



# THE POWER OF VOICE

Chicago IL  
Mexico City MX  
Portland OR  
San Francisco CA  
Washington DC

[metgroup.com](http://metgroup.com)

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

## Addressing Global Challenges

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

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

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



### We offer a range of services within three integrated practices:

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

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

## Issue Area Expertise

### SBC Experience and Methodologies

MG/ISMG is an innovator in designing and piloting SBC activities and social and behavior change communication (SBCC) related to democracy, human rights, and gender equality, as well as in sustainable development/climate mitigation and global health. SBC methodologies and tools are critical in reshaping the enabling environments that can advance policy, institutional, cultural, and individual changes. MG specializes in SBC at the structural levels and integrates individual behavior change to advancing systemic change. Our approach includes developing, testing, and applying narratives and messaging that aligns with people's closely held values to create long-term shifts in mindsets and social norms. Our expertise in [public will building](#) and [narrative change](#) methodologies and locally driven approach are highly effective in shifting deeply entrenched behaviors that are related to social norms, beliefs, and values. MG is deeply versed in all stages of SBC research, analysis, assessment, design, iterative implementation, and learning capture and dissemination.

### Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance

Our work includes SBC, strategic communication, and research to counter democratic backsliding and build resiliency to growing repression, including disinformation, and polarization. We work directly to address impunity, the rule of law, corruption, digital repression, protecting human rights, defending civic space, and strengthening civil society organizations (CSOs), women's empowerment, and gender and social inclusion (LGBTQIA+, Indigenous people, youth, and other targeted groups' rights). We employ creative and innovative campaigns, rooted in original research, that help tell the story of what it means to build trust in justice systems and hold those in power accountable. Our approach to SBC, SBCC, and narrative change are a critical component of a comprehensive approach to democracy-strengthening activities.

### Climate Change Adaptation and Environmental Justice

Our work includes SBC interventions, advocacy campaigns, and program development related to climate change adaptation and mitigation; acceleration of biodiversity conservation at a large scale and climate-smart agriculture; environmental justice; enhanced global resilience to weather-related disasters and food and water insecurity; the transformation to a clean-energy future; the placement of people-centered conservation as part of sustainable development; the removal of toxic chemicals from the places we live, work, and play; and the advancement of sustainable forestry, agricultural, and clean-water resources.

### Global Health

Our work employs SBC methodologies and traditional strategic communication campaigns to address a wide range of solutions to chronic disease; infectious disease; environmental health; health access and health systems capacity; reproductive and maternal health; and to increase preventive, well-being, and community health application. We work with a full spectrum of public health professionals, including decision-makers, scientists, educators, and health care providers, to advance more effective policies and practices and promote social norms that advance well-being.

## Client Examples

### USAID



#### **Countering Corruption Through SBC**

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





### **Advancing Women's Rights in Tunisia**

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



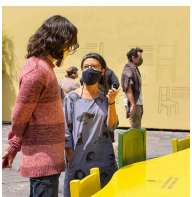
### **Improving Effectiveness of State-level Justice Institutions in Mexico**

This five-year project (managed by DAI as the prime contractor) seeks to advance and support systemic transformations in the Mexican criminal justice system to reduce impunity and increase trust at the state level. MG/ISMG is providing technical assistance and strategic communication to support judicial institutions, as well as nontraditional actors (civil society, private sector, academic sector), to advance resilient organizational and structural reforms that connect with end-users' values, needs, and expectations.



### **Conducting Democracy Narrative and Messaging Research and Development**

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



### **Advancing Civic Space and Civic Participation in Mexico**

Social change agents often communicate without prioritizing stakeholders and without knowing which values and barriers they have to change their behaviors. With the SBC knowledge and tools we introduced and direct TA provided to a cohort of organizations working on civil society resilience, environment, gender equality and transparency and accountability, these groups developed SBC campaigns focusing on the specific behaviors their priority stakeholders need to change to advance towards more just, transparent, equitable and sustainable communities. In only a few months and as a result of our work specific behaviors changed: there was a 75% increase in the number of people reporting water leaks in the streets in a northern state, a 33% increase in organizations adjusting their fiscal strategies to fully comply with the regulatory framework nationally, and a 25% more people are volunteering in the organizations in a southern state of Mexico. This was accomplished through a combination of capacity building, direct TA, and support to a cohort of CSOs. This work was conducted in partnership with Making Cents International and Development Professionals International under Analytical Services IV – LACLEARN.

## **Ford Foundation**

### **Democracy, Rule of Law, and Human Rights**

In Mexico, ISMG partnered with civil society organizations, policymakers, and influencers to create and apply a groundbreaking SBC initiative focused on addressing severe human rights abuses, including forced





disappearances, femicide, murder of journalists, and state-sanctioned torture. Through innovative stakeholder mapping and deconstruction of dominant narratives that advance impunity, ISMG designed a new metanarrative that activates core values and engages citizens as part of an effort to build a more trusted judicial system. The initiative has engaged millions and mobilized thousands through activities that counter disinformation and corruption and promote justice, the rule of law, and civil society activism. National polling has indicated growing alignment with the new narrative and indicator shifts on the issue of human rights.

In Central America, ISMG works with civil society groups to create [hope-based narratives](#) that promote protection of civic space and human rights, highlighting the relevance of working together and taking care of each other as a way to tackle social division. The narratives were co-created to have impact in the challenging context of increasing attacks on the legitimacy of civic space. Working with the Ford Foundation, our team is partnering with dozens of organizations to build capacity and to advance a powerful new narrative.

### ***Advancing Gender Equity in Guatemala and El Salvador***

Through this project, MG/ISMG is working directly with grassroots organizations and media outlets to develop and convey their own intersectional narratives to advance gender equity, justice, and rule of law at local and national levels. Based on understanding the existing narrative landscape, the attacks these groups are suffering, and the mechanisms certain groups are deploying for these attacks, MG/ISMG is providing direct technical assistance to create hope-based narratives and SBC communication initiatives to advance gender equality and CSO goals.

### **Human Rights Work in El Salvador**

MG/ISMG developed a [collaborative campaign](#) to call for the release of women who have been imprisoned in El Salvador as a result of suffering obstetric emergencies. This campaign helped elevate and leverage the work that has, for many years, been carried out by local Salvadoran CSOs. MG/ISMG developed the strategy for the campaign in partnership with local CSOs, international women's and reproductive rights advocates, and others. As a result, all the imprisoned women have been released and allowed to return home to their families.

### **Humanity United**

We worked with a consortium of research partners to map salient migration narratives across five country case studies and published our findings in a report titled "[How We Talk About Migration: The Link Between Migration Narratives, Policy, and Power](#)." The research mapped and analyzed similarities in migration narratives in very different political and cultural contexts and highlighted how migration narratives are increasingly weaponized to advance a range of anti immigration political agendas. In follow-on work, we examined root causes of migration, including the impact of violence and conflict on communities in Central America, and we published "[Migration Narratives in Northern Central America: How Competing Stories Shape Policy and Public Opinion in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador](#)."

## **Key Team**



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

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



### **Jay L. Knott—international development expert: president, MG**

Jay brings deep leadership experience from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. He led the growth of a global consulting and initiative implementation firm, worked internationally in diverse and challenging contexts for USAID, and focused on issues that intersect MG's three focus areas: public health, environment and sustainability, and social justice. Jay has a track record of improving organizational effectiveness; developing individuals and teams; advancing



performance, impact, and innovation; helping organizations grow; advancing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion commitments; and building strong cultures.



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

Haim works on a global portfolio of narrative, messaging, and social and behavior change campaigns focused on advancing democracy and countering malign actors. He spent nearly 20 years as a conflict resolution and security researcher and analyst in North Africa and the Middle East before joining MG in 2019. He has conducted research and analysis for numerous U.S. government agencies, with a focus on countering violent extremism, ethnic conflict, and political violence. At MG, he has led work with NASA and USAID.



**Maria Elena Campisteguy—intercultural engagement lead: senior executive vice president, principal, MG/ISMG**

For more than 30 years, Maria Elena has been dedicated to creating campaigns, strategies, and programs that advance social justice and build intercultural understanding. She has worked with public agencies, foundations, universities, and nonprofit organizations in the United States, Mexico, and Latin America to attract and authentically embrace new stakeholders; advance policy, systems, and behavior change; expand programmatic and service reach; and build more inclusive and equitable workplace cultures. Clients include NASA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, and Ford Foundation.



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

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



**Vernice Miller-Travis—environmental justice lead: executive vice president, MG**

Vernice is one of the innovators, leading experts, and most respected thought leaders on environmental justice. She established the global environmental justice programs at Ford Foundation and has worked internationally on a broad range of environmental and development issues. She is a deeply skilled practitioner in intercultural engagement and organizational culture change and a leader with significant expertise in clean air, land, and water regulatory systems and environmental and urban planning. Vernice has extensive experience working with diverse stakeholders in public engagement processes in the regulatory, planning, and policymaking arenas.



**Alejandro Vélez Salas, Ph.D.—human rights research expert: vice president and Mexico City lead, ISMG**

Alejandro leads stakeholder research and mapping, technical assistance, peer-learning design, and social media listening programs, with a focus on anti-impunity and corruption and rule of law. Prior to joining MG, Alejandro edited the website of Nuestra Aparente Rendición, a CSO that works to understand and counter state-sanctioned violence in Mexico. He has studied forced disappearances; edited the book, “Tú y Yo Coincidimos en la Noche Terrible,” which compiled the life stories of murdered and disappeared journalists in Mexico; and works as a partner for relatives of missing persons in Mexico.



**Rebecca Gerber—digital strategy lead: vice president, MG**

Rebecca is a dedicated digital leader with over 15 years of expertise in digital advocacy, creative storytelling, and multichannel engagement strategies that inspire and mobilize people to take action. Rebecca maximizes digital platforms to address the intersections between technology and social change. Her leadership focuses on storytelling, accessibility, and leveraging emerging tech for the greater good. Her specific expertise includes: crafting effective advocacy strategies



across digital platforms, developing innovative social campaigns, measuring analytics and engagement, and crafting compelling and persuasive narratives for targeted audiences.

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

---

### **Contract Vehicles**

We hold the General Services Administration (GSA) Professional Services Schedule, and are a leading partner with The Cloudburst Group under USAID's Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Bureau's Learning, Evaluation, and Research III Task Order. We are a resource partner on USAID's Digital APEX mechanism managed by Vistant. We have joined teams on Analytical Services IV for LACLEARN and SEGA tasking, and we are a subcontractor to DAI for Mexico's ConJusticia contract.

---

#### **UEI**

ECJVQLHA41R5

#### **GSA Number**

GS-07F-0224X

#### **Procurement Designation**

Small Business

#### **Schedules**

541-2: Public Relations Services

541-4a: Market Research and Analysis

874-1: Integrated Consulting Services

#### **NAICS Codes**

541430, 541611, 541613, 541618, 541720,  
541810, 541820, 541830, 541840, 541890,  
541910, 541990

#### **Contact**

**Sarah Dotlich**, vice president  
New Business Development  
[marketing@metgroup.com](mailto:marketing@metgroup.com)

