tafakari
BUSARA YEARBOOK

You are not a meteor: metrics and humans

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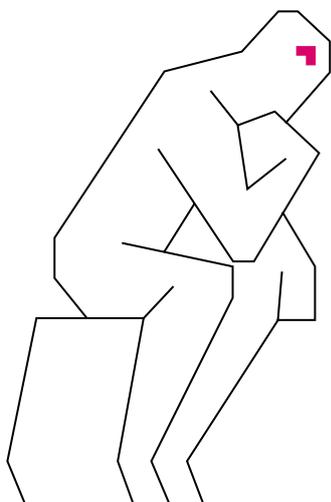
What is the **Tafakari** Yearbook?

Busara's **Tafakari** offers an annual summary of who we are, what we do, and where we are going.

Tafakari means **'to reflect, ponder, think about'** in Kiswahili, the language widely spoken in Kenya, where our headquarters are located. The Tafakari Yearbook is an opportunity for different voices from within Busara

- **To reflect:** What have we accomplished in the year gone past? What have we learned about humanity's complex challenges and how behavioral science might help? How is the environment in which we do our work changing?

- **To ponder:** What kind of contribution are we hoping to make with our work? What changes would we like to see within ourselves and around us? What responsibilities must we take on to work towards a better future? What role can we play?

- **To think:** What are our plans, hopes, and dreams for the coming year?

Meet Busara

Busara works with researchers and organizations to advance and apply behavioral science in pursuit of poverty alleviation. As a research and advisory organization, we are boutique, cutting edge and vocal, seeking to push the frontiers of knowledge in behavioral science and development, and putting the Global South at the center of research, policy, and practice. We pursue a future where global human development activities respond to people's lived experience; value knowledge generated in the context in which it is applied; and promote culturally-appropriate and inclusive practices.

To help achieve this, we advance ethical behavioral science and equitable scholarship in the Global South through interdisciplinary research (using qualitative, quantitative and experimental methods) and through personnel policies that support diversity, inclusion and equity in an international Global South organization. As the largest behavioral science lab in the world with 133,000+ lab participants, we join our partners—such as implementing non-profit and private sector partners, academics, governments and multilaterals—on a learning journey to find out how to increase the impact of their programs.

The operationally relevant knowledge we produce tackles complex issues in food security, climate and environment, livelihoods, governance, digital inclusion, education, peace, and health. With our work, we are growing the next generation of researchers through in-house courses, academic teaching, and visiting fellowships.

BUSARA'S CORE VALUES

ACT WITH CURIOSITY

We want to learn. We want to never stop asking the difficult questions in our work. We want to meet each other with openness and interest.

ACT WITH RESPECT

We want our work to be thoughtful and of high quality. We want to fulfill the need that we originally identified in pursuing a piece of work. We are careful about the complex issues we tackle, and mindful of the huge impact they have on people's real lives.

ACT TOGETHER

We are collaborators, seeking to actively share knowledge and perspectives. We seek to communicate and contribute to achieving our shared purpose.

ACT WITH PURPOSE

We want to keep a clear line of sight of why we do what we do. We want to take responsible ownership of our work, and be held accountable to the standards we set for ourselves.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DOI   digital object identifier

GBV   gender-based violence

IERC   Independent Ethical Review Committee

(I)NGO   (international) non-governmental organizations

IRB   Institutional Review Board

M&E   monitoring and evaluation

NGO   non-governmental organization

NACOSTI representatives visited the Busara offices as part of the verification process on 6 November 2024

Message from leadership

Rethinking impact: The ripple effects of our work

Francis Meyo is Busara's Chief Executive Officer
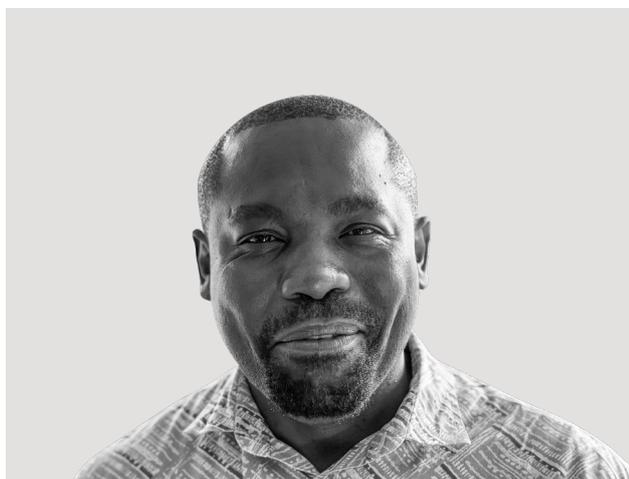
When you think about impact, what comes to mind? Is it the number of people reached? The policies influenced? Or perhaps the behavioral insights implemented? At Busara, the word impact had been bugging us. So we looked up the many dictionary definitions of impact and found the word means more than the image suggests–which is that of a one-off meteor strike. This year's Tafakari is all about looking at the different meanings of impact and suggesting what might be relevant metrics for each.

We picked five of the meanings that the dictionary lists for impact.

- There are **results:** things that are results of the work we do.

- Then there are **ripple effects,** like ripples on a pond started by a single stone that sets off waves to touch distant shores in ways we may not immediately see, but profoundly feel over time.

- We think about **consequences:** what are the consequences of our work?

- We do not underestimate that the need for impact can create **pressure.** How can we constructively deal with this pressure?

- Lastly, impact is also **influence:** what are lasting changes, some of which might come about in surprising ways?

For me, 2024 was a year of reflection, redefinition, and renewed commitment. Before I became Busara's fourth CEO in September, I was driven by a deeply personal question: What impact have I made at Busara over the past eight years, and what impact has Busara left on me?

Busara was already a force in my life before I joined. It was its mission, its people, and its purpose that drew me in.

Over the years, I have had the privilege to co-create many unique elements that make Busara impactful. At the same time, the organization has shaped me in ways I find hard to put into words—a testament to how complicated impact can be. On a personal level, Busara has been a constant through milestones like having my three children. On a professional level, I believe my most enduring legacy lies in the people I have helped grow— colleagues whose brilliance I have seen blossom within and beyond Busara (which is what Stanley Ngugi writes about in this Tafakari for the metric 'relationship'). I hope that that impact will last a lifetime.

What I have come to understand is this: impact isn't a moment, a number, or a headline. It certainly is not a meteor strike–a one-off that leaves a deep dent. **Impact is a journey.**

It extends far beyond the immediate outputs. It includes contributing to debates (as Pauline Nyumu, Stephen Ndirangu and David Muruaru show in this Tafakari); making our work as relevant as possible to communities while listening to their feedback (as Rahab Kariuki outlines); conducting our work with rigor, ethically, and to holistic quality and compliance standards (as Patrick Forscher, Gladys Muange and Mareike Schomerus argue). Impact comes through the communities we help build for ourselves through our research festival Tara Mistari and with others (as we learn from Samantha Wanjiku and Emmanuel Ajibade); the insights we offer (as Salim Kombo explains); and the knowledge we gain and share, including by guiding decision-makers in their choices in ways that make our learning efficient for them (as Lionel Mwalimu, Mohammed M. Alhaji and Jennifer Adhiambo explain). Impact also comes from the effort we extend to understand when and why impact might be bad or inappropriate, depending on the context, and how research methods can help address that (as Mario Schmidt and Jaspreet Singh put forth).

Last year, we recognized the need to reimagine our Theory of Change, shifting from focusing on measurable results to understanding the systems that produce them. Behavioral science reminds us that meaningful change often lies in address-

ing the deeper motivations, needs, and contexts that shape human behavior. Just one type of impact cannot produce such change, which means we must always try to draw connections within the system (as Emiliano Diaz del Valle highlights).

Busara's mission is singular yet profound: to use behavioral science to tackle real-world challenges. This mission is bigger than individual behavioral shifts or one-off countable impact. It is about fostering ecosystems where knowledge, experience, and insight converge to address global issues—with the many impact aspects outlined above. Through rigorous research, evidence-based decision-making, thoughtful implementation, and meaningful relationships, we have demonstrated that lasting impact is possible.

Consider one of our projects in financial inclusion. Initially, we assumed that men's late-night spending habits drove the widespread use of early-morning mobile loans. But closer analysis revealed a different story: entrepreneurial women—mama mbogas—took these loans at 4 a.m. to buy fresh produce for resale. This insight shifted the conversation. It influenced the Central Bank of Kenya to challenge major banks to design better digital credit products for small business owners, a policy challenge that remains pivotal today. This example illustrates that impact is not just in the interventions but also in artic-

ulating challenges and opportunities. By shedding light on an overlooked behavior, we opened doors for others to innovate and respond, creating ripples far beyond our initial engagement.

As I set my agenda as CEO, I carry forward these lessons. How do we articulate and amplify Busara's work's results, ripple effects, consequences, pressures, and influences to shape a better world?

2025 will be the year of impact at Busara. We will reflect on what impact truly means and commit ourselves to championing a more nuanced understanding of it. As the saying goes: what isn't measured isn't changed. However, we must also recognize that what is measured or paid attention to should reflect our work's depth, complexity, and interconnectedness—not just its surface-level outcomes.

Our focus must shift from simple metrics of impact to more complex, meaningful ones—the kind the authors of this Tafakari propose. This may include primarily changing from outputs to systems, recognizing that meaningful, sustainable change requires addressing some of these metrics in a connected way. Impact is not an endpoint but a living process of growth, adaptation, process, and discovery.

We cannot do this alone. Your partnership—your ideas, challenges, and feedback—is critical. Together, we can move beyond surface-level measures to co-create systems that reflect the richness of human behavior.

I invite you to join in as we push the boundaries—not just in what we achieve, but in how we think about achieving it. You are not a meteor: metrics and humans (our second Tafakari Yearbook) proposes a toast to another year of curiosity, purpose, and collaboration. Let's continue creating ripples that reach far and wide.

PS: Over the past few months, I've been ending my internal organizational updates with a Swahili saying. Today, allow me to sign off with a Zulu saying: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu (A person is a person through other persons).*

YOU ARE NOT A METEOR: METRICS AND HUMANS
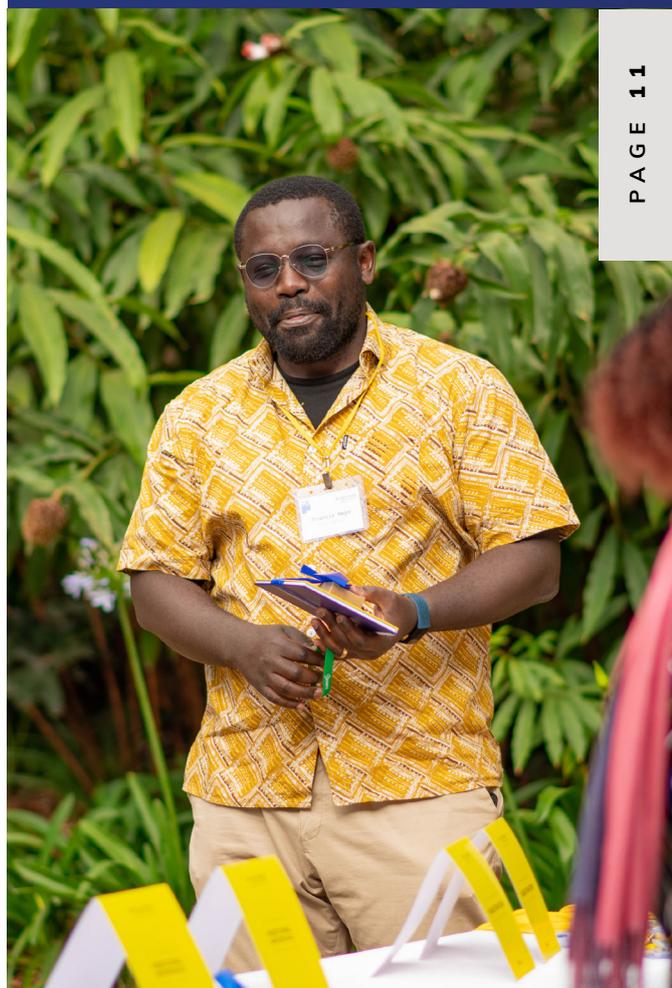
Result

result, n.
The effect, consequence, or outcome of some action, process, or design, etc.[1]

Also:

effect, n.
Something accomplished, caused, or produced; a result, consequence. Correlative to cause, n.[2]

1 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "result (n.)," September 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3489543153.
2 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "effect (n.)," December 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7712376194.

Metric: <mark>relevance</mark>

We give to get: community mechanisms as impactful insurance

Rahab Kariuki is an Engagement Director based in Kenya

It is common to think of an umbrella as a symbol for insurance. Just as a sturdy umbrella goes unnoticed on a sunny day, the potential for insurance often remains overshadowed by financial inclusion.

In rural Kenya, Amani embodies the balancing act many women demonstrate, especially in tough times like the COVID-19 pandemic. With her husband away, she deals with the dual responsibilities of farming and managing household chores while worrying about her children's school fees and medical

needs. Like that umbrella, Amani finds hope through a community of women who gather weekly to contribute to a savings group. In this supportive environment, they uplift one another and create a safety net for their families by pooling their resources. While this collective highlights how women can overcome adversity and recover from financial shocks, it does so at a significant burden without the support of formal insurance and robust risk management. The weight of financial insecurity rests on Amani's shoulders alone.

The insurance sector has largely failed to meet the unique needs of women in low-income communities, like Amani. One could say that the sector has failed to impact Amani's life. The result is that many women have minimal or no access to financial support during emergencies. In recent fieldwork, we found that the savings group approach promoted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) does not offer adequate risk management or insurance. Instead, a widespread risk-sharing mechanism exists, offering assistance to members and their families primarily in the event of death or hospitalization and, in some cases, a

happy event like the birth of a child. Surprisingly, contributions are made out of pocket rather than from group funds. Group norms have created strong accountability and a sense of reciprocity among group members, encouraging unwavering commitment. Additionally, the emotiveness and urgency of these contributions, which occur after a loss, make this form of community risk-sharing infallible. It has a huge impact—and maybe that is why it is no wonder that formal funeral insurance does not stand a chance in these communities. Because death or illness is unpredictable, we found that when these events occur, some members have to forgo necessary household expenses to make their contributions, and many resort to taking out loans to honor their commitments. *While this system is imperfect, it is a vital support system.*

These savings groups represent much more than table banking: their impact comes from embodying trust, mutual support, and shared endurance. Members pool their resources, providing financial assistance in times of need while navigating life's uncertainties together. This understanding brings us to an important point of contention. The prevailing mindset in the insurance industry tends to dismiss community-led initiatives as mere assistance, rather than recognizing their potential as viable insurance models or distribution channels for insurance. They think of impact as providing support in an acute moment of shock: one impact image meets another. This narrow view ignores the reality that informal systems embody the essence of insurance: pooling resources to protect against unforeseen events. Risk-sharing and mutual support within these groups provide security that resembles traditional insurance plans. These are not one-off moments; they are long processes through which community mechanisms built on reciprocity and social capital become impactful.

Moreover, these informal solutions offer a relatable and accessible entry point for women to engage with financial services. Community savings groups prioritize flexibility, social interaction, and shared responsibility, making them inviting environments for women who may feel intimidated by formal financial institutions. In these settings, women aren't merely participants, but co-owners of their economic destinies. By lifting each other and forming support networks, they cultivate skills and build confidence in their financial decision-making abilities.

There is potential to improve these informal models by incorporating technology and risk assessment strategies. We can make these networks more adaptable to new challenges while keeping their foundational values of collaboration and support by using modern tools like blockchain, actuarial pricing, and index insurance.

■ This starts with recognizing group assistance leveraging social networks as powerful insurance-like mechanisms in their own right. Acknowledging their effectiveness and considering them as alternative insurance models can lead to user-centric methods that honor African communities' traditions (tailored to women's needs) while improving their ability to tackle modern challenges.

■ Secondly, initiatives aimed at integrating informal community practices with formal insurance structures, such as building insurance mutuals, can bridge gaps—making insurance not just accessible but also more relevant to women's lives. *Relevance is an excellent way to be impactful.*

The challenges faced by women in accessing formal insurance are multifaceted. Most of us (not only low-income people) find ourselves overwhelmed by the complexities of navigating insurance, a situation worsened by difficult-to-understand information and inadequate financial literacy. Distrust of insurance companies, compounded by immediate financial constraints, often steers women toward informal solutions, which they perceive as more flexible and socially connected. Furthermore, societal norms and cultural expectations often frame insurance purchases as a man's responsibility, discouraging women from considering or seeking coverage. Tackling these barriers requires concerted efforts to promote financial education, gender equity, and societal acceptance of women's financial agency.

Recognizing and improving the existing community risk-sharing mechanism into a community-driven and member-owned insurance mutual could be an impactful game changer; it reverses formal insurance models by rolling over any leftover funds for future use, ensuring fast claims processing and simple products. In this model, clients are also owners, incentivized to reduce risks collectively, paving the way for a more resilient future built on mutual support and shared responsibility. By embracing community-led risk-sharing initiatives, we can protect women's financial well-being and strengthen our communities. When women succeed, families are better prepared for challenges, children receive better education and healthcare, and communities become more resilient to financial, climate, and health issues. All of which fall under the impact so many development projects seek to achieve.

In this project, we are grappling with emerging questions such as: what is the role of men in promoting and facilitating this type of insurance for savings groups predominantly made up of women? How can this insurance be structured and protected from manipulation? How can the abilities of these groups to manage the insurance be strengthened? How can risks to the pooled fund be managed to prevent depletion?

As we work to make Amani's umbrella central to financial inclusion approaches, my plea is to embrace the power of grassroots solutions. The community roots make them relevant—and allow us to ask if our work has correctly identified an approach's relevance. The vibrancy of informal insurance practices exemplifies a shift in how we think of financial security. By championing these initiatives, we can redefine what insurance looks like, making it more accessible, relatable, relevant, and effective for women across diverse communities. More—dare I say it—impactful.

I am championing the inclusion of insurance mutuals in savings group methodologies. This would create a more inclusive future, starting with empowering women to grow and protect their money. This would ensure that asset protection is not a privilege for the few but a right for all.

Metric: insightfulness

What if most of what we thought about civic engagement in the Global South is wrong?

Salim Kombo is an Engagement Director based in Kenya

Civic engagement faces unique challenges and opportunities in the Global South as societies navigate complex political landscapes, digital transformations, and shrinking civic spaces. A traditional way of measuring civic engagement is by looking at voter turnout.

Voting has an easily counted impact: how many people showed up to cast their votes? However, this impact measurement fails to capture the full spectrum of activities and behaviors that constitute civic participation today. It is practical but not very insightful. That is because common impact measurements often focus on civic engagement as an event rather than a process: impact is the moment of striking.

To better understand and foster meaningful civic engagement (and its true impact), we need to know how it manifests in the unique contexts of the Global South. Below are some of the key considerations for achieving this. They have one unifying factor: they require fresh and often surprising insights.
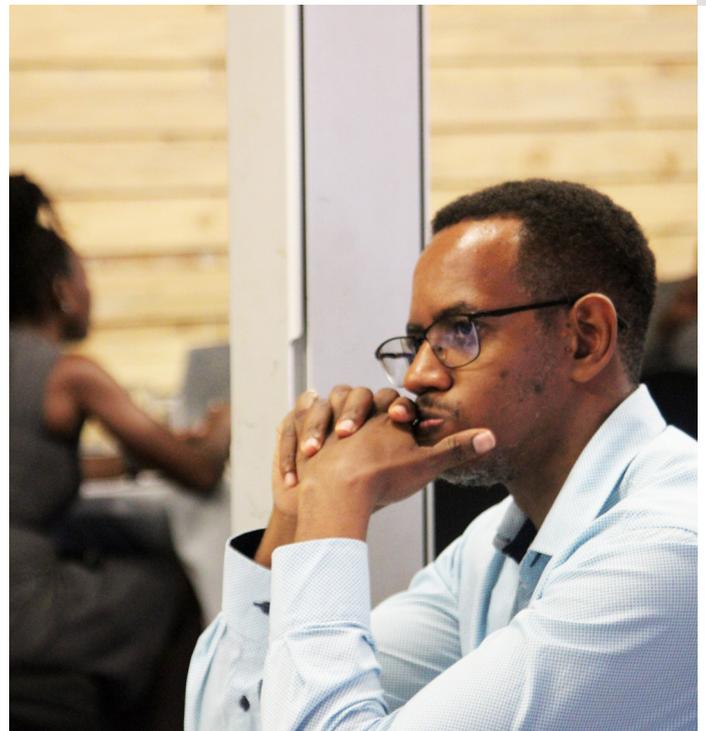
Challenges in measuring civic engagement in the Global South

Quantifying civic engagement must be based on information beyond what is easy to collect. It requires understanding the context of people's involvement and the quality of the outcomes. There is a bias toward focusing on counting and figures, such as voting statistics. But arguably, grassroots campaigns can be more critical in determining which candidate or issue people vote for.

Moreover, there can also be significant biases in data collection on civic participation. Civic participation surveys often fail to reach marginalized groups, and self-reported data can be influenced by social desirability— people reporting what they think they should do rather than do. For better insights, there is a clear need for more inclusive, representative methods of data collection and supplementing surveys with qualitative insights that capture the underlying attitudes and motivations and more objective measures of civic participation.

Broadening the definition of civic engagement

Civic engagement behavior in many regions of the Global South extends beyond formal activities like voting.

Engaged behaviors are often informal and difficult to measure but are essential elements of civic life. They include communal resource sharing, informal volunteering, so-called 'citizen parliaments' (such as the Bunge la Wananchi in Kenya),[3] and grassroots organizing. These are often facilitated through online and offline communications such as WhatsApp and informal gatherings. Many new and creative forms of civic engagement have emerged that fall outside traditional definitions. For instance, during the 2024 Anti-Finance Bill protests in Kenya, an AI tool was developed to expose the corruption cases of all politicians in the country, creating greater transparency and awareness of important civic issues in a new and engaging way.[4]

Therefore, measuring these new forms of participation requires an expanded approach that captures visible actions, such as protests and petitions, and less formalized, community-centered efforts, like providing transport or meals to protesters.

3 Onyando, Winnie. 2023 (December 9). "Bunge la Mwananchi explainer: This 'parallel' government." *Nation* https://nation.africa/kenya/news/politics/bunge-la-mwananchi-explainer-this-parallel-government-4458108.
4 Kimani, Brian. 2024 (June 29). "Kenyan creates ChatGPT tool that exposes all politicians' corruption cases." *Citizen Digital* https://www.citizen.digital/tech/kenyan-creates-chatgpt-tool-that-exposes-all-politicians-corruption-cases-n344905.

Addressing barriers to civic engagement, particularly for marginalized groups

Despite the burgeoning forms of civic participation we are seeing, significant structural and socio-economic barriers remain that limit civic participation in the Global South, particularly for marginalized communities. These include limited internet access, language barriers, geographic isolation, and, in some cases, personal risks to participation. Without addressing these, there is a real risk of accelerated inequalities between those who can effectively participate in the most important discussions on the governance of their communities and countries—and those who can not. Inclusion measures, particularly for marginalized groups, are therefore vital for informal, new, and innovative forms of civic engagement to leave no one behind. Thinking of inclusion as an impactful

process is not what usually happens in impact measurement. But without it, it will not be possible to gain a deeper understanding of the many faces of civic engagement.

In conclusion, rethinking civic engagement in the Global South needs a multifaceted approach that captures participation's diversity, nuances, and unique challenges in this context. Traditional metrics like voter turnout are insufficient for understanding the depth and breadth of civic activity that includes both formal and informal engagement. There is a wide array of actions and motivations that standard measurements overlook. To foster and accurately gauge meaningful civic engagement, it is crucial to develop inclusive, context-sensitive methods incorporating qualitative insights that reveal people's motivations and obstacles. Only these can produce the insights we need and by which we have to measure the meaning of our work.

By expanding our definition and approach, we can better support civic participation that is representative and responsive to the realities of life in the Global South, ensuring that all voices, especially those of marginalized communities, are heard and included. That would be an impact.

The aha moment that made The Aha! Moment

In the past year, Busara started 36 projects and concluded 46. What remains after a project closes can differ vastly: a *Groundwork*, elaborate reports, playbooks, decks, program designs, or academic articles. Sometimes, it is tough to keep track of what we learn from each project. A lightbulb went off when we realized this was a huge shortcoming. This moment gave Busara's newest publication series its name: *The Aha! Moment.* The Aha! Moment is a concise, two-page record of each study, its ambitions, research design, its contribution to knowledge and the literature, some overall learnings and implications, and suggestions for further research. It is a way to share our insights and acknowledge our contribution to knowledge and broader understanding.

Find all 2024 *Aha! Moments*
at **www.busara.global/aha**

Unlocking the power of social media in Nigeria's digital economy

Discover the impact.
Learn more here.

EXPLORE ISSUE NO. 12

Metric: **efficiency**

Human factors in health security lapses: What if the most efficient impact was changing ourselves?

Mohammed M. Alhaji, PhD, is an Engagement Director based in Nigeria

Between January 2022 and October 2024, over 120 countries reported more than 105,000 confirmed cases of Mpox with 234 deaths, primarily concentrated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.[5]

5 WHO Team Emergency Response (WRE). 2024 (13 October). "Multi-country outbreak of mpox, External situation report#40- 13 October 2024." *World Health Organization* https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/multi-country-outbreak-of-mpox--external-situation-report-40--13-october-2024.

Beyond Mpox and COVID-19, several other infectious diseases were reported in 2024. Marburg disease was tackled in Rwanda, West Nile virus has been reported in Barbados; MERS-CoV in Saudi Arabia; and various strains of Avian Influenza in China, Ghana, USA, Vietnam, and other countries. Psittacosis is in five European countries. Dengue fever has surfaced in Iran; Nipah virus in Bangladesh; and Yellow Fever across 13 African nations. Also, rabies, Hepatitis E, and other viral outbreaks have been identified globally.

These infectious diseases have the potential for cross-border transmission, influenced by factors such as their infectiousness, the effectiveness of local containment measures, and, most importantly, human behavior.

Human error is considered the greatest weakness in cybersecurity. The same holds true in public health. Indeed, with how the world is connected, global health security is only as strong as the weakest country. Within each country, resilience is demonstrated by the weakest subnational system. This pattern extends to communities and even individuals who

may, for example, delay or avoid seeking timely healthcare, thereby delaying timely activation of response mechanisms.

Human actions or inactions are critical to the success or failure of preparedness and outbreak responses. Disease outbreaks are arguably less a testament to the adaptability of the disease-causing microorganism, and more a direct result of human failure across complex interaction and system levels.

Yet, we often pay much more attention to what the virus does than to human activities' impact in fighting disease outbreaks efficiently. Leaders must prioritize and allocate sufficient resources; researchers must conduct relevant studies and disseminate findings in a timely and accessible manner; and philanthropic leaders need to align with and support government and community efforts. Development implementers must also respond promptly, utilizing expertise, tools, and information. Community leaders and members must work together toward a common goal, ensuring collective responsibility. Any inefficiency of actions required at each level directly impacts the potential and extent of the disease outbreak.

Because disease outbreaks often expose weaknesses in the local systems from which they emerge, the repeated failure to contain avoidable outbreaks raises important questions.

- *Why do we repeatedly fail to contain infectious diseases efficiently?*

- *Where are the most significant gaps across the continuum of human interaction and collective responsibility—from leaders allocating resources to communities and individuals being responsive and cooperative? Where do breakdowns occur most frequently?*

- *Are the patterns of failure consistent across regions and disease types?*

- *Are researchers providing accurate and timely information on the appropriate platforms, and how accessible is this information?*

- *Do we have the right mix of human resources and motivation at different levels?*

- *How efficient and effective is cooperation at the local, national, regional, and international levels, and how can it be enhanced?*

- *How do we optimize the limited resources and funding available for preparedness and response?*

All of these questions could be grouped under the heading of how to have an impact in fighting against outbreaks of infectious diseases. Still, researchers and organizations seeking to address these foundational questions often struggle to engage key stakeholders efficiently and secure funding. Short-term, large-scale solutions—such as vaccine distribution during active outbreaks—are frequently prioritized over long-term preparedness investments. These are interventions where impact is easily countable and the relationship between the intervention and the effect can be established: you count the number of vaccines and relate it to the number of infections, and you might have an impressive and relatable impact story.

It is much harder to show the outbreaks that did not happen, or the vaccines that did not need to be developed. The most impactful intervention would be decision-makers within functioning systems efficiently making the right choices based on the useful information they

had—in short, people working against their weaknesses. But this might never appear in an annual report on impact measurements.

It is essential to research and apply deeper foundational insights across all levels, especially when no major outbreaks occur to effectively recalibrate global health security efforts.

The true impact is not measured by how well we get out of an emergency; it is visible in how well we manage to learn how to counter human weaknesses by supporting decision-makers and efficiently getting information to them in the right way and at the right time so that they can make the best decisions to make sure that the next pandemic does not occur.
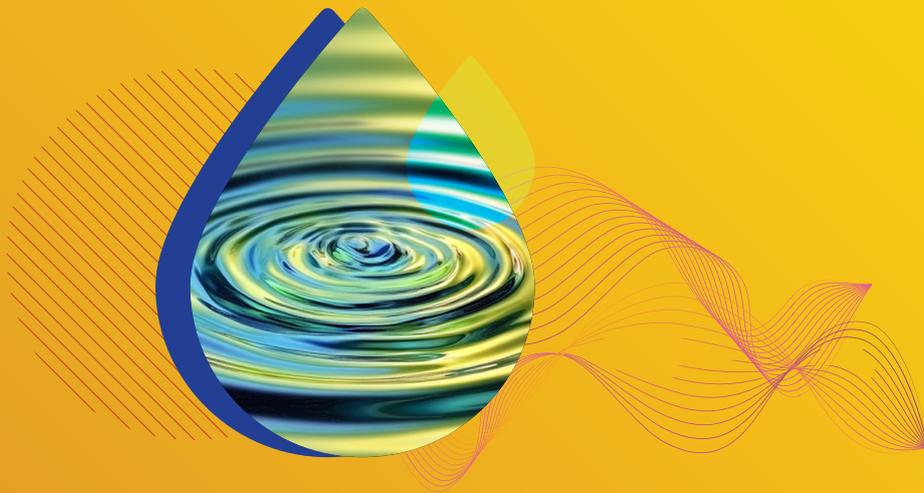
Ripple effect

Ripple effect, n.
An effect caused by rippling; spec. the continuous and spreading results of an event or action.[6]

Also:

ramification, n.
An offshoot of something that develops from or grows out of something else; an extension, esp. of an idea, concept, etc.; a subdivision or single part of a more complex structure.[7]

6 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "ripple effect (n.)," December 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2654746900.
7 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "ramification (n.)," June 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1923058962.

Metric: <mark>ethics</mark>

Counting ≠ accountable: Fuzziness as impact

Patrick S. Forscher, based in Kenya, is the Director of Busara's CREME (Culture, Research Ethics, and Methods) Meta-Research Team

Good health and well-being. High-quality education. Dignity. Peace. As a field, development is interested in a wide variety of fuzzy, complex, and even potentially subjective concepts.

The very fuzziness of these outcomes contributes to a problem with which development has long struggled: how do you hold a development organization accountable to a target that is so fuzzy and subjective?

Behavioral science shares development's interest in fuzzy, complex, and subjective concepts, focusing on processes such as attitudes, intentions, and beliefs. Yet, behavioral science's promise—at least to some—is to reduce such fuzzy concepts into a form that feels less fuzzy, and even objective: numbers.

Behavioral science has a vast and growing toolkit of measures and tasks that put people through sometimes quite complicated procedures to assign each person a number—or a few numbers— that represent that person's attitude, intention, or belief. These numbers seem to transform the fuzziness and uncertainty of the original concepts into something that appears definite, certain. These numbers in hand, a behavioral scientist can sort, rank, average, and regress with abandon, freed from the messy contradictions that complicate attitudes and beliefs as they operate within people's lives. The evidence that results from such mathematical and statistical operations can appear unimpeachable, gilded with the appearance of objectivity that numbers bring. As the late Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman put it when describing quantitative behavioral science results in a chapter of his most famous book, <u>Thinking, Fast and Slow</u>, "the results

are not made up, nor are they statistical flukes. You have no choice but to accept that the major conclusions of these studies are true. More importantly, you must accept that they are true about you."[8]

To many in development, behavioral science's ability to transform messy social realities into neat and seemingly objective numbers is exactly what makes it attractive and what gives it such promise in achieving lofty goals such as health and well-being worldwide. Behavioral science also promises to bring accountability to this enterprise, as the numbers and analyses it produces do not appear to be as gameable as fuzzier targets.

Unfortunately, the seeming objectivity of quantitative behavioral science is an illusion. Over the past 20 years, we have learned that it is possible to tweak quantitative findings as easily as qualitative ones by omitting troublesome observations, presenting only the measures that make statistical results look nice, and other questionable practices.[9] It is possible to use these practices to demonstrate practically anything, even something as absurd as the claim that people can see into the

future.[10] Moreover, the messy social realities that were supposedly stripped from findings through quantification cannot be removed entirely, which becomes apparent when such findings are stress-tested against their original contexts.[11] Even such a luminary as Daniel Kahneman fell victim to these mistakes. As he later admitted about the same chapter of Thinking, Fast and Slow that he once presented as inescapably true, "The experimental evidence for the ideas I presented in that chapter was significantly weaker than I believed when I wrote it."[12]

10 Engber, Daniel. 2017. "Daryl Bem Proved ESP Is Real which means science is broken." *Slate* https://slate.com/health-and-science/2017/06/daryl-bem-proved-esp-is-real-showed-science-is-broken.html.
11 McCrabb, Sam, Cassandra Lane, Alix Hall, Andrew Milat, Adrian Bauman, Rachel Sutherland, Serene Yoong and Luke Wolfenden. 2019. "Scaling-up evidence-based obesity interventions: A systematic review assessing intervention adaptations and effectiveness and quantifying the scale-up penalty." *Obesity Reviews* 20 (7):964-982. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/obr.12845.
12 Schimmack, Ulrich, Moritz Heene and Kamini Kesavan. 2017 (February 2). "Reconstruction of a Train Wreck: How Priming Research Went off the Rails." *Replicability Index* https://replicationindex.com/2017/02/02/reconstruction-of-a-train-wreck-how-priming-research-went-of-the-rails/comment-page-1/#comment-1454.

8 Kahneman, Daniel. 2011. *Thinking Fast and Slow*. New York: Penguin. Page 110.
9 Simmons, Joseph P., Leif D. Nelson, and Uri Simonsohn. 2011. "False-Positive Psychology: Undisclosed Flexibility in Data Collection and Analysis Allows Presenting Anything as Significant." *Psychological Science* 22 (11):1359-1366. doi: 10.1177/0956797611417632.

The lesson that Daniel Kahneman learned is that quantification is not the same as accountability. Absent structures of accountability—along with the transparency of the process required to inspect how a claim is arrived at—numbers can be manipulated just as easily as fuzzier targets.

In some ways, numbers are even more dangerous than non-quantitative forms of measurement, as they can bring a sheen of objectivity[13] where none is warranted.[14] As Busara embarks upon a quest to assess its impact upon its outcomes—including some very fuzzy ones, such as ethical practice and dignity—we hope to take to heart the same lessons as Daniel Kahneman. As such, we will not avoid quantification entirely, but rather overconfident quantification. We will accompany such quantification with qualitative metrics and structures to enforce transparency and accountability in how these metrics are constructed.

In the context of ethical practice, these structures will include something new to Busara: a Busara-founded ethical review board that specializes in behavioral science and takes as its founding principles the ethical framework to which we wish our work to be held.[15] This board will have a governance structure independent of Busara to ensure that we do not exert undue influence on its

13 John, I. D. 1992. "Statistics as Rhetoric in Psychology." *Australian Psychologist* 27 (3):144-149. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/000500069208257601.
14 Vazire, Simine. 2019 (23 December). "Do We Want to Be Credible or Incredible?" *Psychology Observer* https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/do-we-want-to-be-credible-or-incredible.
15 Wambua, Joel; Nicholas Owsley and Tom Wein. 2023. *Participant voice first: Busara's research agenda on ethical research in the Global South.* Busara Groundwork No. 3 (Research Agenda). Nairobi: Busara. DOI: https://doi.org/10.62372/NQPF8886.

decisions. We will also ensure that the people we hope to benefit are numbered among the board's members and monitor how our participants experience the studies overseen by the board. These measures, we hope, will help us approach the ethics of our work and the impact of any changes in ethical practice with humility rather than overconfidence.[16]

Development—and, by extension, behavioral science in development—wishes to achieve fuzzy and complex goals. Maintaining accountability to fuzzy goals can be challenging. Development organizations should not succumb to the temptation of hiding this complexity beneath the supposed objectivity of numbers.[17] Rather, we believe the best response to this complexity is to recognize it as an inherent feature of the topics we wish to understand—regardless of whether we use quantification to achieve this understanding—and to build the proper accountability and transparency structures to facilitate learning about this complexity.

16 Forscher Patrick. S and Mario Schmidt (eds). 2024. *A better how: notes on developmental meta-research*. Nairobi: Busara. DOI: doi.org/10.62372/ISCI6112.
17 McNamee, Ben, Patrick S. Forscher and Michael Lenczner. 2024. "Open Science in Impact Evaluation: What Impact Evaluators can Learn from the Replication Crisis in Social Psychology." *New Directions for Evaluation (in press)*. https://osf.io/e67ub.

The Busara Independent Ethical Review Board

==Much of the behavioral science that occurs in the Global South aims to improve lives.== Perhaps for this reason, scholars have been slow to recognize the ethical risks of behavioral and social science research, especially research that is not conducted thoughtfully. As signified by a _growing body of scholarship_ on this topic, this oversight is now being corrected.[18] Yet ethical analyses and frameworks will be empty unless they are implemented and accompanied by robust accountability structures. Moreover, the existing institutions to regulate ethics—Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), or, as they are called in Kenya, Independent Ethical Review Committees (IERCs)—are not always well-equipped to evaluate emerging fields like behavioral science. This can lead to under-regulation in some places, leading studies with _dubious protocols_ to breeze through review, and over-regulation in others, burdening low-risk research with needless administration and delay.[19]

==Our new initiative is designed to address these shortcomings. In the coming year, Busara is working to establish its own IERC.== The committee will have a governance structure independent from ours and will aim to provide ethical oversight where appropriate and needed and increase efficiency where it is not. We will do this by adopting separate procedures for low-risk and higher-risk research and, for the high-risk protocols where more oversight is needed, ensuring protocols are reviewed by members of the Global South communities with whom Busara has the strongest relationships.

The committee will also be equipped to assess and sanction a wide range of behavioral and social science research, including, but not limited to, decision lab-based research, qualitative research (including ethnography), and behavioral investigations into special topics such as financial inclusion and public health. We plan to set up structures to allow ongoing monitoring of our committee's processes so that they can continuously improve and embed emerging best practices in ethical research. _We hope the result will be an IERC that will provide long-term improvements to the research ecosystem._

18 Cohn, Emma, and Douglas MacKay. 2024 (last updated June 24). "Ethics of Field Experiments: A Bibliography." https://dmackay.web.unc.edu/ethics-of-field-experiments-a-bibliography/.
19 Green, Andrew. 2020 (September 8). "A new research experiment in Kenya raises questions about ethics." _Devex_ https://www.devex.com/news/a-new-research-experiment-in-kenya-raises-questions-about-ethics-98039.

Metric: **quality**

Good work travels:
quality as impact

Mareike Schomerus is Vice President Voice and Impact, based in Kenya

When life gets hectic, it can feel as if the ground underneath one's feet turns into a slushy, muddy, unreliable surface. The only way to get across, get out, and move on in such a situation is to run, jump, splash, and get dirty. Or all of these.

Social science research to produce practically relevant insights can feel like that. Our work is challenging. It requires balancing the needs and interests of communities (our clients), concerns or agendas of our partners (who fund and support us), our own skills and expertise, and broader knowledge needs within a scientific, practice, and policy community. All this balancing happens within constrained timeframes, with limited resources, ethical dilemmas, and the desire to build and maintain good, constructive relationships.

In addition, research requires ideas. You need headspace, inspiration, and sometimes courage to see through a problem, develop a creative research design, or unpack what the data is telling you. With so many elements in our work, it might be no surprise that the ground can sometimes feel wobbly, and things can slip. But even when that happens, we don't want to get dirty.

So, how do we counter an unstable, slippery ground? We build a

foundation—a fundament. In the past year, that is what we emphasized with the motto that 'quality is fundamental' to our work. This seems obvious: no organization would declare that quality does not matter to them. But quality is a bit like impact: an evocative word that is tough to fill with the meaning that can guide our actions daily. What does it mean to do quality work? What does it mean to have impact? When the two words sit next to each other, it can feel like a cozy social gathering of jargon. In the past year, we have sought to fill the word quality with meaning, much like we are now seeking to fill the word impact with meaning. As always, having a language to talk about something is helpful. So, Megan Grazier and Sam Bastian (at the time Director of Project Operations and Chief Operating Officer), started defining quality for Busara by developing a set of quality principles that we would seek to achieve in everything we do.

Everything.

Because…quality is fundamental. It is the ground on which we walk.

Table 1 shows these quality principles and what they mean to us. They are our starting points from which we hope to expand and refine further.

Principle		Meaning
Relational	▶▶	*The work is relevant to the interests and agendas of partners and communities, and partners and researchers are aligned on what they want to achieve and how.*
Contextual	▶▶	*The work builds on the specific needs and backgrounds of the relevant communities (as articulated by them) in both process and outcome.*
Insightful	▶▶	*Research findings will enrich the broader knowledge base, meaningfully linking research, practice, policy, and real-world experiences.*
Rigorous	▶▶	*The work uses the most appropriate method for each question, with methodological pluralism. Building on a foundation of behavioral science, it can be interdisciplinary, multi-method, quantitative, or qualitative.*
Complete	▶▶	*All objectives, outcomes, and outputs will be achieved with full compliance. Any outputs will be delivered with clear goals in mind and presented appealingly without errors.*
Efficient	▶▶	*Work is delivered within the allocated time and budget, using resources wisely. Any deviation is identified and accounted for.*

Table 1: Quality principles and their meanings

Because quality and impact are connected (and, as Mario Schmidt argues in this Tafakari, once you separate them, you might achieve great impact with terrible quality work), these quality principles are also reflected in our approach to better understanding our impact.

These quality principles will continue to accompany us because just saying them out loud is not the same as achieving them. In reality, we are often tempted to trade off between them. Because relationships are the most important, we can, for example, forget about

efficiency when delivering our work. We have learned that without relationships, we cannot do our work well: unless we understand the interests and needs of partners and communities, we cannot deliver insightful findings or other impact markers as outlined in this Tafakari.

To ensure that we work in the right context, we must engage meaningfully with implementing partners and gain a clear sense of the many challenges that another good buzzword poses to us: context (with which Jaspreet Singh also grapples in this Tafakari).

Our research festival Tara Mistari, last year was dedicated to this little word: context (see Emmanuel Ajibade's reflection on Tara Mistari in this Tafakari). We spent a whole day asking questions: *what does it even mean to know a context? To work in a context? How do we know a context and interpret it based on who we are, our educational background, our methods, or our epistemology? How do we gather knowledge in someone else's context without instantly translating it to fit our context? How do we use analytical tools to see connections in ways we might not have seen before?* We must always grapple with these questions to stay alert to limitations that come from our mental models to changes, to our mistakes and misunderstandings. All of these have real-life implications for others.

Such reflections also lie in the key to other quality principles: we can only be rigorous using appropriate methods.

Appropriateness is determined by being contextual. We can only be insightful if we understand what is important to communities and partners, which we can only achieve through being relational. And we can only do all of this with completeness if we never lose sight of ethical standards and necessary compliance, as Gladys Muange and

Patrick S. Forscher argue in their chapters in this Tafakari. And we can only exist as an organization if we can do all of the above efficiently.

Impact requires making contact, maybe jumping up to land differently. You can't jump from slushy ground. We need firm ground to stand on. The quality principles will help. But they are not automatic concrete-paved roads that will never develop potholes or be swept away by a storm. They require nurturing, attention, maintenance, and learning, particularly when life gets hectic.

Consequence

consequence, n.
A thing or circumstance that follows as an effect or result from something preceding.[20]

Also:

aftermath, n.
A (usually undesired) thing remaining or left after the end or exit of something; an unwelcome consequence or effect.[21]

20 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "consequence (n.)," March 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8344396184.
21 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "aftermath (n.)," December 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6507783002.

Metric: relationships

People are impact:
Busara's legacy in action

In 2024, Stanley Ngugi was Busara's VP of People and Community, based in Kenya

Let us start with a real story (even though names and organizations have been changed): When Amina joined Busara, she was a fresh graduate from a university in Nairobi, full of curiosity about human behavior and its role in tackling poverty.

She was bright and hardworking but had not yet had access to structured opportunities that could help her grow into a leader in the development field. At Busara, Amina worked on projects with big international organizations, learning the technical side of behavioral science and how to work with people, manage teams, and lead complex projects. Over time, she became a trusted voice in the organization, known for her thoughtful approach and ability to bring ideas to life. After several impactful years at Busara, Amina joined an international NGO (INGO) as a program manager. She has applied everything she learned at Busara to reshape how her INGO approaches community-driven solutions, ensuring they are rooted in behavioral science and respect for local contexts. Amina's journey shows how investing in people can create leaders who drive meaningful change far beyond their time at Busara.

When we talk about impact, we often default to the tangible—the number of publications, the reach of our projects, or the size of our partnerships. These are, without doubt, important metrics. But at Busara, the impact is most profoundly reflected in our people. It is in the growth of individuals who join us, the culture they help shape, and the waves they make when they eventually leave to carry our mission into the world.

A talent engine for the Global South

At Busara, we do something remarkable: we take promising young professionals, often at the start of their careers, and turn them into leaders in behavioral science and other fields. Many of these individuals come to us as fresh graduates or early-career professionals, wide-eyed and eager but unsure of their potential. What happens next is transformative. Through immersive experiences, hands-on research, exposure, and mentorship, they leave Busara not only as experts but as advocates of behavioral science, equipped to drive change wherever they go.

These alumni are one of Busara's proudest exports. They join government agencies, INGOs, global think tanks, and cutting-edge research institutions. They become thought leaders, innovators, and collaborators applying behavioral science to some of the world's most pressing challenges. Their influence ripples outward, amplifying the values and methods they honed during their time here.

A culture that speaks for itself

When I first joined Busara, I had heard whispers of its culture—a workplace where collaboration flourishes, curiosity is encouraged, and respect is the default. Over the years, I have seen that culture solidify into something unique and enviable. It is not just a set of values printed on a poster; it is something you feel about how we work, communicate, and grow together.

This culture is not static—it evolves, shaped by the people who call Busara home. It pushes boundaries, asking what inclusion and equity mean in a field like ours. How do we ensure every employee, respondent, and partner feels valued? How do we lead by example, showing that ethical practices and respect for context are not optional but essential? These questions are not just theoretical—they inform everything we do.

More than an organization: a launchpad

Busara's greatest legacy isn't the research we conduct or the projects we deliver—it is the people we empower. When someone leaves Busara, it is not

a loss but an expansion. Our people carry the ethos of Busara into the world, applying behavioral science with integrity and a sense of purpose. That is why we celebrate alumni who achieve extraordinary things, knowing that their successes are a testament to what we stand for.

We have embraced the reality that Busara is a stepping stone for many. Rather than seeing this as a challenge, we have reframed it as a point of pride. If our alumni are driving change elsewhere, it means we are succeeding in our mission to amplify the reach of behavioral science. Their departure is not an end—it is the beginning of a new chapter in the story of our impact.

The consequences of people-centric practices

People as impact is not just about who works at Busara; it is about how we work together and the example we set. Whether our commitment to ethical research, our emphasis on diversity and inclusion, or our dedication to fostering a positive work environment, we aim to lead by doing. We have learned that how we treat people—whether they are employees, respondents, or partners— matters as much as what we achieve.

At Busara, people are not a means to an end. They are the impact, the reason our work resonates, the force driving our mission, and the heart of everything we do. They are the consequence. And that, for me, is what makes Busara truly special.

As we move forward, we will continue to invest in people—not just as employees but as ambassadors, innovators, and change-makers. At the end of the day, the measure of Busara's impact is not just in the work we have done but in the lives we have touched and the people we have empowered to create a better world.

The next generation: internships-partnerships at Busara

In 2024, Busara partnered with Smith College in Massachusetts, USA, on a new approach to offering internships. Smith's Collaborative Leadership and Design Immersions Program was keen to help us build internship equity, meaning that Smith sent two of their interns while equally supporting two interns from Kenyan universities. This allowed a better internship experience and offered paid internships to Kenyan students. Eugenia Rogers (who aspires to become Sierra Leone's first female president and was one of our interns) reflects on her time with us:

My time at Busara was more rewarding than I had imagined. What struck me most was the culture of collaboration and impact. Everyone's voice matters, and ideas flow freely. From team meetings to brainstorming sessions, I noticed a genuine respect for each person's perspective, including the interns. As I move forward, I carry the lessons of empowerment, empathy, and innovation that Busara taught me—knowing they will guide me wherever my career may lead.

Metric: **debate**

What does public engagement mean for an organization like Busara?

Pauline Nyumu was Busara's Online Community Officer until 2024, when Stephen Ndirangu took over. Both are based in Kenya

Busara's audience is as diverse as our work. To development partners, we are a behavioral science lab or research partner; to research participants, we might be a survey hub; and to academics, we are knowledge producers.

To us, we are a boutique research and advisory organization applying behavioral science insights to tackle poverty in the Global South, where we are rooted. Yet, all these descriptors barely scratch the surface of our true scope.

We work across disciplines, from conducting experiments to producing qualitative knowledge and distilling recommendations with a singular aim: poverty eradication. As such, public engagement is central to our mission. But what does this public engagement really mean? And how do we know if we are making an impact? We need to know that we are present in the debate.

Social media: the bridge to our audience

Our social media platforms are a bridge that connects us with our diverse stakeholders. And while measuring the impact of online efforts can be tricky, some metrics can give us a glimpse. In 2024, our social media posts garnered **over 1 million impressions,** leading to **more than 100K engagements.** These engagements ranged from comments to likes, shares, clicks, and profile

visits. Beyond these clicks, **2,128 new people** subscribed to our newsletter The Behavioral Lens in 2024, while our website received **more than 4,200 social media referrals.**

But what does all this activity really mean? Does it tell the full story of our publications' impact? Does it mean we are present in the debate? To answer that, we need to break engagement into three stages: awareness, interest, and action, which are widely used in something called the content funnel.

From impressions to action: measuring impact along the funnel

Figure 1: The content funnel
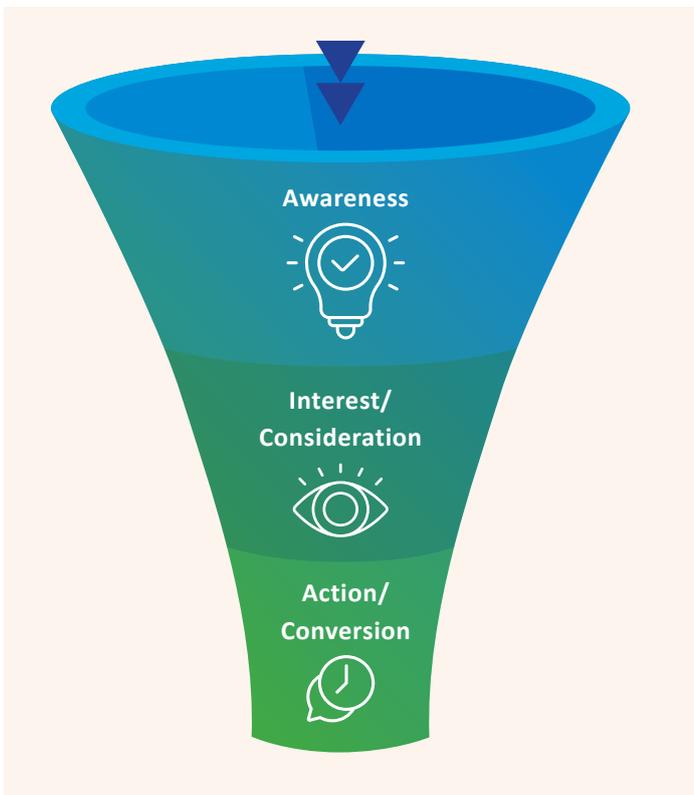
Awareness stage: the first connection

The first step in public engagement is ensuring our audience finds us. The online community discovers our work through social media platforms, newsletters, or websites. At this stage, impressions and reach matter the most. Are we making ourselves visible to the right people at the right time, with the right content? Here is an overview of how many people saw us in 2024:
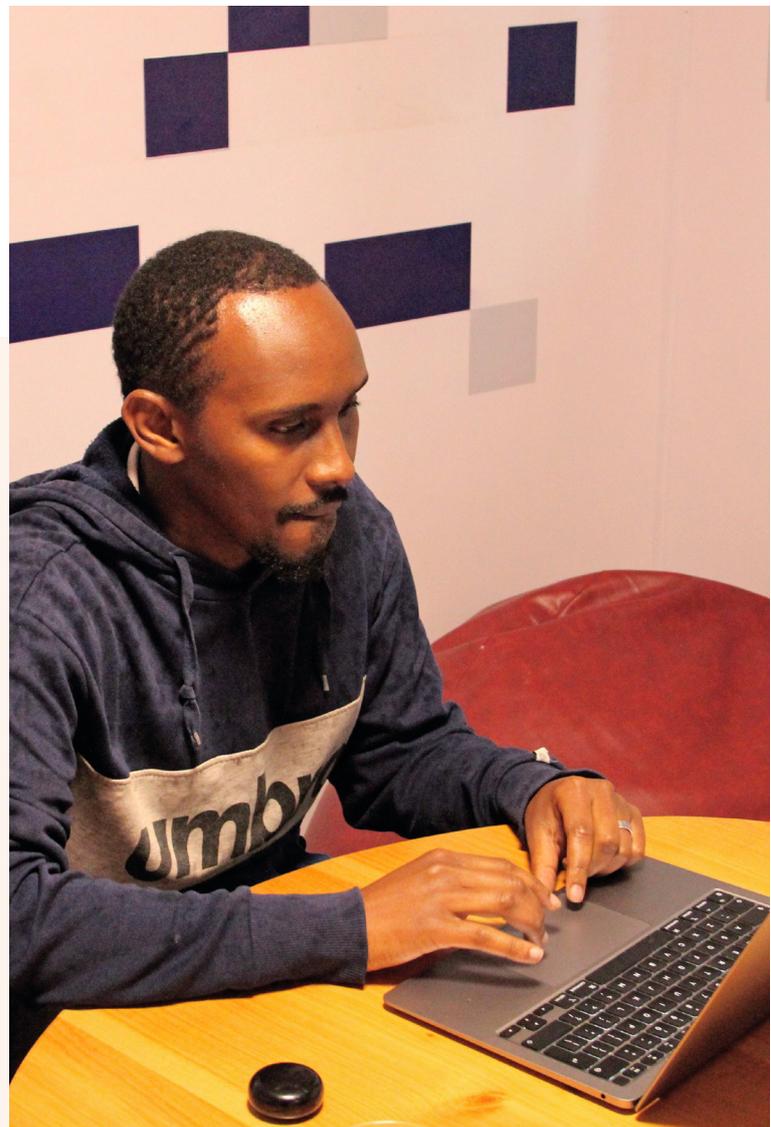
Consideration stage: from viewers to engagers

Just reaching people isn't enough. We have to ensure that our work sparks interest, and that is where our different formats come in: we publish in different formats to appeal to different people.

For instance, our Groundwork publication series is tailored to spark interest in academics and fellow researchers, whereas our videos and blogs may appeal more to practitioners, and our Aha! Moment summaries might best appeal to policymakers.

Once we have captured someone's attention, the next question is: *are they engaging deeply with our content?* This is where social technographics come in, which highlights that different people engage in different ways.[22] Some will collect and bookmark our content (collectors), others will comment and start discussions (critics), while some might passively consume without interaction (spectators). We measure each of these through engagement, as outlined in Table 3 next.

22 Li, Charlene. 2007. "Social Technographics: Mapping Participation in Activities Forms the Social Web." *Forrester Research.*

Platform	Impressions
LinkedIn	▶▶ 863,042
X (formerly Twitter)	▶▶ 174,246
Facebook	▶▶ 61,717
Instagram	▶▶ 30,953

Table 2: Social media statistics January - December 2024

With millions of social media posts competing for attention daily, we have to follow best practices to ensure our content is optimized for both algorithms and human eyes—and it all starts with breaking down complex research reports into simple, easy-to-read, and digestible social media posts.

Platform	Engagement
LinkedIn	▶▶ 74,894
X (formerly Twitter)	▶▶ 5,785
Facebook	▶▶ 21,092
Instagram	▶▶ 11,474

Table 3: Social media engagement statistics January- December 2024

Content that hits a nerve sparks debate, shares, and citations. Even if some topics don't attract much engagement initially, we know from previous metrics that certain themes—such as gamification or human-centered design—perform exceptionally well. In 2024, our online community grew significantly, with **5,582 new followers on LinkedIn, 126 on X (formerly Twitter), 235 on Facebook, and 177 on Instagram,** marking a **21.3% average increase** across all our social media platforms from 2023. Table 4 on the following page is an overview of where we ended 2024 regarding followers.

Platform	Followers
LinkedIn	▶▶ 26,771
X (formerly Twitter)	▶▶ 5,987
Facebook	▶▶ 4,284
Instagram	▶▶ 1,030

Table 4: Busara social media followers (December 2024)

Number of webinars ▶▶ **49**

844 ▶▶ **Attendees to the webinars**

Table 5: Number of Busara webinars held and attendees in 2024

Action stage: the real measure of impact

The actual impact goes beyond likes and shares. The real test of public engagement lies in whether people take action and whether the debate continues. Did they attend our webinar after signing up? Did they cite our work in their research after downloading it? Did they collaborate with us on new projects or invite our team members to speak at events? Did they use evidence from our research to create new policies? These actions represent deep, meaningful engagement—indicators that our work is not only being seen, but also informing decisions and shaping behavior.

For instance, we know **how many people attended our webinars** last year, as outlined in Table 5 next.

What's next? Creating impact in the real world

Beyond online engagement, we understand the importance of making our content accessible to make an impact. Whether it is the <u>Busara toolkit</u>[23] or the edited collection <u>A better how</u>,[24] how do we prioritize easy access for our audiences? Our aim is to bridge the knowledge gap, making complex behavioral science insights available and usable by practitioners, policymakers, and peers.

23 Jang, Chaning, Edel Koki, Robert Nyaga, Arize Okafor, Jaspreet Singh, Aya Vang and Steve Wendel. 2024. *The Busara toolkit: leveraging behavioral science for development. Busara Groundwork No. 10 (Research Agenda)*. Nairobi: Busara <u>DOI: doi. org/10.62372/WQSB6195.</u>
24 Forscher, Patrick S. and Mario Schmidt (eds). 2024. *A better how: notes on developmental meta-research*. Nairobi: Busara. <u>DOI: doi. org/10.62372/ISCI6112</u>

Ultimately, public engagement is about more than just disseminating knowledge—it is about sparking curiosity, driving debate, and, most importantly, influencing actions that lead to tangible outcomes such as collaborations, policy influence, and shifts in how behavioral science is applied in the Global South and beyond. We are continuously learning how to measure these impacts across various touchpoints, but our goal remains the same: to use behavioral science to improve the world.

People like spending time with us

David Muruaru is the Communications Officer for Busara's BeGov governance cluster based in Kenya

There are many ways to look at engagement. Working in research, we often get questions on the impact of our work. Even as we explore different formats of engaging audiences, we can rely on numbers to give us an overview of whether we make any impact.

As any person working in Voice and Impact would tell you, a common question we face is why, between deliverables and meetings, researchers also ought to write or attend seminars. Research is knowledge production. Sharing work is as important as doing the research, otherwise there would be no point to it. Another question we get is whether audiences engage with our work. To answer this, we did a web analysis and competitor mapping in August 2024.

The analysis showed that our audiences spend a decent amount of time engaging with our content. For instance, in the month of August 2024,[25] the average time spent on our website (busara.global) was 7.43 minutes. When we compared these numbers with similar organizations in the region, we found that audiences generally spent 47 seconds to 1.11 minutes on their sites—see Table 6 below.

Website visit duration by online users

Busara.global ▶ **00:07:43** minutes

Organization A ▶ **00:01:11** minutes

Organization B ▶ **00:00:47** minutes

Organization C ▶ **00:01:12** minutes
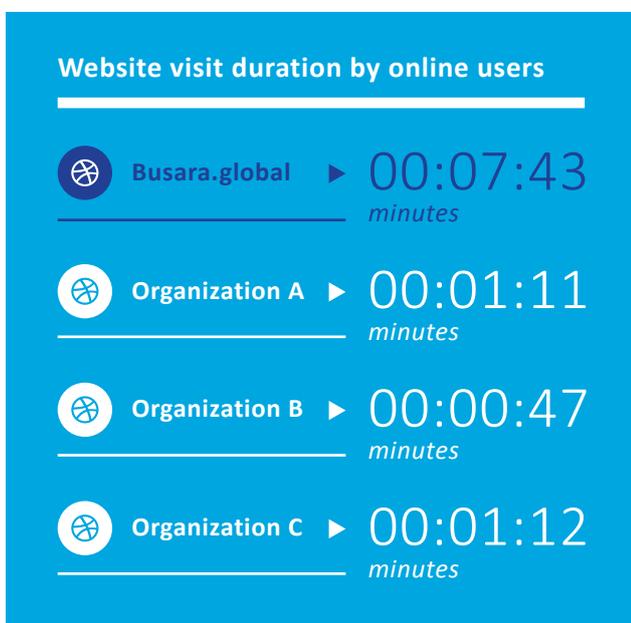
Table 6: Average time spent by users on busara.global, compared to similar knowledge production organizations, based on similarweb analytics conducted by Busara

What do these numbers mean? According to the latest Digital Experience Benchmark Report by Content Square, the average time spent per session by online audiences on desktops was 6.05 minutes in 2023, up from 5.88 minutes a year earlier.[26] Mobile users, on average, spent about 2.45 minutes on websites in 2023 and 2.52 minutes in 2022. When we compare these numbers with Busara's web visits, we can make the case that our users engage more deeply with our content: online audiences spent an average of 7.43 minutes on www.busara.

25 Using similarweb analytics, a digital analysis tool, we analysed web traffic on busara.global for the month of August 2024 comparing key metrics with similar knowledge production organisations in the region.

26 See Content Square. 2024. "Digital Experience Benchmark Report." Content Square https://explore.contentsquare.com/2024-benchmark-en-2/2024-benchmark-report-en.

global. These numbers are part of a bigger picture, but we can say that our audiences engage with our work when we look at audience engagement.

When considering what good audience engagement means, the standard metric for viewer readership is between three and five minutes for blogs and articles. More minutes spent on a website can indicate that the content is relevant and targeted to the right audiences. This year, we are exploring even better ways to engage with our audiences to make our work meaningful and a contributor to the debate. For instance, through community engagement forums, we can make it easier for Global South communities to experience research in a more wholesome way by engaging them on the implications of the research findings.

Metric: community

The people around us: Impact in building community, creating memories, facilitating learning

Samantha Wanjiku is a Senior Officer in People Operations based in Kenya

What if impact was not only to be found in what happens after, but also in what happens during an event? Events are powerful catalysts for building community, creating lasting memories, and sparking learning. They offer a structured yet flexible setting for people to connect, exchange ideas, and find common ground. Events are how we meet, get to know, and challenge each other.

At Busara, we consider each event an opportunity to create environments that encourage open dialogue, spark curiosity, and facilitate genuine learning. Whether it is for Tara Mistari, our Research Festival, or events that we host for partners (such as for BuildUp, the Society for the Improvement of Psychological Science, or the Africa Evidence Summit), we think of creating impact through the various steps. Thoughtful design of space layouts. Structured interactions. Good food! Every element has to support a sense of belonging and shared purpose. In exploring these elements, we can see how each contributes to building lasting relationships and a robust network of peers dedicated to collective growth and knowledge-sharing. That is impact: when we make the moment meaningful, we can also shape the future by shaping a community.

Creating connections through intentional gatherings

Events bring people together in ways that go beyond their day-to-day

interactions. Whether it is an event for all Busara staff, a workshop, or a casual social gathering, the simple act of coming together facilitates connections that virtual meetings cannot achieve. The importance of this became apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, which reminded us of how much we need in-person interaction for trust-building and engagement: those faces on the screen were lovely, but they were not enough. Events like *Tara Mistari* are organized with this in mind, making sure that attendees are not just participants but active members of a community. These gatherings foster dialogue, promote trust, and deepen relationships that carry forward well beyond the event.

What does this mean for how we think about events as community builders? All of a sudden, everything matters. Sharing a meal becomes an informal and powerful way to talk, deepening relationships. The meal often leads to lighter, more candid conversations, creating opportunities to learn about one another's backgrounds, perspectives, and insights in a comfortable setting.

When I set up a space for meals, I put in seating when I want people to have   deeper, more extended conversations. I also offer standing arrangements to promote mingling and brief exchanges that might spark more extended discussions later.

What about a cold drink or two in the evening after a long day of sharing knowledge and insightful discussions? It is definitely something most people look forward to as it creates a less structured environment to connect and deepen the conversations and potential collaborations explored during the day.

The simplicity of shared meals reminds us of the universal need for community and the learning opportunities that arise in such organic settings. Having attended conferences in typical ballroom setups, I see how a space can influence interaction—I believe people feel more relaxed and open in a green space outdoors versus a "stuffy conference room" as one attendee during the BuildPeace conference, which we hosted at the Busara office in 2023, put it.

Eating together also breaks down barriers and brings people to the table—both literally and figuratively. Over food, even those scared of networking can find a way to connect.

Networking can be challenging, and some people may feel unsure how to connect meaningfully. Large events can be intimidating for many, and it can be hard to know what side of themselves to bring out. Understanding this, we structure events to support different engagement styles. Ice-breaker activities offer a gentle entry point for newcomers

while smaller, quiet breakout sessions allow those who prefer more focused conversations to feel equally involved. During internal events, we all wear name tags, so nobody has to admit that they forgot someone's name. It is just another way to relieve the stress of connecting with people. By promoting an approach where networking is as much about what one can give as what one can gain, these events create an inclusive environment where all feel empowered to contribute.

Creating peers and facilitating equal knowledge exchange

One of the hallmarks of Busara's approach to community building is encouraging peer relationships across levels and roles. Last year's Tara Mistari included a session hosted by the Business Operations team, which might seem unusual for a research organization. In this session, the People Team spoke about how they think about people's educational backgrounds when making hiring decisions. This drew a large turnout and underscored that every voice within Busara has a unique and valuable perspective to share as part of our community. Through such sessions,

we ensure that even in a research-focused organization, there is room for everyone to contribute to discussions and engage as equals—and to realize that impact is in everything we do and is brought by different people on the team. We strive to create a community where knowledge flows freely, individuals feel empowered to bring their insights and ideas, and everyone's contributions are valued by fostering these peer relationships.

The lasting impact of events in community building

Thoughtfully curated events have a lasting impact, shaping not just the individuals who attend but also the community. For Busara, these events build a network of peers who can rely on each other for support, learning, and collaboration. Each gathering is an opportunity to reinforce shared values and a commitment to collective growth, fostering a strong sense of belonging that extends into daily work. Attendees leave with a sense of connection built on more than just professional exchanges— they carry forward shared memories, strengthened relationships, and a deeper understanding of their role in the community.

In designing events that promote community, memories, and learning, Busara builds not just gatherings but enduring connections. Each event is a building block for a network of peers who grow together, learn from each other, and share in the journey of collective development and impact. Our contribution to helping the community grow this way has a significant impact.

Understanding staff wellbeing

The Staff Pulse Survey helps us identify staff's challenges, gather ideas for improving the organization, and receive feedback on the reception and performance of initiatives, objectives, or goals over the past quarter.

Through the Staff Pulse Survey, we aim to gain meaningful insights into areas where the organization can improve to ensure that everyone's experience at Busara is as positive as possible. Some notable feedback outcomes from the 2024 survey include the overwhelming sentiment that most staff would be disappointed if they had to leave Busara—highlighting the positive experiences many are having working here. Additionally, staff feedback has been instrumental in piloting several new initiatives, such as creating a mothers' room (for quiet space and breastfeeding), which was widely requested by staff, and new engagement activities like a book club and the Busara Mom and Dad clubs. Feedback also highlighted the need to improve the engagement of remote teams, an area we are committed to doing much better in 2025.

Tara Mistari 2024: We need to talk about context

Emmanuel Ajibade is an officer in Voice and Impact based in Nigeria

Ask different people what they mean when they say 'context' and you get different answers.

An architect will talk about fitting a new building into existing landscapes and houses.

A storyteller will remind you that you need to know with what background knowledge your audience will listen to your story, because how well you understand context depends a lot on what you already know.

Ask Busara's website and the answer is: context is something Busara is close to. Context is something Busara wants to understand to support better programs. Context is what contributes to the quality of Busara's work. Context is what we do. *But…is it?*

To answer the question "what is context?" you're going to need more context

Context itself is two words. The first is the suffix con, which means together. The same con that we find in conjecture and concentric. The second is textere, an old word meaning to weave. Things that are woven together often hold each other in place, and one simple tug could have unforeseen ripple effects, unraveling the entire fabric.

that various stars were worth turning into a constellation. Someone drew a line to give pieces of information meaning, to turn them into knowledge. That's the Mistari part. Mistari represents the connections we need to draw—across languages, background, knowledge, areas of expertise. Tara Mistari is the time to connect our disparate learnings into constellations. Everyone is invited to offer their learnings by using the tools we champion and love: research, discussion, and engagement allow us to find new connections, to develop new ideas, and to reflect.

This may be why context often feels complicated. At Tara Mistari 2024 we talked about context. Having spent ten years in the Global South bringing multiple perspectives on issues and ways of working to the forefront. Does context mean the same thing now as when we started?

Tara Mistari is Busara's annual festival of curiosity and learning: Tara means star in Hindi; Mistari is line/connection in Kiswahili. The starry sky with its thousands of blinking and intriguing dots felt like the best starting point for the glittery ambition of Tara Mistari.
We could indulge in the beauty of the stars and without remembering any meaning of it. But not everybody does that. People draw connections to make the sky more memorable, more connected. You can see blinking dots. Or you can see Orion's Belt because someone decided

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Tara Mistari 2024 had three insightful plenary sessions. The first one was: 'What I consider context and what you consider context might be very different: Learning from how architecture combines tradition and environment'. Indian architect Yatin Pandya—founder and executive director of <u>Footprints E.A.R.T.H.</u> (Environment, Architecture, Research, Technology, Housing) working on research, design, and promotion of more sustainable urban futures—urged us to delve into history to appreciate our traditions, emphasizing that understanding our beginnings is crucial for context and progress. Moky Makura, Executive Director of <u>Africa No Filter</u>, a donor collaborative focused on shifting the African narrative, followed with the keynote on the question: 'the power of the storyteller. How to ethically represent people in the stories we tell', advocating for a true depiction of Africa, which not only boosts our pride but also shapes our development path.

In breakout sessions, we explored context from different angles. *How does our educational background shape our understanding of context ('Diverse Education, Diverse Perspectives on Context')? Can we only learn about context within the parameters of our epistemologies ('I learn because I already know? Discover your knowledge self')? Is context so changeable and flexible that it is not a helpful concept for us ('No entry/ no exit: what if we think of context as something that does not exist?')? How good are we at trusting our instincts ('No Stupid Questions (Busara Edition)- When should you trust your gut?')? How do you technically measure and adjust for context ('Context and Outcome Measures')? And how do we meaningfully engage and know about stakeholders to support social stability ('Social Stability Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement Strategy Development')?*

Busara's CEO, Francis Meyo, wrapped up the day with a conversation with Evan Nesterak—editor-in-chief at the Behavioral Scientist—discussing how Busara's behavioral science fits into the real world context of scholarship and practice of behavioral science. Between sessions, we enjoyed coffee and lunch breaks, which were not just about food but also about reconnecting with colleagues we usually only see on screens (just like Samantha Wanjiku writes in this Tafakari).

One of my highlights was finally meeting people face-to-face, which added a realness to our interactions. The treasure hunt game was a fun twist, and the evening celebration party was a perfect end to a day full of learning and laughter.

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Pressure

pressure, n.
Originally: pain, bodily discomfort, (a) physical affliction (obsolete). In later use: mental oppression or affliction; the burden of grief, troubles, etc.[27]

Also:

collision, n.
The action or an act of colliding with or crashing into something or someone (in later use) esp., an accident involving a moving vehicle colliding with or crashing into another (moving or stationary) vehicle, object, etc.[28]

27 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "pressure (n.1)," December 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1141917469.
28 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "collision (n.)," September 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7462440621.

Metric: **harm**

What happens to the people? Understanding good and evil through citizen ethnography

Mario Schmidt is a Senior Research Specialist based in Kenya

In mechanics, impact describes the collision of bodies. For instance, in the case of a baseball bat colliding with a skull, we might try to quantify the bat's kinetic energy. Such questions of 'how much' will, however, not be of significant interest to judges, the police, or relatives who seek answers to other questions: *Was the attacker under the influence of drugs? Had the victim assaulted the attacker so that we might argue for a case of self-defense? Do the aggressor and victim have a shared past?*

Along similar lines, I argue that, at Busara, we should be wary of exclusively investigating the quantitative assessment of impact as many people involved—funders, community members, policy-makers—are also interested in understanding why an intervention worked. Instead of reducing ourselves to mechanics of society merely interested in answering if a project had an impact and then quantifying it, we should focus on the multiple causes and reasons for why an intervention was successful or why it failed in a specific context, questions that are crucial if we want to understand more about an intervention's scalability.

Communities are not skulls, and projects are not baseball bats; the analogy only goes so far. Maybe we like 'impact' precisely because it suggests a powerful, direct, and lasting effect even though many of the consequences of development projects are diffuse, too small to be seen without quantitative methods, and sometimes unintended. A mechanical understanding of impact thus also hinders us from realizing that the aggregated impact of an intervention often differs from its impact at specific community points.

Let me refer to an example from my research on unconditional cash transfer programs. It has broadly been accepted that these have a positive impact. They reduce poverty, are cost-effective, and even increase school attendance. Yet, most of these effects are not only exogenously defined—we rarely ask people what impact development projects should have on their lives; they are at the mercy of global fashions and trends—but rely on aggregated numbers that overlook the fate of individuals. Viewing impact from a human-centered and endogenous perspective might result in a different perspective. It could also make visible if harm is being done. During my research

with recipients of an unconditional cash transfer program and those who had rejected the program in Homa Bay County, for example, I heard stories about marital conflict and witnessed heart-breaking moments of self-blame. These might be outliers but were directly caused by the project—impacts that might not matter statistically but impacted individuals dramatically and harmfully.

Many of these adverse effects were related to or directly caused by rumors that claimed the unconditional cash transfer NGO was a satanic organization known as the Illuminati in Kenya. Such rumors also made some eligible recipients reject being drafted into the project. Many of the cash transfer recipients whom I met during my fieldwork believed that the project was a collaboration between the Kenyan politician Raila Odinga and former US president Barack Obama, which, for many, was reason enough to think that the project was genuine. The problem is, however, that the project had nothing to do with Obama. Sometimes, it seems, a project's positive impact might be caused by misinformation.

How can we change our one-sided view of impact as a quantitatively measurable parameter whose ultimate cause often does not interest us?

I suggest employing forms of eth-nographic research in collaboration with local actors—I am currently trying this at Busara by training and engaging 'citizen ethnogra-phers'—will allow us to create more intimate and long-lasting relations with the communities we serve. By equipping local actors with the skills to collect and analyze quali-tative data, we move beyond calls to listen to local communities, which often ignore the hierarchies between powerful NGO employees and community members with little or no research experience.

Teaching local actors the skills to talk to us as experts in qualitative methods will not only help us to co-design endogenous understandings of impact but also make us aware of unintended negative consequences (in other words, harm) we did not expect, as well as assist us in uncovering some of the hidden causes that helped the projects to become a success. Occupying a critical position between external scientists and directly impacted community members—being the baseball bat and the skull if you want—citizen ethnographers can furthermore act as antennas, sensing the needs, complaints, and misunderstandings of

different members of communities as well as their disagreements.

Qualitatively bad or even morally-dubious interventions can have beneficial impacts in as much as qualitatively and morally impeccable interventions can have adverse effects. This should make us cautious to rely exclusively on questions of impact. A home run in a baseball match and a scattered skull might be caused by a comparable amount of kinetic energy, yet we rightfully judge them differently.

Metric: **completeness**

Imagine finding a handbag filled with money: compliance as impact

Gladys Muange is a Project Operations Coordinator based in Kenya

Imagine finding that handbag filled with money—*do you keep it for yourself or turn it in to the authorities?*

Researchers often face more complex ethical dilemmas than a simple handbag scenario. Research is not just about understanding the subject matter but also about what good research looks like: good research goes beyond understanding the subject; it hinges on two key considerations: ethical integrity and adherence to the standards of empirical validity and reproducibility.

Is good research simply about being empirical, reproducible, and valid? Yes, research can have an impact, but is the research a good point of impact as well? Should research prioritize ethical considerations? If the answer to this is yes, is impact then to be found in something that most people think sounds utterly boring: compliance?

research as a tidy, well-executed project and glossing over the messy parts. It is an instinct—who wants to admit failure? We know the pressure to show progress, secure funding, and build our reputation. But when we are asked to report on impact, the instinct is usually to highlight the positive outcomes and downplay the bumps in the road. Yet, if we do only that, our work is incomplete.

Because impact does not just come from the final product—it is about the process, too. Being honest about setbacks, ethical dilemmas, or compliance challenges can have just as much (if not more) of an impact than a snappy finding. Admitting mistakes and learning from them not only helps us grow, but also builds trust and strengthens the integrity of our research.

Now, when I talk about the instinct to pretend everything worked perfectly, I am referring to a tendency we all have when asked to report on our research—especially when we want to look good. The default idea of impact often focuses on the apparent successes: the breakthrough findings, the high-profile publications, or real-world applications that seem like the ultimate payoff. In this way of thinking, impact means things went smoothly, the results were what we expected, and everything fell into place just as it should.

But here is the catch: that is often the story we want to tell because it aligns with how we are conditioned to think about success. It is about presenting

When we are willing to say, 'this didn't go as planned, but here's what we learned,' it shows that research is a journey—not just a series of successes. That kind of transparency and reflection is, in its way, a powerful form of impact.

So, to put it another way, the instinct I am talking about is that natural tendency to inflate or smooth over the rough patches in our work to make the outcome look better. However, real impact happens

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when we take complete ownership of the bumps in the road, learn from them, and use them to strengthen our future research. It is not about perfection but progress, honesty, and growth.

Making compliance visible and navigating challenges

It rarely works perfectly.

One of the key challenges researchers face is balancing the many competing demands of a project. To address this, we need to make the trade-offs and ethical challenges visible at each process stage. This means ensuring that everyone involved understands why compliance

matters and why it is part of our impact—not just what the rules are. When researchers understand the purpose behind the requirements, compliance stops feeling like a bureaucratic burden and becomes an integral part of the research process.

For example, when we gather data, there are clear ethical considerations around consent and privacy. It is easy to rush through these steps to save time or resources, but the consequences of skipping these steps can undermine the entire project. At Busara, we ensure that researchers do not just follow compliance rules, but that they understand why they exist. This helps researchers engage with the process deeper, preventing compliance from being a checkbox exercise and becoming a marker of impact.

Promoting open conversations about trade-offs and challenges

It is also vital to create a culture where discussing challenges and trade-offs is encouraged. Researchers often have to make tough decisions, such as balancing speed with thoroughness or data collection with participant privacy. These are not easy choices, and mistakes can happen. However, when errors do occur, they should be seen as an opportunity to learn and improve, not something to be feared or hidden. Truly, one mistake transparently admitted, analyzed, and understood and

never to be repeated is impact at its most powerful.

> **At Busara, we encourage our teams to talk candidly about these tough choices. For example, when a project team faces a situation where data security might be compromised to meet a deadline, we ask, 'what are the risks? How can we mitigate them?' By framing these discussions in terms of learning rather than fault-finding, we help create an environment where ethical challenges are addressed proactively.**

One real-world example of this approach is when we conduct community-based research. Research teams often face the challenge of balancing the community's needs with the academic goals of the project. In one instance, we had to choose between following a more expedited research timeline or taking extra time to build trust and get informed consent from the community. The decision was clear: we prioritized the community's trust, even though it meant additional time and resources.

This was not just about following a rule; it was about understanding the long-term impact of building relationships, and our ethical responsibility toward the people

we work with. When researchers are given the space to reflect on these decisions and discuss their reasoning, they make better ethical choices and gain a deeper understanding of the communities they are researching.

Making ethics and compliance part of daily practice

Ethics and compliance must be part of a complete daily research practice, not just checked off a list. At Busara, we do this by:

1 **Training:** *New staff undergo ethics and compliance training within two months, focusing on the rules and the reasoning behind them.*

2 **Ongoing support:** *Teams receive continuous support throughout projects, with regular check-ins on compliance and ethical challenges.*

3 **Project monitoring:** *We monitor projects to maintain compliance and address issues immediately.*

4 **Reflection:** *We ask researchers to reflect on their decisions, especially when trade-offs are involved, such as 'if we take this shortcut, how might it affect participant safety?'*

Building a culture of ethical responsibility

Ultimately, the goal is to foster a research culture where ethical compliance is not just about avoiding punishment but understanding our decisions' broader impact. At Busara, we encourage our researchers to reflect on the long-term benefits of making the right ethical choices—not just for the immediate success of a project but for the integrity of the research field as a whole.

Navigating ethical challenges in research is not about avoiding failure but understanding the risks, making informed trade-offs, and using setbacks as learning opportunities. By making ethical guidelines clear, encouraging open dialogue about challenges, and supporting researchers at every stage, we can create a research environment that promotes transparency, trust, and continuous improvement.

10.62372: Why we joined Crossref

Busara joined Crossref in 2024, which describes itself as a 'not-for-profit membership organization that exists to make scholarly communications better' by making 'research objects easy to find, cite, link, assess, and reuse. (Source: https://www.crossref.org). It does so by supporting organizations in assigning a digital object identifier (DOI) to their publications. Why did we take this step? Joining CrossRef is part of a three-year strategy (2023-2026) that emphasizes building Busara's voice and contribution to knowledge production through developing our output formats (Groundwork in 2023, The Aha! Moment and Tafakari in 2024) and by consistently sharing the knowledge we gain both from the research we conduct, as well as about what we learn about building an international Global South research organization. In practice, this means assigning a unique DOI (always starting with Busara's prefix 10.62372) to each output, committing to host it in perpetuity.

Metric: **context**

Colliding with context: Understanding the here and there[29]

Jaspreet Singh is an Associate Engagement Director based in India

Behavior always happens in context. That seems obvious, and yet it is one of the most challenging things to put into practice when working in applied behavioral science. Context is surprisingly easy to forget.

We always ask ourselves first: *what exactly is the behavior we are trying to*

understand here? What is supposed to change about it?

But if we exert all our efforts on understanding and analyzing the behavior first and foremost, there might not be a lot of energy and time left to understand the context in which behavior happens. This is a mistake: context is key for all behaviors. Understanding context is not just tricky; it can also make the difference between good research and bad research, or good behavior change programs and bad behavior change programs. If we do not implement structured, rigorous ways through which to understand and analyse context every time, our research will not be as insightful, and programs drawing on our research are not as effective as they could be.

29 This text is inspired by Diaz, Emiliano, and Jaspreet Singh. *From linear insights to systemic solutions: The future of behavioral science. Busara Groundwork.* Nairobi: Busara, 2024. DOI: doi. org/10.62372/CESI7494.

It also requires us to move conversations with our implementing partners or funders on how they should think about their programs.

The challenge that a commitment to understanding context poses for us is that it never stands still. Claims to understanding a context and working in contextually-appropriate ways become the most dangerous when they are based on non-updated and non-evolving information. Context is dynamic: it might throw you curveballs when you least expect it.

Context is where the many strands of our work have to come together: the ethics of how we interact with and serve communities (as Patrick S. Forscher argues). A nuanced grasp is required to understand the good impact and harmful impact (as Mario Schmidt elaborates). The quality that is produced when we are allowing ourselves time and insight into context. The analytical effort we spend on understanding systems (as Emiliano Diaz outlines in this *Tafakari*).

Systems thinking points us towards the complexity to which we need to pay attention when we truly seek ways to contextualize our methods and insights. Once we accept that there is no such thing as a simple cause-and-effect relationship, we must shift our methods.

What we might think of as old-school applied behavioral science was comfortable with offering tweaks to the context through choice architecture or nudging, for example. Of course, such approaches do not automatically take into account the many types of the context of a person: the social, environmental, economic, political, and psychological context all matter. On top of that, people need knowledge, capacity, and the opportunity to change their behavior (what is expressed in the COM-B model as capacity, opportunity, and motivation).[30] These are all parts of what

30 West, Robert and Susan Michie. 2020, April 9. 'A brief introduction to the COM-B Model of behaviour and the PRIME Theory of motivation.' Qeios. https://www.qeios.com/read/WW04E6.2.

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humans interact with every day, within themselves, and in how they connect to the world.

We also need to pay attention to what happens to the context because of a program being implemented (maybe based on recommendations drawing on our research): *what dynamics occur? What are sustainable changes that we can see? How do these changes affect the people involved, and how do they react based on this feeling? How are the challenges looking from the perspective of Global South researchers, designers, and scientists?* We want to embrace all these context challenges, not collide with them.

Our commitment to context—and to understanding what we even mean by it (as was evident during last year's Research Festival *Tara Mistari*)—is only a starting point: we have a long way to go to sharpen our tools and to put our commitment into practice in all the work we do. This includes, for example, also understanding the context of decision makers when they evaluate evidence for programmatic or policy decisions. *What do we need to keep in mind for them when we draft a recommendation, and try to do so efficiently?* Moh' Alhaji writes about that in this Tafakari.

There is only one thing we know right now: linearity will not get us far. In 2025, we will seek to improve more on how we analyze the context, how the tools we use in different settings must be adjusted, how to listen better—and how to support others in doing the same.

Influence

influence, n.

The exertion of action of which the operation is unseen or insensible (or perceptible only in its effects), by one person or thing upon another; the action thus exercised.[31]

Also:

footprint, n.

A print or impression left by the foot of a person or animal or by the tread of a person's shoe.[32]

31 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "influence (n.)," June 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1751993208.
32 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "footprint (n.)," June 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5563219722.

Metric: **connection**

Making the connection: changing the system of gender-based violence in Guatemala

Emiliano Diaz del Valle is an Engagement Director based in Mexico

In global development, the quest for measurable impact often gravitates towards quantifiable outcomes: the number of lives touched, programs implemented, or policies influenced.

However, when the end goal transcends individual projects and aims for systemic change, traditional metrics generally fall short. At Busara, we have grappled with this tension firsthand through our work in Guatemala addressing gender-based violence (GBV). This experience has compelled us to rethink how we define, measure, and communicate impact when the ultimate objective is to transform complex systems.

The challenge of measuring systems change

Traditional impact metrics excel at capturing immediate, tangible results, but often overlook the nuanced, long-term transformations that systemic change entails. In Guatemala, GBV is not just a series of isolated incidents but a pervasive issue embedded within cultural norms, institutional practices, and policy frameworks. Our Behavioral Systems Approach revealed that addressing GBV effectively requires altering the very fabric of interconnected systems—healthcare, justice, and community structures.

So, how do we measure progress when the goal is to shift these deep-rooted systems? How do we capture the ripple effects of interventions that may not manifest as quantifiable outcomes in the short term but are crucial for sustainable change? The answer is: we emphasize drawing connections.

Embracing a behavioral systems approach

Our work in Guatemala involved a comprehensive framework integrating behavioral science and systems thinking. This approach allowed us to map out the complex networks influencing GBV and identify leverage points for intervention. By engaging more than 80 stakeholders—from government officials to frontline workers—we gained a holistic understanding of survivors' systemic barriers.

We constructed an agent-based model to simulate 29 intervention scenarios, enabling us to forecast impacts and anticipate unintended consequences. This method highlighted the limitations of traditional metrics, which might only consider the number of policies changed or services provided without assessing whether these changes effectively disrupt harmful cycles or improve survivor experiences.

Reframing impact through holistic metrics

To capture the essence of systemic change, we needed metrics that reflect the interconnectedness of the factors at play. This meant moving beyond counting services rendered to evaluating

shifts in cultural norms, policy efficacy, and institutional collaboration. For instance, we realized the need to measure:

- **Policy alignment:** *The degree to which new policies incorporated survivor-centered principles and facilitated cross-sector collaboration.*

- **Trust in systems:** *Changes in survivors' willingness to engage with healthcare and justice systems, indicating increased trust and perceived safety.*

- **Interconnected outcomes:** *Reducing negative feedback loops, such as policies inadvertently discouraging reporting due to lack of confidentiality.*

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■ **Victim wellbeing:** *The extent to which interventions improved survivors' physical, emotional, and social well-being, recognizing that proper recovery encompasses more than immediate safety.*

These metrics provided a more accurate picture of our impact on the system, acknowledging the slow yet profound nature of systemic transformation.

The human element in impact measurement

A crucial aspect of redefining impact metrics is incorporating the human experience. Numbers alone cannot capture the lived realities of GBV survivors or the frontline workers supporting them. We integrated qualitative data—stories, testimonials, and experiential insights—to contextualize our quantitative findings.

By humanizing our impact assessments, we offered a more comprehensive narrative resonating with stakeholders and emphasizing systemic changes' real-world significance. This approach also helped build trust with communities, demonstrating a genuine commitment to understanding and addressing their needs.

Implications for monitoring and evaluation practices

Our experience in Guatemala underscores the need for innovative Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices that accommodate the complexities of systemic change. Traditional M&E frameworks often rely on linear models of cause and effect, which are insufficient for capturing the dynamics of systems.

We advocate for M&E approaches that:

1 **Embrace complexity:** *Recognize that change is non-linear and influenced by multiple interacting factors.*

2 **Prioritize learning:** *Focus on adaptive learning processes that allow for course corrections based on ongoing insights.*

3 **Engage stakeholders:** *Involve all system actors in defining success metrics, ensuring they reflect diverse perspectives and needs.*

Collaborating for systemic impact

Achieving systemic change requires collaboration across sectors and with various stakeholders, including funders, policymakers, and community

organizations. We found bringing these groups on board early and fostering open communication essential.

By demonstrating the value of our Behavioral Systems Approach, we can build credibility and secure buy-in. This collective effort amplifies impact and ensures that changes are embedded within the system rather than imposed externally.

Reflecting on impact beyond numbers

Our work in Guatemala has been a transformative journey, compelling us to rethink how we define and measure impact. When aiming for systemic change, traditional metrics prove insufficient. Instead, we have adopted holistic, human-centered approaches that capture the complexity of the systems we seek to transform.

Currently, we are initiating a system-strengthening program with doctors, nurses, and social workers at sexual violence clinics. This is the first of many steps outlined in our plan to facilitate systemic change by implementing strategic, incremental adjustments at key leverage points identified in our analysis. By making these targeted changes, we aim to stimulate various system components, driving meaningful and impactful transformation.

At Busara, we are committed to pioneering these new methodologies and advocating for their adoption within the global development community. By doing so, we hope to enhance our impact and contribute to a broader shift in how organizations approach systemic challenges.

In redefining our metrics, we embrace the intricacies and interconnectedness of human experiences and the multifaceted nature of societal systems. This perspective allows us to create more meaningful, lasting change—an impact that numbers alone could never fully encapsulate.

As we continue this journey, we are reminded that impact is not just about the magnitude of change but also its depth and sustainability. It is about paying attention to connections to improve systems so they serve people better, acknowledging that actual progress often defies simple quantification.

Metric: learning

Lessons from our year: how do we make sure we learn?

Lionel Oduol is a Senior Officer of People Operations based in Kenya

There is an episode of the hit TV series *Billions* in which Wendy Rhodes, the much-touted HR guru at Axe Capital, is tasked with addressing a wave of unhealthy rivalry, competitiveness, and mistrust among the staff, who recently went through a grueling merger with Mace Capital in the previous season.

Though this episode is part of what is widely considered the series's weakest season, it stuck with me because of the unique way Wendy resolves this challenge to workplace morale and cohesion. Her solution is to invite long-standing WWE champion Becky Lynch, AKA 'The Man', to get the team to learn about the importance of working together. Miraculously, after a three-minute speech centered on Becky's relationship with Wendy and the importance of collaboration, the divide between the two groups dissolves, and they are suddenly inspired to work together.

I begin with this story because it simplifies the learning process—making it seem that all you need is a few powerful words and a captivating event to get your message across. Naturally, this is not the case, and our experience at Busara has shown us that effective learning is more than a one-time event: it is a process involving multiple activities, stages, and metrics.

In other words, If you want to impact your learning, don't think it happens only once. But also, do not think you can ever have an impact without making learning an integral part of it.

As part of my contribution to this year's *Tafakari*, I'm pleased to share three key lessons we have learned over the past year on how to make our learning impactful.

Learning needs context

Context is vital for learning retention and applicability.

This past year, we have learned that presenting facts or theories alone is not enough—learning needs to be rooted in scenarios relevant to staff's day-to-day tasks and strategic objectives.

We worked diligently to ensure our training materials meet the specific needs of each team—even in some memorable instances, adapting content on the spot based on the emerging immediate needs of the audience. This approach includes involving teams in scenario-based exercises, simulations, and case studies directly related to their work. For instance, we redesigned our onboarding program to replace generic presentations with role-specific workshops, giving new hires hands-on training tied to their immediate responsibilities.

Less is more

At the beginning of this year, I set an ambitious goal to deliver unique learning experiences every month. It soon became apparent that, aside from the extensive effort this required, Busara staff simply did not have the time to participate in so many separate sessions. The solution was to integrate learning into existing meetings, meetups, and routines—such as Town Halls, Barazas, fireside chats, and lunch-and-learns—minimizing the need for extra attendance and preventing facilitator burnout. This way, learning remains accessible, and staff can engage meaningfully within their regular schedules.

You cannot improve what you do not measure

Measurement is essential for evaluating learning effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement. The staff pulse survey has been a valuable tool, providing insights into individual experiences and learning

progress across the organization. In 2025, we aim to work more closely with Busara teams to monitor our learning initiatives' impact, enhancing outcomes based on real-time data and feedback. So measuring is good—but only measuring will not create your effects.

As we refine our approach to learning, these insights remind us that impactful learning is an ongoing process shaped by context, focus, and measurable outcomes. By embedding learning within real-world scenarios, simplifying content, and continuously assessing our impact, we aim to cultivate an environment where knowledge not only resonates but transforms how we work. Our journey is far from over, and we look forward to building on these foundations to foster even more meaningful growth and impact through learning in the year ahead.

I am also considering bringing in a WWE champion in case things get tough.

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Busara fireside chats: we need to think together

The nature of our day-to-day work means we mainly engage with each other as we pass the work baton. From my part to your part. This relay race of work rarely leaves room to dream up ideas, think differently, or just wonder about the possibilities. The kind of curiosity-driven thinking that drew many of us to this work in the first place.

Busara Fireside Chats, inaugurated in 2024 as a brain child of Michael Onsando, Manager for Voice and Impact, create a space for us to slow down and talk. We have so far heard fantastical stories about a speaker (an actual speaker) that was forgotten somewhere in the field, a once senior associate who learned the hard way why studies need to be closed for responses after the window has passed, and a lingering question on what we owe each other. We have laughed, cried, and cringed, but more importantly, we have seen the person on the other side of the Slack message. We have learned that, beyond being a stage in the Busara process, we are all just people trying to make sense of everything around us.

Metric: **teaching**

Teachers know best? Navigating the unknown in sharing our knowledge

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During my earlier days at Busara (more than ten years ago) my job description involved reading protocols during lab sessions. As a certified teacher, this role was a perfect fit for me, even though it was my first exposure to lab studies and the behavioral sciences in general.

It reminded me of a core teaching principle: moving from the known to the unknown. The known was the teaching skills I was honing, which I could seamlessly apply to lead lab sessions, while the unknown was the new and fascinating world of behavioral science that I was just beginning to explore. Of course, I also had an impact: the lab participants followed my instructions.

This occurred a few years after Busara established itself as a pioneering lab for behavioral and economic experiments, as documented in one of its earliest outputs, A methodology for laboratory experiments in developing countries.[33] During this period, we learned and adapted extensively to the local context. Much like our laboratory experiments, it was a trial and error phase: we designed mobile lab cubicles out of canvas and metal rods, which took an entire day to set up (a process that now seems almost absurd given the ease of our current lab-in-the-field setups). This phase improved our techniques and infrastructure.

During that growth time for the lab, when I began working with researchers who

33 Haushofer, Johannes, Marie Collins, Giovanna de Giusti, Joseph Muiruri Njoroge, Amos Odero, Cynthia Onyago, James Vancel, Chaning Jang, Maneesh Varghese Kuruvilla and Conor Hughes. 2014. "A Methodology for Laboratory Experiments in Developing Countries: Examples from the Busara Center." *Available at SSRN:* https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2155217.

were new to the region and those already familiar with the Kenyan context, I was often introduced as the local expert. *But is my impact to be found in being local? Or is it that I teach others ways of thinking they had not encountered before?* My contribution is not having been born in Kenya; it is allowing people a glimpse into my way of thinking and working with tools that are new to the context in which we apply them. My impact is that I share the learning that I teach.

You're the expert in your field

Experts teach but also make their impact visible through their contributions. As pioneers in the field, Busara has supported the establishment of other labs in the Global South and collaborated on academic courses that enhance understanding and application of behavioral science in real-world settings. This is well illustrated by two insights on the science of learning: learning is most effective when we teach others, and social interaction enhances the learning process.[34] At Busara, we focus on bridging the gap between behavioral science's theoretical and practical aspects to create this valuable link.

34 Beharry, Alicia. 2021 (June 1). "7 Interesting Facts About the Science of Learning." Skyprep https://skyprep.com/2021/06/01/7-interesting-facts-about-the-science-of-learning/.

However, we also seek never to stop exploring how our way of thinking influences our work. The impact is also on what the mind does.

Being in the room with smart people

It is no secret that our university professors are some of the world's brightest minds. While this may be evident from attending higher education institutions in Kenya, there is no substitute for working closely with academics from top-ranked universities. But maybe we think we cannot impact the minds of the brightest people: they have already arrived.

Meaningful interactions with academics from all over the world have created a lasting impact with some of Busara's most valued affiliates, who remain very instrumental in fostering knowledge exchange across diverse contexts and facilitating academic courses that connect Busara with institutions of higher learning.

Through such interactions, I have had the chance not only to learn from our educational partners but also to create impact in even more meaningful ways through teaching and learning.

In early 2020, just before the COVID-19 lockdowns began, Busara and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) collaborated on a course to give students hands-on experience in applying behavioral science in the field. For over a week, we facilitated training sessions for PhD students from local and international universities, ultimately contributing to our first-ever omnibus protocol derived from these collaborative research designs.

The Covid period opened a possibility for many things, including the opportunity to experience remote learning. In January 2022, we were invited to join a Global Poverty class at Loyola Marymount University. We did not only participate as local experts but as peers in the learning process where we actively participated in classroom discussions. Similar courses have followed suit.

Then came the course on Behavioral Experiments in International Development, which has been running at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy for a few years now: students in Chicago work with Busara in Nairobi to learn how to conduct the necessary background research that will make their experimental work valuable. Part of the teaching team is in Nairobi, and part is in Chicago. An unforgettable image that accurately captures this diversity in learning was once shared by Anisha Singh, former Director of the BRACE team. There she was, seated on her balcony in Nairobi, co-teaching a class at the University of Chicago alongside our Mareike Schomerus.

When I joined this teaching team in 2024, it was truly enriching to witness the students' enthusiasm—not only in attending the lectures but in exploring the local context from a fresh perspective, directly from someone embedded within

it. I have the same experience when I host student interns who come to Busara from all over the world to learn from us, a promise to create a lasting impact through the generations to come.
What did I gain from all of this? I learned that Busara is more than a research organization—it is a pivotal force in bridging the gap in behavioral science representation between the Global North and South. The impact also fosters interactions between, for example, senior academics, researchers, students, interns, and research participants. Above all, I have understood that impact comes from valuable human relationships. I was once told that we are fortunate to experience the best side of our visiting academics—something that owes much to the seeds of respect planted by our founders between local and international researchers, creating a truly inclusive and equitable environment.

Our impact might not lie in measuring changes in program design or even in the number of publications we produce; it could be in planting ways of thinking and connecting that people did not have before through getting teaching that they never expected.

Determinations

determination, n.
The decision arrived at or promulgated a determinate sentence, conclusion, or opinion.[35]

Also:

transformation, n.
The action of changing in form, shape, or appearance; metamorphosis.[36]

35 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "determination (n.)," June 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1399491025.
36 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "transformation (n.)," September 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6970839590.

Busara and impact in 2025 and beyond

In 2024, Samantha Bastian was Busara's Chief Operating Officer and Interim CEO. Francis Meyo is Busara's CEO. Mareike Schomerus is Busara's VP Voice and Impact
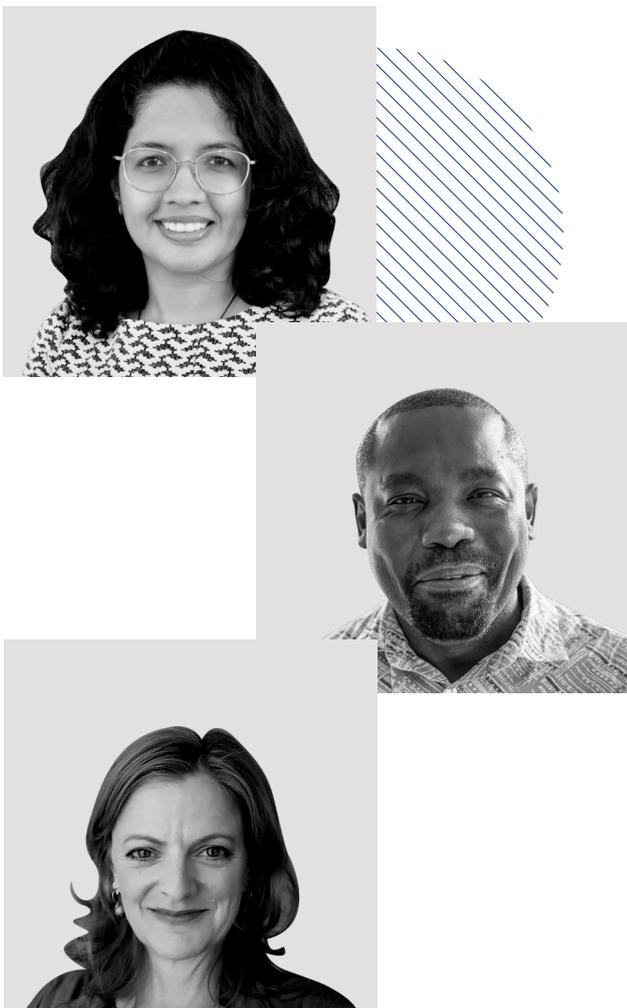
Humans are fascinating, diverse, multi-faceted, infuriating, amazing. Above all, humans are messy. We try many things to counter that messiness and ensure

that we always control everything. In our work, for example, we can be tempted to use simple impact measures. Such measures capture outputs and results—maybe outcomes—but not much more.

Yet, time and again, we have to learn that key performance indicators and precision impact measurements fall short of capturing the messiness of the human condition and experience. As a behavioral research organization, we do not want to plaster over that messiness: we want to engage with it. In many ways, accepting, unpacking, and constructively embracing messiness is our mandate.

Our Theory of Change links our mission to outcomes, but also articulates the pathways and ultimate goals across the three interconnected domains where we seek to drive impact: behavioral science, development, and the Global South.

At Busara, we pursue impact through three pathways:

1 Behavioral Science
We advance research, design, and innovation tailored to the Global South. We shape discourse on issues critical to the region by publishing research and setting global agendas. Our commitment to methodological

by embedding behavioral and cognitive insights into global development practices and translating rigorous research into actionable strategies for policymakers, implementers, and donors. As both knowledge generators and users, we champion evidence-based practices in development.

3   **The Global South**

We strengthen leadership and independence in behavioral science and development across the Global South. We empower regional organizations to lead in research and innovation through institutional capacity building. We also train the next generation of behavioral science and development leaders, equipping them to drive impactful solutions. Many of these leaders now contribute to prominent Global South-focused organizations. Additionally, we advocate for including Southern voices in international decision-making, fostering a more equitable and representative discourse.

innovation drives the creation of tools and frameworks that capture the complexity of human behavior in the contexts we serve. We co-create inclusive, interdisciplinary methodologies through collaborative ecosystems with global, regional, and local partners, elevating scholarship from the Global South.

2   **Development**

We seek to make behaviorally- and contextually-relevant development efforts to ensure lasting change. Our projects are rooted in local realities, producing effective and sustainable solutions. We foster systemic change

Through these pathways, Busara ensures its work is firmly grounded in the unique contexts of the Global South while positioning the region as a leader in advancing behavioral science and development globally.

What does that mean for how we measure impact?

We cannot measure our impact only through streamlined key performance indicators. To stay true to our mandate and our knowledge, we have to accept that to measure the breadth of change and the many versions of impact, we need multiple and diverse ways. The authors in this Tafakari, with their many versions of impact and suggested metrics for each, left us with one overarching insight: the mental model of linear impact—problem, solution, strike—just does not help us. Such an approach misses out on how change happens within a system or context, through what pathways, and on catching possible negative impacts.

Any attempts to track impact in a linear, simplistic way also go counter to other things that Busara, as a behavioral science organization, knows to be true: our measurements might be derived from our biases. We might make decisions without complete information, with time constraints, under subtle peer pressure, or based on poor assessment processes. That is what a behavioral perspective teaches us.

So, how do we measure impact in a human and behaviorally-informed way? In a way that does not imagine humans as planets and research and programs as meteors?

We need many different angles. Luckily, much of the rest of the world seems to be on board with this insight, as applied research, including behavioral science, is moving more and more towards interdisciplinarity and multi-method work.

More comprehensive indices for behavior change have long existed and continue to be supplemented by measuring change using political, anthropological, sociological, economic, and even philosophical ways of assessment. The understanding that impact is a process

is embedded in many ways of thinking about measurement.

Of course, we want to have an impact, particularly in the long run. We also understand that we need to show impact and that sometimes, the most credible—if incomplete—way of doing that is by offering quantitative indicators. And since behavior is an essential factor in all global development programs, we will continue to focus on behavior change, finding impact measurements that draw on the many metrics suggested in this *Tafakari.*

Areas of impact

Looking forward, we will thus examine results, ripple effects, consequences, pressure, and influence as part of our impact. We might find credible quantifiable ways to capture what we learn in some of these areas. In other places, we might ask questions, tell stories, listen to feedback, or find even other ways to record how change happens. The table below sets out these impact areas, the metrics introduced in this Tafakari, and the questions we might ask about each metric.

Determinations

For 2025, we are asking: *what do we need to measure and track within the above five areas of influence? How do we pay attention to each area of influence? How can we make being aware of processes part of our measurement? How can we embed our thinking on impact into our organizational monitoring and evaluation of our work? How do we report to ourselves, to our partners, communities, and participants honestly and transparently? What are we measuring already?*

Answering these questions and continuing to ask them will require us to develop an organizational framework for understanding the impact that speaks to our Theory of Change, which emphasizes systems thinking and nuance. This commitment to finding ways to appreciate our five areas of impact is a determination (which is another one of those synonyms for impact).

Why do we want to do this? Because our work is multifaceted and deserves to be assessed in this way. Because both research and international development are suffering from credibility crises (some prompted by incentives to get funding or to gain political credibility) that push people to overpromise results or under-report challenges.

Area of impact	Metric	Question
Result (effect)	▶ **Relevance**	▶▶ *Is our work relevant to the community? Does our work benefit someone beyond the immediate intervention?*
	▶ **Insightfulness**	▶▶ *Did we learn something that went beyond confirming what we already knew? Are new voices heard?*
	▶ **Efficiency**	▶▶ *Did our work get to the decision-makers at the right moment? Are we efficient enough to ensure we can continue working as an organization?*
Ripple effect (ramification)	▶ **Ethics**	▶▶ *Is our work ethical in the eyes of the research participants?*
	▶ **Quality**	▶▶ *Does our work avoid quality shortcuts? Are we transparent about our decisions, trade-offs, and challenges?*
Consequence (aftermath)	▶ **Relationships**	▶▶ *Are we building meaningful and sustainable relationships that invite open exchange?*
	▶ **Debate**	▶▶ *Are we contributing to debate and offering our voice? Are we listening?*
	▶ **Community**	▶▶ *Are we building community within and outside our organization?*
Pressure (collision)	▶ **Harm**	▶▶ *Are we clear about the many different manifestations of what harm might look like? Are we taking active steps to avoid harm?*
	▶ **Completeness**	▶▶ *Are we doing our work in compliance with required standards, protocols, and ethics approvals?*
	▶ **Context**	▶▶ *Are we approaching each context with a fresh mind and open eyes, willing to learn and adjust our theories and methods?*
Influence (footprint)	▶ **Connection**	▶▶ *Are we drawing the connections that make up the system? Do we look for these connections in our research and analytical work?*
	▶ **Learning**	▶▶ *Are we dedicating time and effort to active learning?*
	▶ **Teaching**	▶▶ *Do we share our learning? Are we bringing the next generation along?*

Table 7: Busara areas of impact, metrics and questions

We know that research in international development must reduce some cognitive dissonance when it comes to impact measurement. This dissonance occurs because of the pressure to report change in countable ways, and simultaneous learning that calls for nuance in those way.

We want to understand how our work relates to the lives of people who share their knowledge with us in the short and long term. This cannot happen through a strike or big bang in the sense that the word impact suggests. Humans are not meteors.

BUSARA PUBLICATIONS 2024

Groundwork
Groundwork is Busara's primary publication series. Each Groundwork lays the groundwork for future research, debate, and program design. As think pieces, Groundworks examine the current state of knowledge and what is needed to advance it, frame important issues with a behavioral perspective, or put forward background information on a specific context.

Alhaji, Mohammed M., Robert Nyaga, and Patrick S. Forscher. 2024. *All responses are local. How behavioral systems can enhance global management of the Mpox outbreak,* Groundwork 15 (Literature Review). DOI: doi.org/10.62372/YEUP3422. https://busara.global/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/GW-15-LR.pdf

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The Aha! Moment is Busara's project fact sheet and findings snapshot. We generate an Aha! Moment for every project we do, and these provide a public record of our work.

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Book
Busara Books are collaboratively-authored or edited collections.

Busara, 2024. *Tafakari Busara Yearbook: You are not alone: human behavior under pressure.* Nairobi: Busara. DOI: doi.org/10.62372/JDVN6905. https://busara.global/our-works/tafakari-yearbook-2024/

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Project reports are outputs on specific projects, usually co-published with project partners.

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WHERE WE WORK
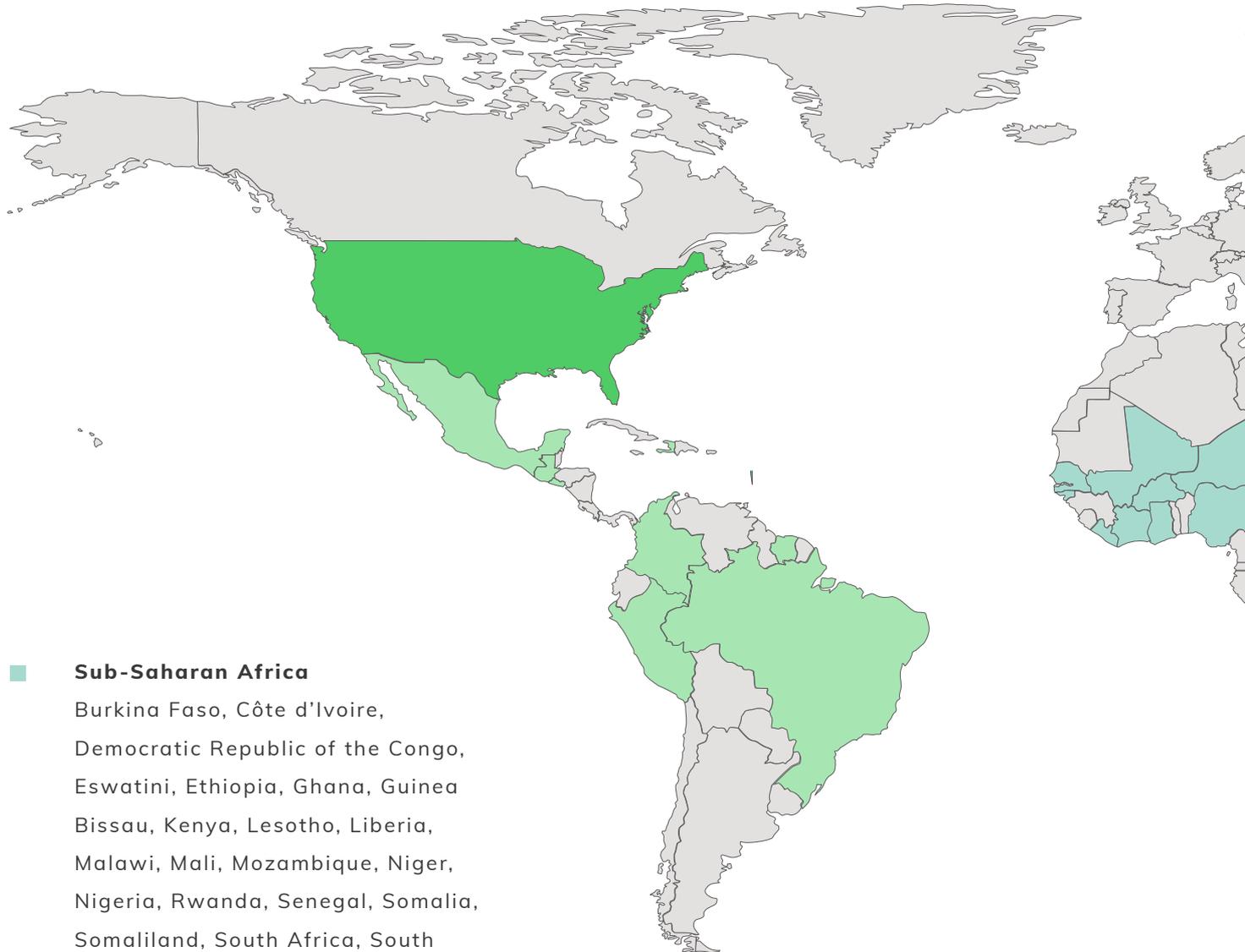
Sub-Saharan Africa

Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Somaliland, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

South Asia

Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan

Latin America

Barbados, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Suriname

East Asia & Pacific

Fiji, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Vietnam

Middle East & North Africa

Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia
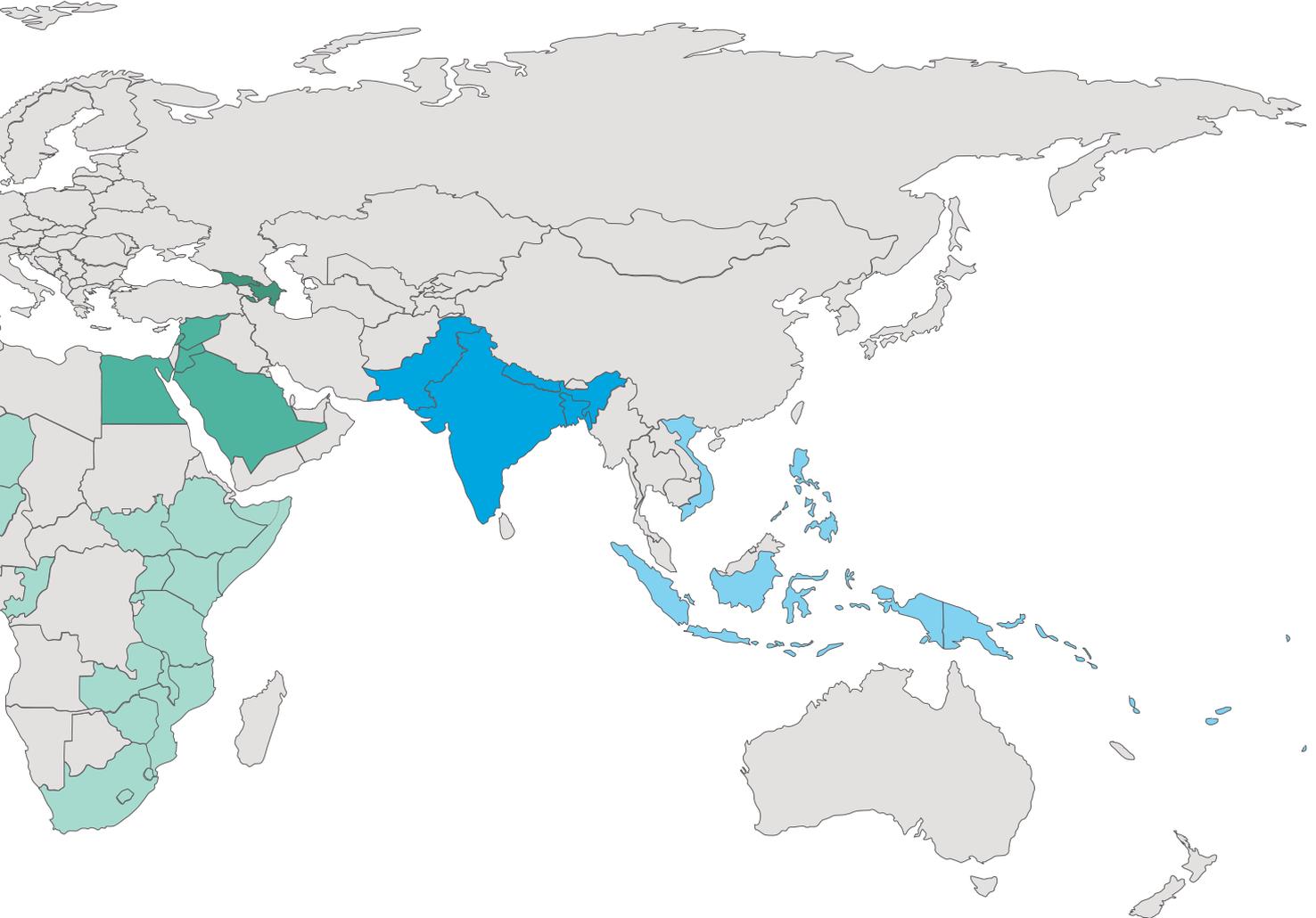
Central Asia
Azerbaijan, Georgia

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