that motivate or encourage someone to take action. Incentives can be useful in the early stages of a behavior change initiative to encourage first attempts, but they work best when paired with intrinsic motivation, otherwise behavior may stop when the incentive does.

Indicators
Specific, measurable markers used to track progress toward initiative goals. In behavior change initiatives, indicators fall across three dimensions: conservation indicators (environmental outcomes), behavior change indicators (adoption progress), and social diffusion indicators (spread of the behavior through social networks).

Intention
Wanting or planning to do something. Intention is an important step in the behavior change journey, but it does not guarantee action. Many people intend to change a behavior but never follow through — a gap known as the intention gap. Bridging intention and action requires deliberate design.

Intention Gap
The space between knowing what to do and actually doing it. People may be fully aware of a behavior and even motivated to try it, yet still hesitate to act. The intention gap is one of the most common stumbling blocks in behavior change initiatives and requires deliberate strategies to bridge.

Intrinsic Motivation
Doing something because it feels meaningful, rewarding, or aligned with personal values. Intrinsic motivation is what sustains behavior change over time, because it does not depend on external rewards or enforcement.

Lead Farmers
Community members selected and trained to serve as trusted peer educators and champions within their villages. Lead Farmers model new behaviors, train fellow farmers, and extend the reach of an initiative through trusted, peer-to-peer influence.

Learning Agenda
A structured plan that outlines what a team wants to learn during a behavior change initiative, when they will learn it, and how they will use those insights to inform decisions. A learning agenda moves monitoring beyond data collection toward active investigation of why certain approaches work in specific contexts.

Messaging Matrix
A planning tool that helps teams organize, align, and test their campaign messages across different audiences, messengers, and channels. A messaging matrix ensures all communication connects back to a shared core message while allowing for audience-specific adaptation.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)
A system for tracking progress, measuring outcomes, and generating insights throughout the life of a behavior change initiative. Unlike traditional monitoring approaches, MEL in behavior change work is participatory, iterative, and dual-tracked — capturing both the process of human change and conservation outcomes.

Motivation
The reasons an individual has for acting or behaving in a particular way. In behavior change initiatives, understanding what motivates the target audience — whether that is improved livelihoods, social recognition, or community belonging — is essential to designing strategies that resonate and last.

Nudges
Small, timely prompts or environmental cues that help people continue a behavior without requiring constant motivation or conscious effort. Nudges are a key tool in action maintenance, helping behaviors endure by reducing friction and reinforcing routines.

Participatory Methodology
An approach to community engagement and program monitoring in which communities are treated as co-researchers and partners — not just participants or subjects of measurement. Participatory methods ensure that community members help define success, share feedback, and shape how initiatives adapt over time.

Pilot
A small-scale test of initiative strategies in a limited number of sites before expanding to full scale. Piloting allows teams to learn quickly, uncover unexpected barriers, refine strategies, and build evidence — reducing the risk of costly mistakes when scaling up.

Psychographic Profile
A detailed portrait of a target audience that goes beyond demographics to capture values, motivations, barriers, social norms, and daily realities. Psychographic profiles help ensure that messages and strategies are grounded in what actually drives people's decisions.

Relapse
Returning to a previous behavior after having adopted a new one — ceasing to do something that had begun to take hold. Relapse is a common and expected pattern in behavior change, not a sign of failure. Well-designed initiatives anticipate relapse and build in support structures that help people return to the new behavior rather than abandoning it entirely.

Root Cause Analysis
A structured exercise used to identify the underlying drivers of a conservation problem rather than its surface-level symptoms. Root cause analysis helps teams understand what is really causing harm before deciding which behaviors to target — ensuring that strategies address real causes rather than visible effects.

Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC)
An approach that uses science-based communication strategies to promote changes in knowledge, attitudes, norms, beliefs, and behaviors within a target audience. SBCC combines behavioral science with communication theory to design messages and channels that resonate with specific audiences.

Social Diffusion
The process through which a behavior spreads from early adopters to wider social networks, becoming increasingly normalized within a community. Social diffusion is the mechanism that allows a behavior to outlive the campaign that introduced it.

Social Marketing
The design, implementation, and evaluation of initiatives designed to change human behavior for the benefit of people and society. Social marketing applies commercial marketing principles — understanding audiences, reducing barriers, and communicating benefits — to conservation and public health challenges.

Social Network
The groups of people with whom an individual interacts — including family, neighbors, peers, and community leaders. Social networks are the pathways through which behaviors, ideas, and norms spread. Understanding who holds influence within a social network is essential for designing effective diffusion strategies.

Social Norms
The behaviors, values, and expectations that a person is understood to conform to within a particular group, community, or culture. Social norms are a powerful driver of behavior — people are more likely to adopt a behavior when they believe others like them are already doing it. Behavior change initiatives often work to shift what feels normal and expected within a community.

Tacare
Started as the Lake Tanganyika Catchment Reforestation and Education (TACARE) program, Tacare is the Jane Goodall Institute's *community-led conservation and development approach that aims to protect species and the environment and improve people's lives*. Co-created by Dr. Jane Goodall, it is a holistic, science-driven approach that strives to ensure that local people and institutions own and drive development and conservation decisions in their landscapes as they address their own interconnected needs with the needs of wildlife and their shared environment. It is an approach guided by the principle that it is offered, never imposed: communities choose whether to participate and, when they do, own the solutions and drive the change.

Target Audience
The specific group of people whose behavior an initiative is designed to influence. A well-defined target audience goes beyond broad demographics to include an understanding of values, motivations, barriers, and social context — the factors that shape whether strategies will resonate in practice.

Target Behavior
The specific, concrete action that a behavior change initiative is designed to promote. A target behavior is not a broad aspiration but something people can recognize, try, and talk about — something defined clearly enough that anyone can describe it in simple terms.

Theory of Change (ToC)
A tool that makes your path forward explicit by linking planned activities to desired outcomes, surfacing assumptions, and creating a shared roadmap for your team and partners. In behavior change initiatives, a ToC describes both how you will achieve your conservation goal and how specific behavioral shifts will contribute to it.

Values
The principles, standards, and qualities that a person holds in high regard and that guide how they live and make decisions. In behavior change initiatives, understanding community values is essential — strategies that align with what people already care about are far more likely to succeed than those that ask people to adopt values they do not share.

FOR FURTHER READING

The frameworks and ideas in this book draw on decades of behavioral science, conservation practice, and community development research. This section gathers those foundational sources in one place as a starting point for readers who want to go deeper into any of the concepts introduced across the chapters. Sources are organized thematically to reflect how they appear across the book.

BEHAVIOR CHANGE FRAMEWORKS

Rogers, E.M. (2003). Diffusion of Innovations (5th ed.). Free Press.
ISBN: 978-0-7432-2209-9

Appears in: Chapter 9

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations is one of the most influential frameworks in behavior change research. It describes how new ideas and practices spread through communities over time, identifying five adopter categories — from innovators to laggards — and explaining what motivates each group. For practitioners, the most useful insight is that different people need different kinds of evidence and social proof before they are willing to try something new. Designing for diffusion means planning for that diversity from the start.

McKenzie-Mohr, D., & Tabanico, J. (2024). Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An Introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing (4th Edition). New Society Publishers.

Appears in: Chapters 2, 3, 5

This book is the foundation for the Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) approach referenced in Chapter 2. Where traditional awareness campaigns focus on sharing information, CBSM focuses on removing barriers and building benefits at the community level. McKenzie-Mohr's framework is particularly relevant for practitioners working with behaviors that require real changes in daily routines — like composting — because it starts with understanding what actually prevents people from acting, not just what they know. Freely available tools based on this framework are available at cbsm.com.

McConnaughy, E. A., Prochaska, J. O., & Velicer, W. F. (1983). Stages of change in psychotherapy: Measurement and sample profiles. Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice, 20(3), 368–375.

Appears in: All chapters — foundational to the Theory of Change structure

The Transtheoretical Model, or Stages of Change, underlies the Theory of Change that structures this entire book. It proposes that people move through a series of stages — pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance — when adopting new behaviors, and that effective initiatives meet people at their current stage rather than assuming they are all ready to act. The stages described in this book (awareness, intention, action, maintenance) map closely onto this framework, adapted for a community and conservation context. A more accessible introduction for practitioners can be found in: Prochaska, J.O., Norcross, J.C., & DiClemente, C.C. (1994). Changing for Good. William Morrow.

Thaler, R.H., & Sunstein, C.R. (2008). Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness. Yale University Press.

ISBN: 978-0-300-12223-7

Appears in: Chapters 6, 7, 8

The concept of nudges — small, timely prompts that make a desired behavior easier without removing choice — appears throughout this book, particularly in the chapters on intention, action, and maintenance. Thaler and Sunstein's work popularized the idea that how choices are presented shapes what people decide, even when they are not aware of it. For conservation practitioners, nudge theory offers a practical lens for designing low-cost, low-resistance strategies that work with human behavior rather than against it. Thaler received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2017 for this work.

Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (1985). Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior. Plenum Press.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-2271-7

Appears in: Chapters 6, 8

The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation — central to Chapter 6 — comes from Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan over several decades. SDT proposes that behaviors are most sustainably maintained when people feel a sense of autonomy, competence, and connection to others. It explains why external rewards can undermine long-term adoption if they crowd out internal motivation — a tension that practitioners designing incentive strategies will recognize immediately. Self-Determination Theory continues to generate a wide body of applied research across health, education, and environmental behavior.

Bandura, A. (1986). Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory. Prentice Hall.

ISBN: 978-0-13-815614-5

Appears in: Chapters 6, 7, 9

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory introduces the concept of self-efficacy — a person's belief in their own ability to successfully carry out a behavior — which underpins much of what this book describes in the chapters on intention, action, and maintenance. People are more likely to try and sustain a behavior when they believe they can do it, have seen others like them succeed, and receive encouragement along the way. Demonstration plots, peer educators, and progressive training — all central to the Tanzania composting initiative — reflect these principles directly. Bandura's later work on collective efficacy is equally relevant for thinking about social diffusion.

Cialdini, R. B. (2021). Influence, New and Expanded: The Psychology of Persuasion. Harper Business.

Appears in: Chapters 5, 8, 9

Cialdini's research on social influence and social norms informs the book's treatment of peer learning, trusted messengers, and social normalization. His core insight — that people look to others' behavior to determine what is normal and acceptable, especially in uncertain situations — explains why visibility and peer modeling matter at every stage of behavior change. The emphasis on social proof in Chapters 8 and 9 is, in many ways, an applied version of Cialdini's foundational principles in a community conservation context.

Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, Fast and Slow. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

ISBN: 978-0-374-27563-1

Appears in: Chapters 5, 6, 7

Kahneman's framework of System 1 (fast, instinctive) and System 2 (slow, deliberate) thinking helps explain why awareness alone is rarely enough to change behavior. Many conservation campaigns are designed for System 2 — they present facts, arguments, and reasoned appeals — but much of human decision-making operates through System 1, shaped by habit, emotion, and social context. The emphasis throughout this book on simplicity, trusted messengers, visible proof, and low-friction design reflects these insights, even where they are not cited explicitly.

CONSERVATION AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Rare. (2018). The Science of Behavior Change in Conservation. Rare. Available at rare.org

Appears in: Chapters 2, 5, 9

Rare's behavior change work — particularly its Pride campaign methodology — offers one of the most widely applied examples of social marketing in conservation. Their approach emphasizes community engagement, social norms, and pride in local identity as drivers of conservation behavior, complementing the frameworks in this book. Rare has published freely available resources on their approach, outcomes, and field tools at rare.org.

Schultz, P.W. (2011). Conservation means behavior. Conservation Biology, 25(6), 1080–1083.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2011.01766.x

Appears in: Chapters 1, 2, 10

A short but important essay arguing that conservation outcomes depend fundamentally on human behavior, and that conservation practitioners need to take behavioral science seriously. It makes the conceptual case for the approach this book puts into practice, and is a useful read for teams making the argument internally for why investing in behavior change strategies is worth the time and resources.

Dolan, P., Hallsworth, M., Halpern, D., King, D., & Vlaev, I. (2010). MINDSPACE: Influencing Behaviour Through Public Policy. Institute for Government / Cabinet Office, UK Government.

Appears in: Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8

MINDSPACE is a practitioner-friendly framework that organizes the most robust insights from behavioral science into nine key influences on behavior: Messenger, Incentives, Norms, Defaults, Salience, Priming, Affect, Commitments, and Ego. It is a useful complement to the strategies described across Chapters 5 through 8 and offers a structured checklist for teams designing awareness, intention, and maintenance strategies. Freely available from the UK Behavioural Insights Team.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATORY METHODS

Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Herder and Herder.

Appears in: Chapter 4

Paulo Freire's foundational work on participatory education underlies the community engagement philosophy woven throughout this book — particularly the TACARE approach described in Chapter 4. Freire argued that meaningful change comes from communities who are treated as agents of their own development, not recipients of external knowledge. The principles of listening, co-creation, and local ownership that run through every chapter of this book reflect this tradition.

Pretty, J., Guijt, I., Thompson, J., & Scoones, I. (1995). Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainer's Guide. IIED.

ISBN: 978-1-899825-00-4

Appears in: Chapters 3, 4

This guide from the International Institute for Environment and Development is a practical resource for practitioners implementing the kinds of community-based listening, mapping, and participatory research described in Chapters 3 and 4. It covers a wide range of participatory tools — including community mapping, ranking exercises, and seasonal calendars — many of which can be adapted for behavior change contexts. Relevant resources are also available at iied.org.

Chambers, R. (1997). Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last. Intermediate Technology Publications.

ISBN: 978-1-85339-386-0

Appears in: Chapters 2, 3, 4

Robert Chambers developed the concept of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which emphasizes reversing the flow of knowledge — starting from community realities rather than outside assumptions. This principle runs through the entire preparation and community engagement approach described in Chapters 3 and 4, particularly in the emphasis on baseline research, listening before designing, and treating farmers as experts in their own lives.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

Patton, M.Q. (2011). Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts for Program Improvement. Guilford Press.

Appears in: Chapter 4

The adaptive, iterative approach to MEL described in Chapter 4 — treating unexpected results as data rather than failure, and adjusting strategies in real time — reflects the principles of developmental evaluation articulated by Patton. This framework is especially well suited to behavior change initiatives in complex, community-based contexts where conditions shift and rigid evaluation timelines may miss what is actually happening on the ground.

Rogers, P.J. (2014). Theory of Change. Methodological Briefs: Impact Evaluation No. 2. UNICEF Office of Research.

Appears in: Chapters 3, 4

This accessible brief from UNICEF explains what a Theory of Change is, how to develop one, and how it connects to monitoring and evaluation. It is freely available and written for practitioners rather than researchers, making it a useful companion to the Theory of Change overview in Chapter 4 and The Practitioner's Toolkit.

Bamberger, M., Rugh, J., & Mabry, L. (2012). RealWorld Evaluation: Working Under Budget, Time, Data, and Political Constraints (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Appears in: Chapter 4

A practical guide for evaluation in real-world conditions — limited budgets, incomplete data, tight timelines, and political constraints. Particularly useful for practitioners working in field contexts similar to western Tanzania, where ideal evaluation conditions are rarely possible. It offers concrete strategies for designing rigorous-enough MEL systems that still generate actionable insights.

SOCIAL NORMS AND DIFFUSION

Bicchieri, C. (2006). The Grammar of Society: The Nature and Dynamics of Social Norms. Cambridge University Press.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511616037

Appears in: Chapters 8, 9

Bicchieri's work provides a rigorous but accessible account of how social norms form, persist, and change. Her distinction between empirical expectations (what we believe others are doing) and normative expectations (what we believe others think we should do) is directly relevant to the social normalization strategies described in Chapter 8 and the diffusion dynamics in Chapter 9. It is particularly useful for teams trying to understand why a behavior that most people privately support can still feel socially risky to adopt publicly.

Centola, D. (2018). How Behavior Spreads: The Science of Complex Contagions. Princeton University Press.

ISBN: 978-0-691-17531-7

Appears in: Chapter 9

Centola challenges the popular notion that behaviors spread most effectively through loosely connected networks and viral word of mouth. His research shows that complex behaviors — those requiring trust, social proof, and repeated exposure — spread better through dense, locally connected networks. This insight has direct implications for how composting and similar conservation behaviors spread in rural communities, and it supports the emphasis in Chapter 9 on peer-to-peer learning, demonstration farms, and trusted local messengers rather than broad, one-directional outreach.

A NOTE ON ACCESS

Many of the academic sources listed here can be accessed through university libraries or requested through interlibrary loan. For practitioners without institutional access, Google Scholar often surfaces freely available versions. Where open-access or practitioner-friendly alternatives exist — such as those from Rare, IIED, UNICEF, or the UK Behavioural Insights Team — we have noted them above.

(Back cover) Village soccer fans during the BCC Soccer Tournament. Photo by the Jane Goodall Institute Tanzania/ Michael Pandisha

Jane Goodall Institute

