

1

Policymakers are affected by bias just like everyone else. Different types of bias, such as confirmation bias, sunk-cost bias and loss aversion, can be mitigated through the use of behavioral science tools. We can deal with the problem of bias by implementing protocols, working with diverse groups, and using “devil’s advocates.”

2

The messenger is as important as the message. In certain situations, the person conveying the message may act as a role model. This lesson is very relevant for many agendas, especially the gender and diversity one, since the same message could have very different levels of effectiveness depending on whether it is delivered by a role model.

3

Redesign, adapt, simplify. We need to reduce bureaucratic, institutional and structural barriers (e.g. as labor informality) before implementing behavioral insights, particularly in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. Redesigning and adapting interventions that worked in developed countries for our region could be a useful first step.

4

One or many solutions? Different types of challenges may require different types of behavioral interventions. Depending on the situation, it could be one big behavioral bottle-neck, simultaneous bottle-necks or a mix of bottle-necks.

Furthermore, different types of individuals under different types of situations may respond differently to each type of intervention. Ultimately, the key lies in understanding the context to maximize the effectiveness of the interventions.

5

Timing matters. Identical interventions may have drastically different results depending on how messages are communicated and when the interventions are put in place. Optimal timing may differ among populations, a fact that must be recognized to ensure the greatest impact.

6

One-shot solution versus habit formation. Some problems require a single action (e.g. signing up for a retirement program or organ donation). In other cases, we need to fight ongoing battles (e.g. long-term adherence to a treatment), which require interventions that promote habit-formation.

7

Even small effects may be relevant. Behavioral interventions may seem to have minimal impacts. Nonetheless, remember that even small effects may be very cost-effective and, when scaled-up, can change thousands of lives.

8

Theory matters. It is not enough to establish that certain interventions work; we should also understand why they work, in which context, and what the heterogeneous effects for each type of population are. Try to replicate experiments in different contexts to learn how they perform in each case and to find commonalities.

9

Apply a Behavioral-Science lens from the start. It is time to design and pilot comprehensive behaviorally-informed policies, instead of treating them as extensions of existing policies.

Work to understand how these interventions, if proved effective, would be expanded. Sometimes a cost-effective intervention may not be scalable simply because it requires too many resources. Think about how technology can make policies more easily scalable.

10

It is not always about Behavioral Sciences. Sometimes standard economic theory, such as changes in prices, laws, information-sets or incentives, will suffice. To apply the best option for each framework, make sure you understand the context and the bottle-necks.

The IDB has compiled these 10 lessons from the Advisory Committee (AC) on Behavioral Sciences, which held a meeting on April 19th, 2018. The list of external participants included: Alissa Fishbane, Anandi Mani, Stefan Dercon, Stewart Kettle, Dean Karlan, Tim Chadborn, and

Brigitte Madrian.

Want to know more about the Behavioral Sciences Working Group? Contact Florencia Lopez Boo at scl-sph@iadb.org



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