Practitioner's Guide to Getting Started with Behavioural Science

Applications to UN Policies, Programmes and Administration

UN INNOVATION NETWORK

Acknowledgements

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The UN Innovation Network (UNIN) is an informal, collaborative community of UN innovators interested in sharing their expertise and experience with others to promote and advance innovation within the UN System. UNIN hosts the UN Behavioural Science Group, which promotes awareness, provides learning opportunities, and connects colleagues working on behavioural science at the UN and beyond.

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Preface

The UN's mission and objectives are often critically linked to changing human behaviour. Behavioural science enables us to diagnose barriers preventing people from engaging in a certain behaviour, identify enablers that help people achieve their aims, and design and measure the impact of interventions on the basis of these understandings.

In recognition of this potential to catalyse change, the UN Secretary-General has identified behavioural science as a core capability to promote a wider transformation of the UN and included it in the Quintet of Change. Behavioural science, alongside data, innovation and digital transformation, strategic foresight, and performance and results orientation, will strengthen the UN's capacity to deliver on its mandates, including the Agenda 2030.

To encourage all UN colleagues to explore and apply behavioural science in programmatic and administrative areas, the Secretary-General, with support from the UN Behavioural Science Group of the UN Innovation Network, published a Guidance Note on Behavioural Science in 2021. The Guidance Note was complemented by the UN Behavioural Science Report, which outlines approaches and experiences from 25 UN Entities and shares practical steps to create an enabling environment for the application of behavioural science.

Building on these, this "Practitioner's Guide to Getting Started with Behavioural Science" aims to provide a more detailed introduction to the application of behavioural science, and guidance on how to apply it to a UN Entity's policies, programmes and administration. This document is intended for UN practitioners with an introductory understanding of behavioural science who are interested in applying it in their work.

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1. Introduction

1.1 WHAT IS BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE?

Behavioural science refers to the scientific and evidence-based study of human decision-making and behaviour, examining how people actually behave and interact with their context, make decisions, and respond to programmes and policies, administrative processes and incentives. It is a broad and multidisciplinary field that combines, among others, insights and theories from cognitive psychology, social psychology and economics.

Research has shown that human behaviour is not simply the result of deliberate reasoning. More often than not, people do not have all the necessary resources available to think carefully about how they behave. Instead, people rely on mental shortcuts ("heuristics") and intuitive, automatic and often unconscious processes to simplify and accelerate decision-making. This can sometimes lead to errors in judgement (known as biases). Behavioural science seeks to develop a more systematic understanding of what factors influence behaviour. In its practical application, behavioural science is used to identify what drives people's decisions and behaviours, rather than relying on mere assumptions of how people should or usually act.

A key foundational insight and finding from the field is that behaviour is largely shaped by context, including social, economic, normative or environmental cues, for example when people follow the path of least resistance, adhere to social norms, focus on salient information (or ignore information that is not salient), or respond to how choices are framed (e.g. whether they involve a perceived loss or gain). An important implication of this finding is that observable behaviours are not always reflective of intentions or motivations. People possess a variety of motivations and intentions, but a key insight is that their decision-making environment or context can sometimes help, or hinder, their ability to realise their intentions.

BOX 1: EXAMPLES OF COMMON BIASES IN DECISION-MAKING

■ **Inertia, Status Quo Bias and Defaults:** People tend to prefer the status quo rather than expend effort on reviewing and choosing between alternatives. As a result, the default option in any programme, policy or administrative process becomes a powerful tool to shape behaviour.

■ **Social Norms and Social Factors:** Humans are greatly influenced by perceptions of the typical and desirable behaviour in a given social context. If individuals in a group start to engage in a certain behaviour (e.g. filing their taxes on time), others in the group are more likely to follow. But since people rarely know how typical a behaviour actually is, they tend to shape their behaviour according to their perception of what the typical behaviour is - a perception that can at times be inaccurate.

■ **Present Bias**: People are impatient in the present and more patient in the future. In other words, they often choose delayed gratification when considering a trade-off where both options are far into the future, but are more impatient when the same trade-off is between today and tomorrow. As a result, many people find it challenging to save for retirement and instead prioritise spending their money on more immediate needs. Present bias can also lead to the discounting of serious future risks, such as dangers arising from smoking, climate change or poor nutrition.

■ **Availability Heuristic**: People tend to overestimate the likelihood of memorable events (such as plane crashes) and underestimate the probability of less memorable, but more common events (such as strokes). As a result, people may be more motivated to avoid flying than to quit smoking, even if they are at a much greater risk of a stroke than a plane crash.

1.2 HOW IS BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE APPLIED?

Behavioural science uses scientific methods and principles to understand what influences human behaviour. These methods generate behavioural insights that can help to design more effective policies, programmes and administrations and provide a better understanding of what impact these are likely to have. Behavioural science can also uncover root causes of unintended consequences of policies, programmes and administrative processes. This tool seeks to understand what is likely to work, for whom and why. It shows how to make small changes that can have outsized impacts, or how to effectively tailor and target interventions that facilitate more follow-through on existing intentions.

Behavioural science is most often used to identify the behavioural dimensions of a given challenge; the barriers and enablers of a behaviour; and to design and test solutions to understand what works. It can be characterised by four features, namely:

1. **Focused on Behaviour:** Behavioural science observes and measures behaviour, as opposed to knowledge, beliefs, preferences or attitudes. It does so by observing actual behaviour or, if that is not possible, by collecting data on behavioural intentions, stated or self-reported outcomes linked to the behaviour. Knowledge and attitudes, as well as many other internal and external factors can be taken into account as possible influencers of behaviour.

2. **Evidence-based:** Behavioural science leverages understanding from academic and practical findings and uses scientific methods to identify behaviours, barriers or enablers that either impede or facilitate the effectiveness of policies, programmes and administrations; and test and

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measure the impact of approaches to changing behaviour through experimental methods.

3. **Context-driven:** Behavioural interventions focus on changing contextual factors to change behaviour. This may involve reshaping contextual cues such as the framing of different options, or the salience of particular information or social norms at play, based on the evidence on how these cues influence behaviour.

4. **Incremental:** Behavioural science embraces an incremental approach rather than investing immediately in large-scale policy interventions. Small scale experiments can help to test the relative effectiveness of various approaches to changing behaviour. Behavioural interventions whose effectiveness is already well-established (e.g. switching from an opt-in to an opt-out design) can sometimes more quickly be applied to existing problems.

☐ BOX 2: KEY DEFINITIONS

■ **Behavioural Science**: The evidence-based study of how people behave, make decisions and respond to context, which could include programmes, policies, administrative processes and incentives.

■ **Behavioural Insights**: Knowledge obtained from the application of behavioural science to gain an accurate and evidence-based understanding of how people behave and make decisions.

■ **Behaviour Change**: A broad concept that includes any effort to change behaviour and often involves giving people information with the aim to change their attitudes and decisions. Behaviour change initiatives (such as training and communication campaigns) are often not informed by the scientific findings and methods of behavioural science. Behavioural science can help improve and complement those efforts to promote behaviour change.

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Different types of behavioural science interventions have been developed to help practitioners apply behavioural science (see list of frameworks in Annex B).

One of the most well-known applications of behavioural science is a "nudge". A nudge is a behaviourally-informed intervention, made by changing the presentation of choices (i.e. the "choice architecture"), which alters people's behaviour in a predictable way. Nudges preserve freedom of choice, as they do not forbid any options or change economic incentives. For example, in an effort to encourage people to purchase healthier goods at the supermarket, a nudge might move healthier products to more visible locations, but would not reduce the costs of the healthy goods nor remove less healthy ones from the shelves. Nudges are easy and cheap to avoid. Some nudges are educational, such as warnings, reminders and information disclosure. Other nudges are more "architectural", such as automatic enrolment in savings plans with "opt out" options.

Another type of behavioural science intervention called "boost" stems from a different understanding of how people deal with the limits of their cognitive capacities. Whereas the nudge approach views heuristics as challenges to be overcome, the boost approach understands them as strong decision-making tools that people can learn to use more effectively. Boosts place more focus on building people's decision-making capacities. If, for example, people are given financial education or statistical literacy, those capacities might be "boosted," thus enabling them to exercise their own agency.

2. Applying Behavioural Science in the UN

In the programmatic work of the United Nations, successful outcomes often depend on changes in human behaviour, for instance, making healthier food choices, taking medicine, allowing a child to go to school, opting for more environmentally friendly transport, increasing fertiliser use, saving money, or finding formal employment.

There are also opportunities to apply behavioural science to reduce excessive burdens in administration and programming that would otherwise slow down decision-making, impact performance, distract employees from their core tasks and reduce employee satisfaction. Common examples of excessive administrative burdens include complicated forms, opaque organisational processes or long waiting times. Unwarranted administrative burdens can also impact the uptake of programmes designed to support the people the UN serves.

Recognising the potential of behavioural science, the UN Secretary-General released a Guidance Note on Behavioural Science to encourage all UN Entities to work together to apply behavioural science in policy, programming, and administration, with the aim to 1) improve policy and programme effectiveness; and 2) improve administrative support systems, policies and processes.

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"Behavioural science is a critical tool for the UN to progress on its mandate. It can contribute to combating poverty, improving public health and safety, preventing and managing crisis, promoting gender and economic equality, tackling corruption, strengthening peacebuilding and all the SDGs.

UN entities are strongly encouraged to invest in behavioural science and work in a connected and collaborative interagency community to realise its tremendous potential to achieve impact."

António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, UN Guidance on Behavioural Science

PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS
STRENGTHEN GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS BY MAKING IT EASY TO COLLABORATE

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PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
LOWER THE RISK OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM WITH AFFIRMATIONS OF VALUES AND COMMITMENTS TO COHESION

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LIFE ON LAND
ANALYSE THE DECISION MAKING OF ANIMAL POACHING TO REDUCE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

15

LIFE BELOW WATER
CURTAIL OVERFISHING THROUGH IMMEDIATE UPFRONT PAYMENTS

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CLIMATE ACTION
ADVANCE CLIMATE ACTION THROUGH PLEDGES

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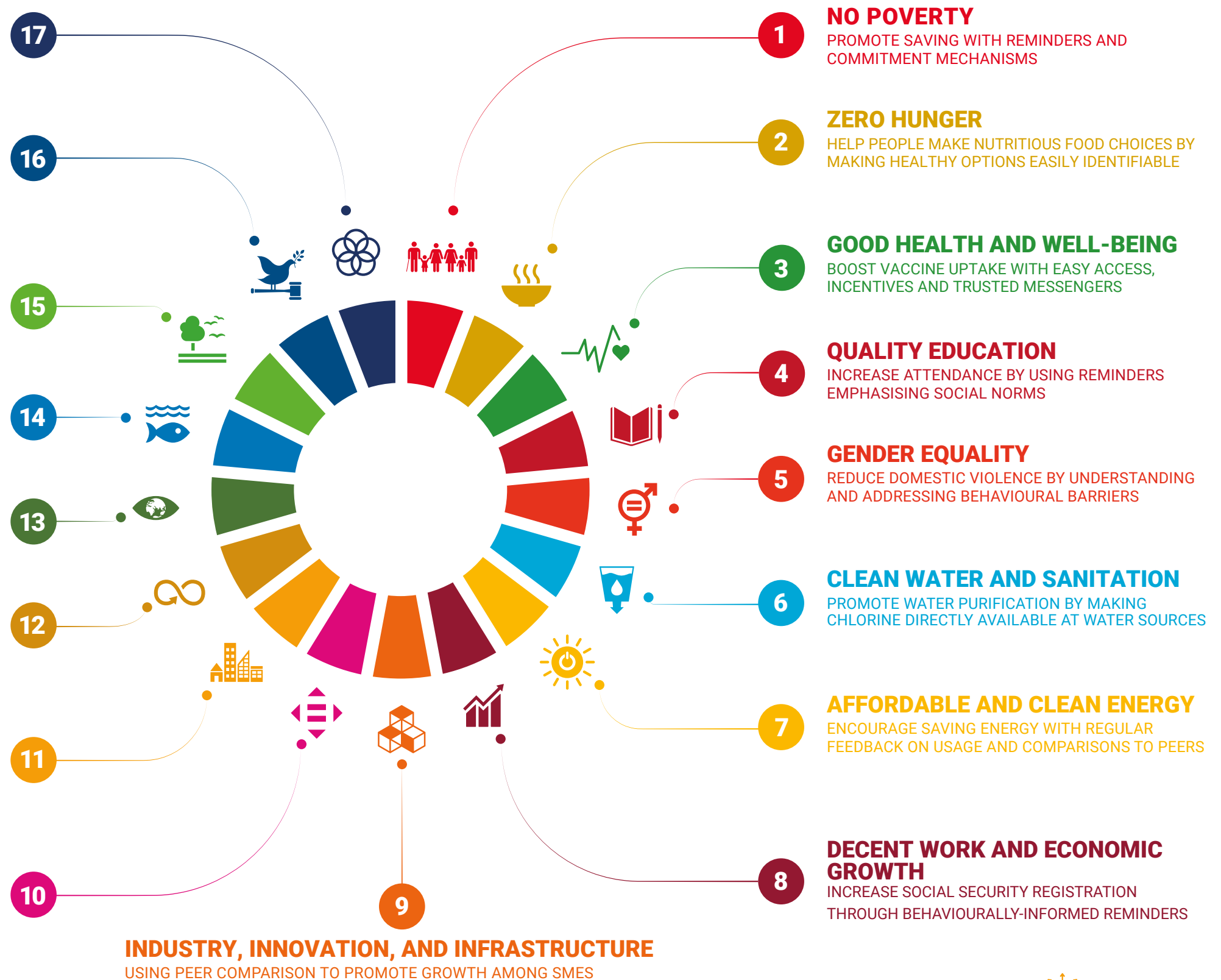
RESPONSIBLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION
KICKSTART RECYCLING THROUGH PERSONAL CONNECTIONS AND TARGETED DIGITAL NUDGES

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SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
BROADEN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION USAGE THROUGH LIVE SCHEDULES

11

REDUCED INEQUALITIES
PROMOTE THE UPTAKE OF WELFARE PROGRAMMES BY REDUCING SLUDGE

10

9
INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE
USING PEER COMPARISON TO PROMOTE GROWTH AMONG SMES

1 NO POVERTY
PROMOTE SAVING WITH REMINDERS AND COMMITMENT MECHANISMS

2 ZERO HUNGER
HELP PEOPLE MAKE NUTRITIOUS FOOD CHOICES BY MAKING HEALTHY OPTIONS EASILY IDENTIFIABLE

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
BOOST VACCINE UPTAKE WITH EASY ACCESS, INCENTIVES AND TRUSTED MESSENGERS

4 QUALITY EDUCATION
INCREASE ATTENDANCE BY USING REMINDERS EMPHASISING SOCIAL NORMS

5 GENDER EQUALITY
REDUCE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BY UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING BEHAVIOURAL BARRIERS

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
PROMOTE WATER PURIFICATION BY MAKING CHLORINE DIRECTLY AVAILABLE AT WATER SOURCES

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
ENCOURAGE SAVING ENERGY WITH REGULAR FEEDBACK ON USAGE AND COMPARISONS TO PEERS

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
INCREASE SOCIAL SECURITY REGISTRATION THROUGH BEHAVIOURALLY-INFORMED REMINDERS

www.UNInnovation.network/behavioural-science

While still relatively nascent, awareness, interest and application of behavioural science has been steadily growing across the United Nations over the past decade. Many UN Entities have used behavioural science to better understand programmatic challenges and design more impactful interventions. A number of UN Entities are also running small-scale tests and pilots to understand the impact of various interventions, and some Entities have run rigorous experiments (including randomised controlled trials) to understand the effects of behavioural science applications. Interventions leveraging behavioural science are being piloted and applied at the country level and at Headquarters, with early evidence showing impact.

The UN Behavioural Science Report published by the UN Behavioural Science Group of the UN Innovation Network outlines how 25 UN Entities are applying behavioural science and shares practical steps to create an enabling environment for the application of behavioural science.

Building on these efforts, this "Practitioner's Guide to Getting Started with Behavioural Science" aims to provide advice for UN practitioners who are interested in applying behavioural science. The Guide draws on existing behavioural science guides and toolkits (see Annex A) while also taking into account lessons learnt from UN Entities' experiences with applying behavioural science. The sections are organised around the chronological steps most commonly involved in behavioural science projects, including UN-specific considerations.

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Figure 1
KEY STEPS OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE PROJECTS

1 Define the outcome and target behaviour

Broadly establish the policy, programmatic or administrative objective or challenge, and the associated specific and measurable target behaviour(s) and population.

2 Understand the context and identify the behavioural factors at play

Analyse the context of the target behaviour(s) and key barriers and enablers, and understand the settings and populations of focus, using methods such as literature reviews, stakeholder interviews, and/or survey research.

3 Design a behaviourally-informed intervention

Design intervention(s) that are likely to address the behavioural challenge, based on the findings of the previous step and consultations with experts and key stakeholders.

4 Test and evaluate

Test the behavioural intervention by measuring whether it has a causal impact on the behavioural outcome of interest in a sample of participants.

5 Learn, adapt, and communicate findings

Based on the results, the intervention design can be altered and tested again to make improvements, and/or communicated to relevant stakeholders as appropriate.

Expert input. UN colleagues with an introductory understanding of behavioural science should seek the input of a behavioural scientist. In particular, steps 3 and 4 should be carried out with the guidance of a person with experience in designing, implementing and evaluating behavioural interventions.

Ethics should be taken into account during all steps, especially when interventions include primary research with individuals who may or may not benefit from the intervention. An overview of ethical considerations can be found in Section 5 of this document.

Stakeholders, both internal and external, have knowledge and experience fundamental to the success of each step. Identifying key stakeholders, clearly defining their roles, and keeping them closely involved generates useful insight and buy-in and a higher chance of active stakeholder involvement in implementing and scaling a behavioural intervention.

Iteration, the cycle of testing, learning and adapting the intervention, is a key principle and practice of behavioural science, and could be applied during all steps.

Sections 3 and 4 discuss each step in more detail, providing examples and considerations along the way.

2.1 CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE STARTING

Before deciding to take a behavioural science approach, practitioners should take the following considerations into account:

- **Behavioural science cannot solve all problems**. It is important to define what behavioural science can and cannot achieve. While it has shown significant promise to improve outcomes in both the public and private spheres, not every challenge is a behavioural one. For example, preventing the spread of diseases might benefit from behavioural interventions to promote hand-washing, but might also require infrastructural projects to ensure water and soap are available to adopt the behaviour.

- **Behavioural science is only one tool in the innovation toolkit**. Depending on the type of problem, other tools and approaches may be better suited than behavioural science.

However, many innovative approaches can benefit from being combined with behavioural science, for example by applying behavioural science to the development of digital tools or in data science. The Quintet of Change offers an opportunity for collaboration across priority areas.

- **The costs of behavioural science interventions could outweigh their benefits.** Behavioural science interventions involve time and costs that vary depending on the size, scope and nature of the intervention. The effect sizes of behavioural interventions may also be small. As such, practitioners often find it useful to anticipate the cost-effectiveness of interventions, as well as the time it will take to reach reliable and useful results, before deciding whether to proceed.

- **Behavioural interventions that show no effect are also valuable**. If a behavioural intervention is evaluated and found to have no impact or a different impact than expected, it has still generated evidence to discard approaches which may have otherwise received investment.

Figure 2
BEFORE GETTING STARTED

Many problems can be looked at through a behavioural perspective, but few challenges can be resolved through behavioural science alone - most often, a mix of solutions including behavioural science interventions will be needed to effectively tackle complex challenges. Certain questions are important to consider before starting a behavioural science project in order to be set up for success.

Question	Considerations
Does a behavioural challenge exist?	Is the challenge you are facing a behavioural one or would significant institutional, infrastructural or normative change be required? Are there existing policy solutions in place targeting the issue, and if so is human behaviour a plausible reason why they are not sufficient? Often, efforts must be undertaken on a number of levels for change to occur.
Will the intervention enhance well-being?	If adopted, how will the behaviour change people's lives for the better? Are there possible negative spillover effects? Will all participants be impacted equally, or with potentially disproportionate effects? Careful consideration must be made to ensure that no harm is done to the target population of a behavioural project and that the behaviour is to their benefit.
Can the intervention be evaluated?	When possible, behavioural science projects should be evaluated to understand what works and what does not. Evaluation methods can range from quantitative (e.g. surveys, online experiments, randomised controlled trials) to qualitative (e.g. focus group discussions, interviews with key stakeholders).
Is it worth the effort?	Behavioural interventions involve time commitments and costs that vary depending on the size, scope and type of the intervention. Anticipating the likely impact of the project, the cost-effectiveness of the intervention, its scaling potential, as well as the time it will take to reach reliable and useful results, can help decide whether to proceed.

⬜ **BOX 3: GETTING STARTED WITH BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE WHEN A DEDICATED PROJECT IS NOT POSSIBLE**

It may not always be possible to undertake dedicated behavioural science projects as set out in this Guide because of a lack of time, resources and/or available skill sets. In that case, UN colleagues can begin by considering what specific behaviours to target when designing a new programme, what behavioural barriers might threaten its success, and what enablers might help encourage the target behaviour. The UN Behavioural Science brief provides a starting point to incorporate behavioural thinking, alongside the examples and resources listed in this Guide.

2.2 SKILLS AND CAPACITY REQUIREMENTS

To date, behavioural science skills are still quite rare and few UN Entities have staff that are qualified to design, carry out or assess behavioural science interventions. UN Entities can acquire behavioural science skills through training existing staff, partnerships with behavioural scientists in academia and behavioural science organisations, or by hiring behavioural science consultants. UN staff who are looking to oversee the application of behavioural science should have at least a beginner's practitioner knowledge of the field.

To ensure quality application of behavioural science, UN Entities may wish to consider:

■ **Developing practitioner capacity:** UN staff in charge of coordinating behavioural science projects should have a beginner's practitioner understanding of the field and be able to understand behavioural science concepts, how they can be applied, and what skills are needed to design and implement a behavioural intervention. In addition to reading this Guide, introductory courses on behavioural science can help project managers and other UN staff to coordinate the design, implementation and assessment of behavioural interventions. UN staff who are interested in adopting a behavioural science approach to their work can also learn from the experiences of other UN colleagues, including via the UN Behavioural Science Group, which welcomes enthusiasts and experts alike.

■ **Assembling an interdisciplinary team:** Behavioural interventions require diverse skill sets, including behavioural science, impact evaluation, experimental design, data science, statistics, qualitative research methods and experience in the technical area in question. A mapping of in-house skills among existing staff can be the first step to collaborating and understanding the extent to which a team can be assembled. A team should also include local staff or partners who are familiar with the context of the intervention. In particular, given that most Entities are at the early stages of their behavioural science journey, engagement and exchange with colleagues working in innovation can be beneficial when piloting new approaches. Where skills are lacking, partnerships can be developed and/or consultants can be hired.

■ **Engaging with behavioural scientists:** At various stages of the process, in-depth expertise on behavioural science will be necessary to ensure quality results. To date, most UN Entities do not have dedicated technical expertise. Partnerships with academics, external consultants or consultancies or participation in the UN Behavioural Science Fellowship can help to bridge this gap and facilitate behavioural science projects. The UN Behavioural Science Group may be able to provide advice leveraging experiences across the UN and in scoping projects. It is encouraged that UN Entities work with behavioural science experts who have experience working in the UN and low- and middle-income countries, and insist on capacity building as a part of projects.

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3. Application of Behavioural Science to Programmes and Policies

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This section provides more detailed guidance on how to approach each step of a typical behavioural science project in the context of UN programmes and policies.

3.1 DEFINE THE OUTCOME AND TARGET BEHAVIOUR

The aim of this first step is to understand the policy, programmatic or administrative objective or challenge; and the related specific and measurable target behaviour(s) and population.

Identify the policy or programme challenge and outcome.
At the outset, UN colleagues and stakeholders should agree on the policy or programme challenge, and the desired behavioural outcome to be achieved. Brainstorming with key stakeholders (including affected populations) as well as behavioural scientists can help to look at challenges through a behavioural perspective. Guiding questions might include:

- What is the policy or programme problem in question?
- Who are the stakeholders involved?
- What is the desired outcome?

> **Example:** *Faced with a high incidence of an infectious disease, a programme objective might be to reduce transmission of the disease. The stakeholders involved could be those at risk of contracting the disease, but also their families, neighbours, employers, health professionals, medical care centres, etc.*

Choose a target behaviour and assess its significance.
Reflect upon the behaviours associated with the desired outcome to select a target behaviour that is specific and measurable to a population and context. Questions to consider at this stage include:

- What specific behaviours are involved that are likely to impact the current outcome? (A behaviour is an action that is observable).

- Do you have evidence of the incidence of current behaviours? Can data be collected to measure the behaviours? (see Box 4: Access to Observable and Measurable Outcomes).

- How would a target group and/or the general population benefit if the desired behaviours were adopted?

- How large of a change in the behaviour would make possible interventions worthwhile within a given timeframe?

Behaviour and its determinants vary across subgroups of the population (e.g. age, gender, socio-economic contexts) and it is important to identify the population whose behaviour the intervention seeks to change as specifically as possible. The behaviour may also not be immediately obvious and selection of the behaviour can be further iterated upon throughout the project.

Note that a behaviour is a specific step needed to achieve an outcome, and is separate from a policy goal or output (e.g. "increasing savings" is an outcome, while "opening a bank account and depositing USD50 in it" is a behaviour).

> **Example:** *The behavioural goal of increasing recycling consists of smaller behaviours, such as separating waste, getting information on recyclable waste collection, deciding to go and actually going to a recycling point. This behavioural goal is measurable (e.g. volume of recycled waste at the household or community level), contributes to community well-being especially in the long-term, and is worthwhile if a certain percentage of waste recycling is achieved by the project.*

☐ **BOX 4: ACCESS TO OBSERVABLE AND MEASURABLE OUTCOMES**

Some behaviours are more difficult to observe and measure (for example, behaviour that takes place in private settings, like taking a full course of antibiotics at home). When actual behaviour is not observable, data could be collected through surveys in which participants are asked to report on their own past behaviours (known as self-reported behaviour) or on their intention to adopt a behaviour (known as their intention to act). While both methods can produce valuable results, they remain proxies and cannot be equated to actual behaviour.

Survey data can help provide some indication of behaviour and intentions, but they should be interpreted with caution as many self-reports can be biased, unreliable and/or invalid. The measures that are designed to collect these data should be carefully designed with input from behavioural scientists and/or experts in survey design.

Additionally, the results of any intervention can only be as good as the source of the data on which they are based. Data is of high quality when it is collected and analysed in a safe, ethical and effective manner to ensure consistency and accuracy. In addition, data collected should be reviewed for any abnormalities.

3.2 UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT AND IDENTIFY THE BEHAVIOURAL FACTORS AT PLAY

In this stage, the target behaviour is analysed in its context, including barriers and enablers. The objective of this step is to develop a hypothesis about what might help create the desired behaviour change. Questions to consider include:

- What steps are involved in the target behaviour or decision?

- How do the key stakeholders/players influence the behaviour?

- What contextual factors might influence the behaviour? (e.g. socio-economic context, physical environment, social norms, regulations, institutions, etc)

To answer these questions, the following approaches can be used.

Create a journey or decision map. Such tools help practitioners think through each step of a process that precedes the adoption of a behaviour, including moments of decision, points of influence, and channels of communication (see Annex A for journey mapping resources).

Conduct secondary research and consult with experts. A desk review of academic and practical literature related to the desired outcome, behavioural goal and potential behavioural science principles to be applied can help narrow the focus of the project. The review must be carried out by individual(s) with behavioural science expertise and consider the specific context of the behavioural challenge as preferences, biases and behaviours have been shown to vary significantly between populations and cultures, particularly between the Global North and South. A review of existing

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literature will help to identify what should be included in primary research and what behavioural principles could be tested (based on what has / has not worked in the past in the same domain or in ones with similar characteristics). Consulting with key stakeholders and behavioural scientists can also help to narrow the scope of further investigation. There exist a number of behavioural models to help identify potential enablers of behaviour (see Annex B).

Example: A project on encouraging rural women to open bank accounts might first review existing literature and prior behavioural interventions with the same objective or target group, focusing on the heuristics and biases that were identified, the variety of interventions used, and their relative success rates. Once common behavioural barriers are identified (e.g. lack of trust in institutions, present bias, gender norms), further research can be conducted on these barriers.

Conduct primary research. As possible, primary research provides critical insights and lays the foundation for a measurable intervention. Various research instruments can be used to collect data, including quantitative methods (such as surveys or government statistics), qualitative methods (such as focus group discussions, semi-structured or in-depth stakeholder interviews, observations, design thinking methods) or a combination of these.

The findings of this research might aim to identify how, when, why and how often a given behaviour occurs among a given population, and the contextual and internal or psychological factors that influence it. Contextual factors often include the socio-economic context, physical environment, social norms, regulations, institutions and processes that might influence the behaviour. Internal or psychological factors that influence a behaviour might include knowledge, attitudes, personal narratives, personal norms, skills, representations, emotions and perceptions.

Primary research can also explore why some people do not adopt a certain behaviour. Recruiting a mix of participants to understand what encouraged them or made it easier for them to change could be a helpful approach. Lastly, primary research should not only consider individual but also structural barriers, as many behavioural policy issues operate at the systemic, rather than the individual level.

Example: A project aiming to reduce intra-household violence might research internal factors, such as perpetrators' attitudes, and contextual factors, such as the household's socio-economic background, neighbourhood safety and social norms. Journey mapping the various steps involved in the existing violence reporting process can help identify barriers and enablers at each decision point, such as lack of awareness, feelings of shame or complexity.

Reassess and finalise target behaviour. Following the review of existing literature and evidence and based on findings from the primary research, the project team can reassess and finalise the specific target behaviour of interest.

☐ **BOX 5: BEFORE GOING FORWARD**

Ideally all steps of the behavioural science journey should be carried out with, alongside or under the guidance of a behavioural scientist. However, it is especially important that the following steps on the behavioural science journey - namely designing the behaviourally-informed intervention and testing and evaluating its impact - be carried out with the guidance of a behavioural scientist with experience in designing, implementing and evaluating behavioural interventions.

3.3 DESIGN A BEHAVIOURALLY-INFORMED INTERVENTION

In this step, strategies are developed to address the behavioural challenge. With the support of a behavioural scientist and in consultation with key stakeholders, an intervention is designed and a method of evaluation selected. Guiding questions might include:

- What are the aims of the behavioural intervention?
- Is the proposed intervention realistic and feasible?
- Has the final target group been confirmed? How will they be accessed?
- Who might be negatively affected by the intervention?

- Have ethics been appropriately considered? (see Section 5 on Ethical Considerations)
- Which method(s) would be most appropriate to evaluate the intervention?

Consider behavioural science principles and experiences. Behavioural science frameworks are a valuable tool to help identify potentially relevant psychological and contextual factors that might cause the desired behaviour. These frameworks also provide useful tools to design interventions and are described in Annexes A and B.

Existing behavioural science interventions, practitioner reports and academic papers can provide inspiration for the

design of new interventions. Many behavioural interventions have been conducted across domains and documented in reports, such as the UN Behavioural Science Report and the UN Behavioural Science Group's living library of projects. When reviewing behavioural science studies, effect sizes that were achieved should be taken into account to identify interventions that have worked relatively better in the past.

If no research has been done in a particular domain, research from domains that bear the same defining characteristics could be consulted. Applying findings from one domain to another does not guarantee the same effect sizes or results, but can provide a helpful starting point.

As with previous steps, consulting with stakeholders can also help generate useful insights. Policymakers, programme administrators, the target population and the people who influence them may have valuable knowledge of the context in which the intervention is to be carried out. A stakeholder workshop can help to design interventions or prototypes and create buy-in among stakeholders, who may then be more proactive in implementing the intervention.

Decide how to evaluate. When a behavioural intervention is designed one of the objectives should be to evaluate whether or not it worked. Evidence can range from anecdotal, descriptive, correlational to causal.

Behavioural interventions can be carried out in the lab, online or in the field. The choice depends on capacity to create a controlled environment and resources, among other factors. The most controlled environment can be achieved in laboratory settings (such as a psychology lab where researchers observe people's reactions to an intervention) where almost all factors that might influence behaviour can be controlled. The lab, however, does not have much resemblance to the real world, which contains factors that would likely influence the behaviour. In contrast, field experiments allow researchers to test the impact of behavioural principles in the setting where the behaviour takes place. For example, researchers could

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test a tax compliance letter intervention in the lab, by showing the letter to participants and asking them if they would comply with the message, or in the field, by sending them to taxpayers and observing whether real-life tax compliance improves as a result.

A randomised controlled trial or experiment (RCT) is a research method that can identify what caused a given change. In RCTs, participants are randomly assigned into a control group and one or more treatment groups. In order for an RCT to work, all factors across treatment and control groups should be identical, with the exception of the treatments applied to each of the treatment groups. See Annex A for more detailed guides including on using randomised controlled trials in behavioural science projects.

In addition to experiments, quasi-experimental evaluation methods could be explored (e.g. regression discontinuity, differences-in-differences or interrupted time series) or a qualitative assessment could be conducted. For example, researchers might use interviews or focus group discussions to gather feedback from people who participated in the intervention.

☐ **BOX 6: IF EVALUATION IS CHALLENGING**

Behavioural science can be used in the design of many policies and programmes and help promote greater uptake and impact. If conducting a behavioural science evaluation is not feasible during the programme design process, programmes and policies can be designed, analysed or amended on the basis of a rigorous review of relevant literature on the domain in question (e.g. health, poverty, financial inclusion), the behaviour of interest (e.g. more sustainable consumption patterns), and heuristics or biases that may be coming into play (e.g. loss aversion, confirmation bias). Research on potential behavioural barriers in the specific context should also be performed, sometimes as part of a larger analysis of the policy context. A trained behavioural scientist should lead the review of literature and understanding of context.

Confirm the target group and plan for data access. The analysis of behavioural barriers usually identifies how behaviours vary across the population and various subgroups. At the design stage, the target group of the intervention is clearly identified on the basis of this evidence. A sample size is also selected, depending on the evaluation method adopted. It is also important to consider who might be negatively affected by the intervention.

Example: A project might have researched the reasons why people (the broad target population) turn to extremism. Among this broad target population, the findings might reveal that young men tend to join extremist groups because they and the majority of their peers are unemployed. An intervention might then be designed to target young men between the ages of 15 and 30 (the target subgroup), focusing on developing levers to promote employment or other activities.

☐ **BOX 7: PRE-REGISTER YOUR EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN**

It is good practice for practitioners and researchers to pre-register their experiments. Pre-registration forms are helpful support mechanisms that clearly define what an experiment aims to learn. Without a pre-registration, researchers and practitioners might be tempted to selectively report results that suggest the intervention was successful. This is not only unethical and hinders the discipline from producing more reliable findings, but also undermines the work of other behavioural scientists and slows progress in improving policy-making on the basis of quality findings.

To pre-register a project, practitioners note the key elements of the experimental design, including the research motivation, hypotheses, experimental and analytical methods. The pre-registration is then submitted through platforms such as Open Science Framework or As Predicted, normally before any data is collected. Once submitted, the paper cannot be edited, although changes to the experimental design or analytical methods can be submitted as addendums. In some cases, the pre-registered paper can also be the subject of peer review. Increasingly academic journals are requiring pre-registration.

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3.4 TEST AND EVALUATE

In this step, the behavioural intervention previously designed is tested and evaluated. Some guiding questions to take into account include:

- **What impact did the behavioural intervention have on the target behaviour and policy outcome?**
- **What other factors might explain any observed changes?**
- **Were there any spillover effects? Heterogeneous effects?**

Test and evaluate. With trained specialists, the intervention is tested, for instance by implementing a randomised controlled trial research design (in the lab or in the field) that randomly allocates some individuals or sub-groups

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in the target group to receive the intervention, while others receive no intervention, or a baseline or control version of the intervention. To evaluate whether the intervention was effective, data collected during the trial (or alternative method) is analysed to understand the size of its effect. Ideally, an evaluation will generate positive results that are statistically significant. However, in some cases, the intervention will have no effect, no statistically significant effect, or even a negative effect on the desired behaviour. Such results still provide valuable insights, such as understanding which interventions are detrimental, not effective, or not effective enough (where there are no significant effects) to draw strong conclusions without further research.

Example: A behavioural intervention tested the effect of SMS reminders on school enrollment. Parents of children who were not yet enrolled were divided into two groups, one of which received an SMS informing them that the majority of their peers have enrolled their children, and another received no SMS at all. The evaluation might find that the SMS had the effect of increasing the rate of school enrollments by 2 percent as compared to the control group.

Iterate if necessary. If an intervention has proven to have no positive statistically significant effects, or if the effect size is considered to be too small, further testing could be conducted using different behavioural science principles and leveraging learnings from the initial evaluation.

Example: Messages conveyed by top CEOs had a statistically significant negative impact on the number of women who started their own businesses. This result could be leveraged to further understand the context, why the intervention did not work and explore using a different messenger, such as a celebrity or a peer.

3.5 LEARN, ADAPT AND COMMUNICATE FINDINGS

A behavioural science project does not end once the evaluation is complete. The results of the evaluation should prompt reflection on whether further work is needed, how to communicate the findings, and whether to scale the intervention (and in which contexts). Some starting points to guide this reflection may include:

Discuss with stakeholders how project results should be applied. Based on the results of the evaluation, the effects achieved, and the costs of the intervention, do stakeholders believe the intervention should be scaled up and fully implemented? Examples of key points to consider may include whether an intervention that found positive effects relied on localised factors such as the implementers' motivation, and whether there are behavioural incentives or social effects that can be leveraged to encourage rigorous implementation at scale. If the results do not support scaling the intervention, is there scope to leverage findings to inform and iterate on the intervention design and test it again?

Communicate results to leadership. This may help build support for using the findings to inform the UN's work, including implementation, iteration or facilitating new projects. Communicating results to donors can also help build an understanding of the value of behavioural science and support for further projects.

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Consider applying findings to relevant contexts and populations. Stakeholders may also wish to explore scaling a successful intervention beyond the context or population for which it was designed. For different contexts, going back to the findings on behavioural barriers and contextual factors (see Section 3.2) can help identify how the target population differs, in order to amend the intervention accordingly.

Capture and build on learnings. If the intervention cannot (or should not) be fully applied, evaluation findings and other evidence or insights gained during the project (e.g. behavioural barriers or enablers identified in the project) may still be valuable to help inform decision-making and shape further activities towards a policy objective.

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4. Application of Behavioural Science to Administrative Processes

A growing area of research uses behavioural science to improve administrative processes, which are crucial to the functioning of large organisations such as the UN. In particular, behavioural science can help tackle "administrative burdens" in the UN in contexts such as:

■ **Internal operations -** UN staff may face administrative processes in their daily work, from timesheets, and travel requests, to programme reporting requirements

■ **Programme delivery -** UN programmes may impose administrative processes for the people they are trying to serve, for example signing up to access food assistance programmes

Administrative burdens are a feature of many large organisations, public or private, and can accumulate significantly over time. Common examples include complicated forms, opaque processes or long waiting times. Administrative burdens sometimes arise as the inevitable byproduct of a well-meaning process that seeks to safeguard important objectives such as programme targeting, risk management, oversight, legal compliance or data privacy. Behavioural science research has also identified that excessive or unjustified behavioural frictions (sometimes also referred to as "sludge") can significantly hamper policy objectives by discouraging people from taking actions that are in their own best interest.

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While some level of administrative burden, such as essential paperwork, might be warranted to safeguard these objectives, excessive, unwanted or unwarranted burdens can entail significant costs. These costs include the time and mental energy that people spend on getting through burdensome processes, but can also involve psychological costs if a process feels intrusive or frustrating. These costs and their effects are amplified by common human biases. Present bias, the tendency to overvalue short-term costs

or rewards, makes administrative burdens seem even more daunting. Inertia and procrastination might keep people from getting started on the required paperwork. Groups that are already disadvantaged may find burdensome processes particularly costly to get through.

Many institutions underestimate the costs of administrative burdens because the effects of behavioural biases may not be immediately apparent, meaning institutions seldom

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account for specific burdens or understand their aggregate costs. However, these costs may translate into real, negative effects on outcomes important to the UN. For example, in the context of internal operations, excessive administrative burdens may impede decision-making, slow down processes (e.g. recruitment or procurement), and prevent employees from focusing on their core tasks. Likewise, complicated enrolment, verification or re-confirmation processes may also impact the ability of UN Entities to identify, reach and serve their beneficiaries. Excessive administrative processes can thus exacerbate existing inequality as the most vulnerable populations may be less able to navigate lengthy, burdensome processes.

The five-step approach to behavioural science projects laid out in this Guide can be adapted to the context of administrative burdens, with adjustments to tackle the specific challenges they entail. Some of these adjustments are listed below; links to further resources on administrative burdens are provided in Annex C. As always, behavioural science is one of several tools which can help improve administrative processes, and the approach below should be considered in conjunction with other relevant tools, such as simplification and digitisation. Lastly, applying behavioural science to reduce administrative burdens is a new and rapidly growing research area, hence this section provides an early-stage resource to tackle this issue.

4.1 DEFINE THE OUTCOME AND TARGET BEHAVIOUR

Administrative burdens may be more "hidden" and thus harder to identify than other behavioural challenges as administrative processes are often seen as "set in stone", their consequences may not be as well-understood, and their

impact not measured. Hence support from UN leadership and from stakeholders across the UN system is crucial for administrative burden projects. A review of administrative processes of interest can help identify potentially excessive burdens and obtain this support, by demonstrating how burdens might affect key organisational outcomes such as cost-effectiveness, programme efficacy, or staff turnover. Collecting data on these processes can help quantify and understand the impact of excessive burdens on these outcomes as well as justify using behavioural science to design potential solutions. High-quality, targeted evidence on administrative burdens can be collected through interviews, focus groups and surveys. Key questions may include:

- **What UN processes have participants faced which may involve (excessive) burdens?**

- **What issues did participants encounter while engaging in a particular process?**

- **What costs did they experience (money, time, effort, non-completion, emotions)?**

- **What features made the process burdensome (uncertainty, specificity, frequency)?**

Alongside the collection of original data, existing data such as evaluation reports are a useful source of information, as well as the review of existing procedures and processes.

Example: A scoping exercise aiming to identify excessive administrative burdens in a cash transfer programme may involve mapping out the steps needed to receive the benefit. These could include obtaining information about the entitlement in a local language, travelling to and waiting to register, providing personal details and obtaining documentation to verify these. The scoping exercise may also account for travel costs incurred or stigma and stress associated with having to prove eligibility.

4.2 UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT AND IDENTIFY THE BEHAVIOURAL FACTORS AT PLAY

Administrative burdens often exist in a broader context of policies or compliance requirements. They may be interlinked with other processes with similar rules, or which involve a number of parties and stakeholders. Hence this step must adopt a pragmatic approach to identify which areas have potential for improvement and separate processes that are valuable or mandated by law, from those where there is scope to reduce burden. This may involve:

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Deep-dives to identify who is affected and explore areas with the most potential for improvement. Data on potentially excessive burdens can clarify where action is most urgently needed. Deep-dives into particularly burdened or consequential areas can indicate why burdens exist in the area, what impact they have, and whether there is scope to minimise these burdens. Useful questions to consider may include:

- How was the administrative process created?

- Does anybody benefit from the friction?

- Which steps of the process are burdensome? (e.g. learning, assessing, complying)

- What are the consequences for people and organisations? (e.g. time, effort, money)

- Which groups experience costs? (e.g. women, junior staff, disadvantaged populations)

- What would happen if the process was simplified?

Example: A deep-dive on potential administrative burdens in setting up training programmes could investigate if the steps needed to set up such programmes are "set in stone", if specific aspects of the process such as understanding rules or getting the programme signed off are particularly complex or frustrating, and if any groups or contexts are more often affected by burdens in the process.

Separating warranted, justifiable processes from fruitless or excessive burdens. Some burdensome processes are justified. A cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis can be used to assess whether administrative burdens should be reduced: burdens are justified if the benefits they create outweigh their costs and no alternative measure can achieve the same result with fewer burdens. Particular attention should be given to distributional issues, i.e. whether burdensome processes create or exacerbate inequalities. All stakeholders - those who mandate, implement and experience administrative processes - can help clarify where processes cannot be minimised further, and where there is scope to act.

Examples: Two-factor authentication to access a UN email account is more cumbersome than a simple password, but is justified by its security benefits. In contrast, food assistance programmes requiring repeated proof of entitlement may cause hardship without necessarily preventing fraud.

Sharing findings with Senior Management and the broader UN system. Continued support from leadership is especially important for administrative burden projects, where UN employees themselves are often key stakeholders. Sharing findings on the behavioural barriers identified by the project can help build awareness and urgency from senior leadership by demonstrating the scale of excessive burdens. Across the broader UN system, targeted capability building can ensure that responsible staff are equipped with behavioural science best practice and a better understanding of the potential for applying behavioural science to tackle burdens.

Example: A behavioural insights unit has worked to reduce excessive administrative burdens by training staff across the organisation via workshops and "how-to" guides on the topic, with public support from senior figures.

4.3 DESIGN A BEHAVIOURALLY-INFORMED INTERVENTION

Burden reduction interventions should be developed collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure they are tailored to the needs of all who interact with the administrative process: the intervention should minimise burdens on users and administrators, while ensuring the process still serves its intended purpose. When designing the intervention, research points to the following behavioural principles as being especially relevant for burden-related projects (sources in Annex C):

Switch default options and eliminate steps to combat status quo bias. Frictions within a process can disproportionately discourage people from completing it due to status quo bias: people are most likely to stick with the status quo (not taking any action) in a non-mandatory process. Eliminating extra steps in a process or switching default options can remove frictions by changing the status quo. For instance, reducing the number of "clicks" needed to access an online form has been shown to make a difference to how many people complete it.

Use behavioural communications design. Forms and communications should be designed with behavioural science principles in mind. Projects across the areas of health, environmental and savings behaviour have shown the benefits of making key points salient; leading with a personalised message and using personal pronouns; choosing simple everyday language; highlighting desirable social norms around the process; and using trusted messengers to convey messages about this process. Design clarity is another important principle to embed into visual communications such as letters and emails. It involves principles such as using white space and formatting judiciously, choosing short, relevant headings (e.g. subject lines of 3-4 words, simple headings such as "When do I need to reply?"), and breaking up text into digestible "chunks" (one idea per paragraph).

Reduce choice overload, complexity and uncertainty during processes. People's evidenced aversion to complexity (e.g. if a process is challenging), uncertainty (e.g. not knowing the outcome of the process), and excessive amounts of choices or options (e.g. if there are several potential forms to complete the process) can result in worse decision-making and discourage people from completing processes, even when it is in their best interest to do so. Previous initiatives addressed these barriers by giving households assistance in filling out financial aid forms and by reducing uncertainty via upfront information on aid outcomes, which significantly increased college attendance. Other solutions could tackle complexity by reducing the specificity of processes, for example by using similar formats across processes.

Tackle psychological costs and stigma. People may experience administrative processes as frustrating, intrusive, stressful, or stigmatising, especially in programmatic areas such as food, housing, or financial assistance. While research on alleviating psychological costs is relatively new, promising enablers involve normalising the task and ensuring individuals feel respected. For example, one behavioural insights unit has implemented assessing whether individuals were treated with respect and sympathy as a key aspect of evaluating burdens in programmes.

Collect information less frequently to minimise cognitive costs. Evidence suggests people have limited cognitive bandwidth to deal with demands on their time and energy. Administrative processes may be made less frequent, automated, or removed altogether where possible to reduce cognitive costs. For example, registering a loved one's death can be both cumbersome (with many duplicate forms) and distressing, hence one initiative designed an online system via which people can notify most authorities of a person's death in one go. Likewise, institutions may be collecting the same data via two different processes. Instead, institutions could explore whether existing administrative data can be used to conduct evaluations without collecting additional information.

4.4 TEST AND EVALUATE

As with all behavioural science projects, burden reduction solutions should be tested before implementing them, for example via surveys, online experiments, or randomised controlled trials. Alternatively, cognitive task analysis can generate valuable information in the specific context of testing forms or administrative processes. Cognitive task analysis involves collecting information from volunteer users, who are observed during the updated process to gather feedback on user friendliness, user decision-making, and potential for further simplification.

Example: An intervention aiming to reduce burdens in staff travel bookings could be tested via a randomised controlled trial in which some participants use a redesigned website with simplified information on different hotel options and helpful price comparisons, while others use the original website. Comparing the outcomes of each group would allow for testing whether the new website helps participants book similar accommodation packages for lower prices. Given the significance of permanently modifying travel booking systems, the new website would first be tested as part of an online choice experiment.
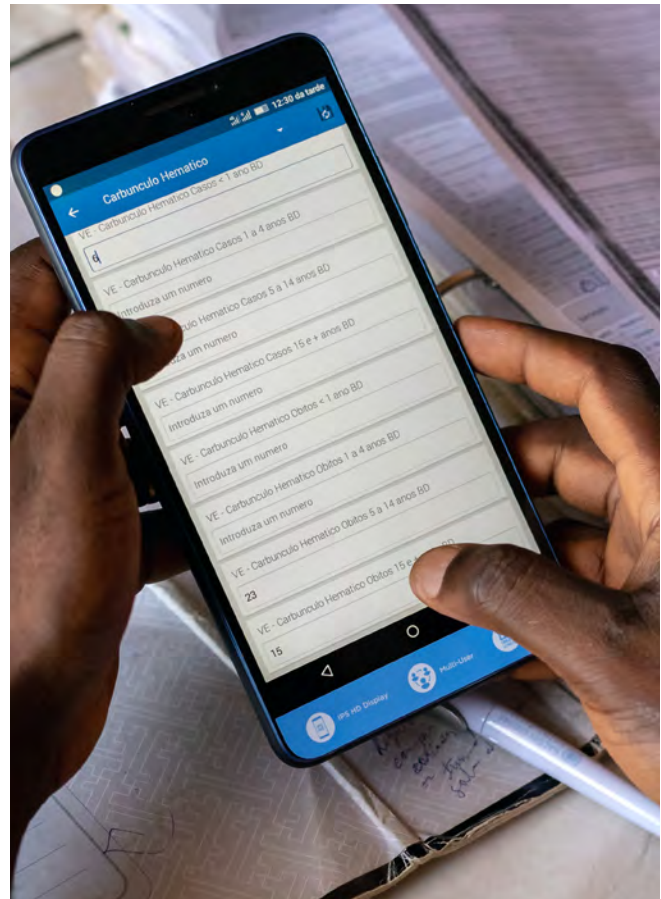
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4.5 LEARN, ADAPT, AND COMMUNICATE FINDINGS

Maintaining momentum in reducing administrative burdens can help ensure that UN systems work more effectively by reducing non-value adding processes in the long term. The below actions can help ensure this:

Providing recommendations on how to limit excessive burdens in the long term. This could involve considerations of administrative burden during programme design and delivery, or regularly looking back at processes to identify excessive burdens, including in evaluation reports. New processes should default to the least burdensome version which still achieves the goal of the process, with any further burdens needing a strong justification.

Showcasing best practice using knowledge sharing channels. This could include sharing case studies of successful administrative burden reduction across UN Entities.

Example: Case studies across countries have shown the value of interventions like pre-populating forms and of general practices like mandating institutions to identify a minimum number of steps each year to reduce burdens and save a minimum (set) amount of hours for users. Best practice at the UN may involve reporting time spent on burdens by various groups in order to quantify these burdens as a first step to address them.

Behavioural science can be a powerful tool to tackle excessive administrative burdens, both in the UN's internal organisational processes, and in its programme delivery at the country level. Behavioural science projects should always be approached with other tools in mind which are relevant to administrative contexts and can be used in conjunction, such as more conventional applications of simplification or digitalisation.

5. Ethical Considerations

Applying behavioural science to change behaviour can be a powerful tool, but behavioural interventions can also have unintended negative consequences on participants. When applying behavioural science, seemingly small decisions can lead to significant challenges and ethical concerns. It is therefore incumbent on researchers and practitioners, including governments and intergovernmental organisations, to maintain certain ethical standards to prevent potential unintended harm to participants.

Several ethics frameworks exist that can help UN Entities consider the ethical implications of their research. Basic considerations typically include the fact that interventions must respect individual rights and freedoms, have legitimate ends, and be carried out transparently. Using research methodologies that are transparent and have integrity (such as pre-registering experiments) ensure that results are accurate, applicable and have the potential to follow through on their promise of wide scale change. For further reading on a growing number of frameworks, see, for example, FORGOOD, BASIC and UNICEF and BIT's Ethical Considerations When Applying Behavioural Science in Projects Focused on Children and associated


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ethics toolkit for applied behavioural science generally, as well as the UK government's IN CASE framework which sets out a behavioural approach to anticipating unintended consequences of policies and projects.

Ethical considerations must be made at the outset of any behavioural science intervention. When the topic of interest, context or target group shows particularly vulnerable characteristics, these standards may increase. For example, behavioural interventions that aim to improve the well-being of children, touch on sensitive issues such as violence and harassment, or risk harming research participants may need to meet higher benchmarks.

When conducted in an academic setting, behavioural science experiments must be submitted to an ethical review board that reviews and approves experiments before they are conducted. To date, however, UN Entities rarely (if ever) have their own ethical review boards. As the UN increases application of behavioural science, Entities may wish to explore setting up a UN ethics review process, possibly working in collaboration with experts from governments and academia.
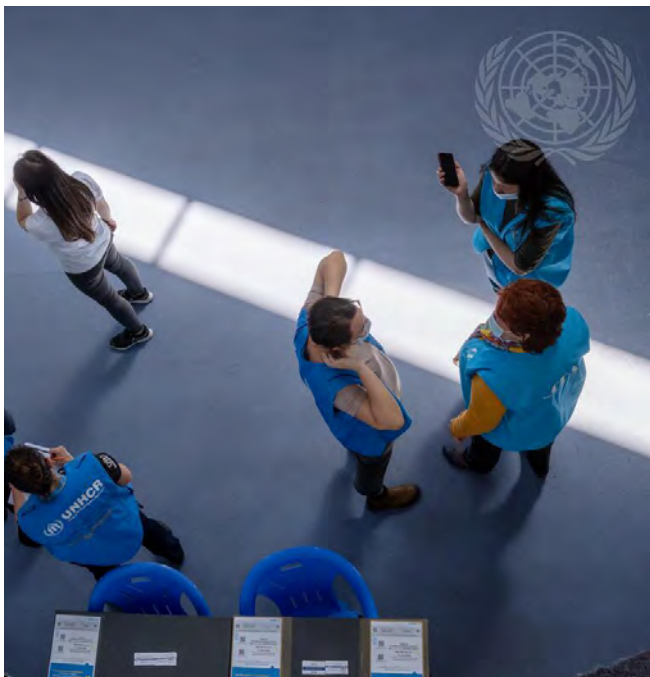
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6. Going Forward

There is significant potential for the further application of behavioural science to progress the mandates of the UN. Although it is still relatively new in the UN, behavioural science is advancing in key programmatic areas including gender, health, peace and security, environment, education as well as in management and administration. This Guide provides practical advice for UN colleagues at the early stages of their behavioural science journeys to advance in the areas of policy, programming and administration.

As we look forward, the UN will not only progress in "getting started" applying behavioural science, but also begin to explore frontier areas such as the ethical application of behavioural science, improved methods to understand context, scaling and deepening understanding of what works across the varied countries and contexts in which the UN operates.

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Annexes

Below is a non-exhaustive list of resources containing guides on behavioural science projects, frameworks about human decision-making (including in specific thematic areas), and materials on administrative burden. It is a living list which will be updated periodically. Please share potential additions with "behavioural-science@uninnovation.network".

These resources should only be used alongside a careful consideration of desired behaviour's specific environment and population, but they can be a useful starting point to learn about relevant behavioural principles and methods.

Annex A: Step-by-step guides for behavioural science projects

The five steps used in this Guide reflect the general consensus in the applied behavioural science literature. Some of this literature is listed below:

■ The OECD's BASIC framework provides guidance on each stage of a behavioural science project, starting with identifying a target Behaviour, Analysing this behaviour to understand what biases and levers are at play, designing a behaviourally informed Solution, setting up an Intervention to experimentally test this solution, and planning for long-term Change from maintaining and scaling the solution to evaluating and disseminating the results.

■ The 4D framework from the Australian Government breaks down behavioural science projects in four steps, which are to Discover the issue and develop a "behavioural problem statement", to Diagnose the behavioural levers and develop a hypothesis on behaviour change; to Design and evaluate an intervention in order to test this hypothesis (merges steps 3 and 4 from this document); and to Deliver the project by implementing and sharing results. The Australian Government also has a guide on Developing behavioural interventions for RCTs to help with intervention design in the first three steps of its 4D framework.

■ Idea42's Practitioner Playbook sets out six steps for behavioural science projects. First, understand the behavioural problem to make sure the right issue is tackled. Second, diagnose "behavioural bottlenecks" contributing to the problem. Third, design an intervention. Fourth, support frontline staff implementing the intervention to ensure effective delivery (this step is in step 4 in this document). Fifth, test the solution in the short- and long-term using a low-cost intervention. Lastly, report and learn from the results of the intervention.

■ The Behavioural Insights Team's TESTS framework (Target, Explore, Solution, Trial, Scale) aims to support the design and rigorous testing of behavioural science interventions. The methodology has been refined through use in over 1,000 behavioural interventions in over 70 countries over the past ten years.

■ The UK Government's Test, Learn, Adapt guide focuses more heavily on experimental testing for behavioural science projects. It includes nine steps to design and test an intervention, from identifying behavioural solutions and defining the intended outcome, to specific steps in designing the experiment (e.g. deciding on randomisation logistics based on statistical considerations) and correctly implementing it, to assessing results, and finally iterating on these results by adapting the intervention to reflect them and testing again.

■ The Office of Evaluation Sciences within the US General Services Administration follows a project process to ensure findings are relevant and reliable. First, partner with Federal Agencies to target priority outcomes. Second, translate behavioural insights into concrete recommendations. Third, embed evaluations where possible. Fourth, analyse results using existing administrative data. Fifth, ensure the work meets evaluation best practice by undergoing a separate reanalysis process. Sixth, measure impact and share the results for all completed projects.

- **Designing for Behaviour Change: A Practical Field Guide** by the Technical and Operational Performance Support program (funded by USAID / Food for Peace) provides a detailed 12-step protocol for conducting behavioural science projects, with many examples and resources to help project planning.

- WWF's (World Wide Fund For Nature) **SAVE NATURE PLEASE** is a 3-step framework to help support behavioural science interventions. Step 1 "Scope, Audiences, Visions, Engage" is about researching the issue and context (similar to steps 1-2 in this Guide). Step 2 "Normal, Attractive, Timely, Uncover, Rewarding, Easy" uses behavioural science principles to design interventions (step 3 in this Guide). Step 3 "Pilot, Learn, Evaluate, Adapt, Scale, Empower" tests and implements the intervention (steps 4-5 in this Guide).

- The City of Sao Paulo (Brazil) offers **detailed guides to behavioural science projects** it has carried out in Portuguese, aiming to encourage replication via its **Copi Cola** initiative (materials are in Portuguese).

- Focusing on the broader implementation of behavioural science in policy, Singapore's public service offers advice on **mainstreaming behavioural science** in organisations, and on identifying **contexts where behavioural science can help** service delivery.

- For journey mapping, the **New Zealand** and **UK Governments** both provide tools and resources, as does **UNICEF's Human Centred Design** approach.

- Resources specifically on scaling behavioural science projects include John List's book **The Voltage Effect** and BehaviourWorks and Monash University's **Scale Up Toolkit**.

Annex B: Behavioural science frameworks on human decision-making

■ The **COM-B** model comes from health policy research. It shows that Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation are essential conditions of behaviour change and proposes interventions to help activate these conditions, such as training, modelling, or persuasion. Relatedly, the Behavioural Insights Team's **Barrier Identification** tool draws on COM-B to help users identify behavioural barriers in their specific policy issue.

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■ **EAST** (from the Behavioural Insights Team) shows how to change behaviour by making it Easy (e.g. removing frictions), Attractive (e.g. highlighting benefits), Social (e.g. using peer networks), and Timely (e.g. prompting action when people are likely to be receptive).

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■ **MINDSPACE** (a framework by the Institute for Government and the UK Government) is a framework detailing common behavioural factors that can be leveraged in policy, such as using relatable Messengers to model a behaviour; providing Incentives to increase motivation; highlighting that a behaviour is a social Norm or making it the Default option; grabbing attention via Salient information; Priming action via subtle cues; leveraging the influence of Affective states on behaviour, encouraging Commitment to a behaviour, and taking Ego into account.

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■ The OECD's **ABCD** framework focuses on drivers of behavioural issues (and associated levers) such as limited Attention, Belief formation, Choices influenced by environment, and willpower or Determination that is difficult to maintain long-term.

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■ The Brazilian Government's **Simples Mente** tool (in Portuguese) organises the behavioural science concepts most used in public policy with the aim to help practitioners implement these concepts, using examples and applications.

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■ There are also thematic documents providing behavioural insights guidance in specific areas:

■ BIT and UNEP's **Little Book of Green Nudges** lists 40 environmental interventions.

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■ The World Bank's **Mind, Society, and Behaviour** report maps out behavioural phenomena relevant to development contexts.

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■ The UNDP's Guide on **Applying Behavioural Science to Support the Prevention of Violent Extremism** provides in-depth context-specific advice on the first three steps of behavioural science projects.

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■ The UN **Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction** 2022 (Part II: The role of biases and communication in risk reduction), coordinated by UNDRR, discusses the role of behavioural science in risk-related decisions and provides guidance on developing interventions in this policy area.

- The InterAmerican Development Bank has shared insights from its projects in policy areas such as health, finances, parenting, the social sector, gender, and COVID (some materials in Spanish).

- Save the Children produced the The Little Jab Book which describes 18 behavioural science strategies for increasing vaccination uptake.

- ActionAid's Behaviour Change Manual adapts the COM-B model for gender-focused international development (and also includes step-by-step guidance on carrying out behavioural science projects in this area).

- The Behavioral Insights Guide for Improving Payment Integrity, developed by the U.S. General Services Administration's Office of Evaluation Sciences (OES), adapts the COM-B Model to diagnose behavioural barriers associated with payment accuracy and improper payments.

- The Behavioural Insights Team has produced guidance in the areas of the behavioural economy, gender in the workplace, intimate partner violence, mass media, behaviour change and peacekeeping, and tackling online harms and manipulations, among others.

Annex C: Resources on reducing administrative burdens

Some practitioner resources on reducing administrative burden are listed below:

■ Accessible reads on what administrative burdens are and why they matter:

- ■ Sludge Audits Sludge Audits and the book Sludge by Cass Sunstein (defines the idea of "sludge" specifically; note many resources in this list use the term sludge)

- ■ The Time Tax (more relevant to programmatic burdens)

- ■ The book Administrative Burden: Policy-Making by Other Means by Pamela Herd and Donald Moynihan provides a framework to understand administrative burdens as well as many case studies

■ The New South Wales Government's Behavioural Insights Unit is a leader in tackling administrative burden in public services and provides a number of resources including the WISER framework to design behaviourally-informed government forms and the Scarcity guide to help people who are short on time, attention, or money better navigate complex processes associated with government services. They will also shortly publish a "Sludge Audit Guide" and associated materials on their website.

■ The Plain English Foundation provides writing resources to reduce language complexity.

■ J-PAL (a research centre working to reduce poverty) provides case studies on reducing administrative burden in low-resource contexts, for example in the area of health.

■ The University of Toronto's Behavioural Economics in Action at Rotman provides a dashboard approach (with case studies) to identify and measure excessive administrative burdens.

■ The "It's not your fault" case study by Lasky-Fink and Linos provides an example of an intervention that reduces the psychological costs of burdens in a programmatic context.

■ The US Government published concrete advice on reducing administrative burdens in its 2022 Memorandum on improving access to programmes via burden reduction - see in particular pages 15-18 for a list of common burdens and associated potential solutions.

■ A review conducted by UNDP and the EOSG identified a number of ways in which the behaviour of UN staff can foster or impede integration and collaboration, leveraging behavioural science principles addressing aspects of administrative burden.

■ The World Bank report "Citizen Service Centres: Pathways Towards Improved Service Delivery" discusses features of service delivery processes that can reduce burdens.