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Metropolitan Group crafts strategic and creative services to amplify the power of voice of change agents in building a just and sustainable world.

Economic Inclusion and Shared Prosperity

At Metropolitan Group (MG), our extensive experience deploying social and behavior change (SBC) research, interventions, and change management strategies positions our organization well to support Economic Inclusion and Shared Prosperity activities. Through the development and implementation of narrative and SBC initiatives (including SBC communications), we can support efforts to ensure that multiple stakeholders—including civil society, private sector, public sector change champions, and citizens—more effectively engage in the activities to change specific behaviors and social norms to foster local development, economic growth, increasing equity, entrepreneurial and employment opportunities, and access to capital.

About Metropolitan Group/Impacto Social Metropolitan Group

[Metropolitan Group \(MG\)](#) is a global small business and a [Certified B Corp](#) that specializes in narrative change and strategic communication to create lasting and sustainable impact for people and communities. At MG, we design and implement SBC initiatives, work to shift narratives, build capacity of local partners, and conduct and disseminate actionable research. Since 1989, we've worked to directly impact social change in two core ways: 1) by creating strategic campaigns and initiatives that change enabling environments—including attitudes, behaviors, practices, policies, and mindsets/expectations and 2) by building the capacity and resilience of institutions and organizations that drive social change. MG and its Mexico City-based sister company, [Impacto Social Metropolitan Group](#) (ISMG), work with national, state, and local governments, foundations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private-sector partners.

We have worked in more than 30 countries on five continents, including Africa, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and Southeast Asia. Our in-house staff in Mexico and the U.S. includes multiple bilingual speakers (English and Spanish), as well as staff who are professionally proficient in French, Portuguese, and Swahili.

We began working with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2021 as a subcontractor to multiple prime contractors for activities related to SBC, strategic communication, and narrative and message creation, as well as direct technical assistance and capacity building for partners across multiple regions. Throughout our activities, we prioritize our commitment to localization as a critical force for creating resilient change.

We offer a range of services within three integrated practices:

- **Strategic communication and SBC**—SBC strategy development and implementation; narrative and strategic messaging design and testing; stakeholder mapping and engagement; formative research; audience research; policy and public sector transformation initiatives, social marketing campaigns; branding, digital strategy, and human-centered design; SBC training and technical assistance
- **Intercultural engagement and social inclusion**—creation of strategies and tools designed with cultural context, language nuance, and appropriate literacy levels; stakeholder assessments; equity, diversity, and inclusion-facilitated training; co-creation and nontraditional/locally centered evaluation and assessments
- **Organizational strategy and innovation**—change management; strategic planning; capacity building; training; leadership development; and technical assistance

Local capacity building is integrated across all three of our practice areas to ensure increased resiliency of the changes achieved, increased opportunity for scaling and replication, and supported localization.

How can MG enhance shared prosperity-focused interventions?

Given our experience in systemic SBC innovations, we have a comparative advantage in shifting deeply entrenched social norms and intransigent behaviors in issues related to livelihoods, economic development, and equitable opportunity. Our experience can advance economic inclusion and enhance technical solutions by developing SBC initiatives, strategic communication programs, capacity building, and narrative change approaches that:

- **Impact enabling environments, information ecosystems, mindsets, and institutional cultures critical to increasing access to capital and economic inclusion**—Our experience in work with development finance, impact investment funds, bank and non-bank financial institutions, small and midsize enterprises (SMEs), and social entrepreneurs has demonstrated the need to address the informal domains that both advance policy, practice, and behavior changes and that remove barriers and put in place drivers that often are key to actual implementation of changes and their resilience post-intervention. The SBC approach to stakeholder engagement garners key insights that benefit intervention planning, selection of levers for change, and relevant framing and support for both formal and informal domain outputs, outcomes, and impacts. We often design these activities to pay special attention to the barriers and drivers that are faced by women, youth, vulnerable populations, social entrepreneurs, and SMEs.
- **Change deeply ingrained social norms on corruption and impunity that hinder foreign investment**— We craft narratives and messages, develop campaigns, and provide technical assistance for stakeholders to denormalize corruption and impunity and promote alternative, desirable behaviors that create an enabling environment for both foreign and national investment.
- **Shift gender, youth, and social inclusion norms that pertain to women, youth, and marginalized groups' abilities to participate in and benefit from access to finance, the business enabling environment, and temporary work programs**—We would assess existing norms and create SBC materials that promote groups' active participation in and benefit from programming in compliance with USAID's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment policy.

What can MG's contributions to economic/prosperity activities look like?

We leverage significant previous experience in the following areas:

- **Leveraging our existing formative research**, funded by USAID, on topics of democracy, corruption, and civic participation (see more in work examples)
- **Applying a gender equality and social inclusion lens/approach** to all the activities under this initiative
- **Mapping stakeholders** and identifying the priority stakeholders we want to influence through the initiative and garnering deep insights through SBC approaches to stakeholder engagement and formative research
- **Understanding the specific norms**, behaviors connected to prevailing issues (corruption and impunity, lack of economic opportunity, access to capital, root causes of migration, etc.) and the barriers priority stakeholders face to change their behaviors
- **Developing the narrative** to be conveyed and testing and refine it to change specific behaviors and norms
- **Providing strategic communication** to craft message frames, identifying and activating relevant and effective mediums and messengers, and supporting both technical (formal) and cultural (informal) change strategies
- **Training and providing technical assistance** to increase the capacity of public, private, and CSO actors advancing economic inclusion activities
- **Crafting the strategy** to eliminate the barriers and increase drivers that priority stakeholders have to advance behaviors and practices that increase economic inclusion
- **Apply iterative learnings** as the enabling environment, behaviors, and social norms are changing

Client Examples

USAID

We have collaborated on multiple USAID-funded projects, research activities, and SBC campaigns with the **Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG)** and with the agency's new



Anti-Corruption Task Force (ACTF). Our work with USAID includes a 10-country global scan of narratives that advance authoritarianism and undermine democracy that is being used to develop messaging campaigns to bolster democracy and rule of law. We have also worked with USAID on designing SBC campaigns in Tunisia to support women agriculture workers; assessing the efficacy of SBC mechanisms to combat corruption; working to advance women’s political participation and leadership; providing strategic communication and technical assistance on justice and crime prevention; and promoting civic space projects in Mexico.

Advancing Women Workers’ Rights in Tunisia

Together with ISMG, we launched the [Advancing the Rights of Women Agriculture Workers](#) project, which applied SBC strategies to shift narratives that impact the rights—including economic equity and inclusion—of women workers. We partnered with two respected women’s organizations in the interior regions of Tunisia, which co-led this project. Working together in Arabic, French, and English, we identified that the dominant narrative around Tunisian women agriculture workers frames them as victims only, ignoring their incredible strength and skills and their enormous contributions to society. With evidence and research, we then developed and tested a new narrative and messaging, which was applied through the “[Felha](#)” campaign. The campaign aims to shift core narratives and, ultimately, influence social norms and specific practices and policies that would improve economic benefits, provide fair treatment, and offer better protection for women who work in agriculture. The narrative framework implemented through the pilot campaign gained enormous traction among women agriculture workers and key stakeholders, including governors; local authorities; local and national civil society organizations; and local, national, and international media. Prioritizing localization throughout this activity created full ownership of the narrative by women agriculture workers, their families, and even some male farmers, creating lasting impact for this community. This was a project under the Innovation Design Services Contract managed by Vistant.

Transparency and Accountability in the Public Sector (TAPS) – El Salvador

We are part of the consortium, led by Counterpart International, implementing the TAPS activity that will go from 2023 to 2028. This project aims to work on both sides of the equation: supply of high-quality services and demand from civil society stakeholders. Our work is focused on the demand side. We are providing technical assistance to a group of civil society organizations to enhance their communication strategies, fostering a change in behaviors related to corruption and rule of law.

Countering Corruption Through SBC

MG was commissioned by the USAID Anti-corruption Task Force (under the Innovation Design Services mechanism managed by Vistant) to conduct research on the use of SBC approaches to social norms and behaviors related to corruption and the development of recommendations to build a strong evidence base to improve current and future anti-corruption activities. Our work included five country case studies of anti-corruption initiatives that utilized elements of SBC. Ultimately, we developed a set of [findings and recommendations](#) for elevating or incorporating these elements into anti-corruption interventions.

Conducting Democracy Narrative and Messaging Research and Development

MG/ISMG has worked closely with public sector and foundation funders to provide actionable narrative and values research, data, and evidence to inform strategy and more effective pro-democracy interventions. We have worked with local partners in more than 15 countries to map dominant narratives that advance democracy, democratic institutions, and democratic values or that delegitimize democracy and advance authoritarian practices and policies. We conduct deep formative research to understand the narrative landscape; use evidence and data to develop and test new narratives and messaging; and design innovative SBC strategies for application. Our work includes ongoing training, technical assistance, and capacity building. All of our research, narrative, message development, and testing is conducted in regional languages to ensure that localization is prioritized with our partners.

Access to Capital

Our team has worked on a wide range of access to capital initiatives, including strategic communication for impact investment funds (ShoreCap International, Vital Healthcare Capital), development and growth of the



global Small Business Banking Network, branding and messaging for doing business, and strategic communication and research related to SMEs, women entrepreneurs, and income-/asset-building for women, youth, small holders, and other communities experiencing economic disparity. Our CEO serves as the board chair of CapitalPlus Exchange, an innovation NGO focused on access to capital for SMEs.

Key Team



Eric Friedenwald-Fishman—SBC innovator: creative director/CEO/founder, MG/ISMG

As creative director, Eric drives strategy development for MG/ISMG. He is an innovator in using values-based SBC methodologies to create resilient changes in social norms, policies, practices, and behaviors. He is an expert in analyzing and developing narratives, and he developed the [Public Will Building](#) model. Eric has worked to counter corruption and impunity, increase access to capital, advance development finance, address hyperpolarization, strengthen democratic institutions and good governance, counter violent extremism, and reduce hate crimes. Clients include USAID, NASA, U.S. Forest Service, Ford Foundation, and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



Haim Malka—international policy expert: executive vice president, MG

Haim works on a global portfolio of behavior change and strategic communications campaigns, with an emphasis on countering authoritarianism. He spent nearly 20 years as a nonpartisan international affairs researcher and analyst focused on the intersection of political, economic, and security trends in North Africa and the Middle East before joining MG in 2019. During that time, he examined numerous issues, including the impact of corruption, environmental changes, and other understudied trends on social cohesion and political stability. At MG, he has led work with NASA, Humanity United, and numerous USAID activities focused on how narratives shape the information ecosystem and perceptions of democracy.



Rodolfo Córdova Alcaraz—social justice co-lead: executive vice president, ISMG

With 20 years of experience, Rodolfo has created SBC initiatives and strategies to advance democracy, civic space, good governance, and human rights in the Americas, Europe, and Africa by applying a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens. He leads the efforts in Latin America. Before joining ISMG, he served in numerous strategic leadership positions, including deputy director at the Foundation of Justice and Rule of Law in Mexico. He has served as senior consultant for the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the UN Network on Migration.



Erin Bloom—legal and policy expert: senior director, MG

Erin is an international legal and policy expert with experience in peace negotiations, fragile and transitional states, systems of corruption and accountability, and public safety and security. Prior to joining MG, Erin served as a technical legal advisor to the Syrian opposition delegation for the 2016 and 2017 Geneva peace talks. She has also worked extensively on crime and gun violence reduction efforts in multiple U.S. cities and is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force. She has worked with USAID on several SBC activities, including anti-corruption and democratic narratives.

MG/ISMG has a [full team of 50-plus](#) experts and practitioners that includes communication and policy specialists; researchers; narrative change, anti-corruption, and SBC experts; gender equity and inclusion leaders; multilingual facilitators; innovators in visual communication; design and digital strategists, and more.

Contract Vehicles

We hold the General Services Administration Professional Services Schedule and are a leading partner with The Cloudburst Group under USAID’s Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Bureau’s Learning, Evaluation, and Research III Task Order. We are a resource partner on USAID’s Digital APEX mechanism,



managed by Vistant. We have joined teams on Analytical Services IV for LACLEARN and SEGA tasking, and we are a subcontractor to DAI for Mexico's ConJusticia contract.

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GSA Number

GS-07F-0224X

Procurement

Designation

Small Business

Schedules

541-2: Public Relations Services

541-4a: Market Research and Analysis

874-1: Integrated Consulting Services

NAICS Codes

541430, 541611, 541613, 541618, 541720,

541810, 541820, 541830, 541840, 541890,

541910, 541990

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