3

Design a Monitoring and Evaluation System

Introduction

In Step Two, your team (and others relevant to your work) made a commitment to the principles of stakeholder engagement. Once you have a plan and the commitment, the real work begins!

Your efforts should be based on the answer to this question: What do we want to accomplish by engaging stakeholders? In Step One, your team thought about concrete objectives for your work with the stakeholders in light of your trial and the broader research agenda. Now that you have defined the goals of stakeholder engagement, you can establish a framework for determining whether your efforts are effective and worth the time and resources involved.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of stakeholder engagement activities can be especially challenging. The successful engagement of a stakeholder may be neither concrete nor definable. And it may be a result of various initiatives or activities — some of which may not even be linked to stakeholder engagement efforts. For instance, success is sometimes defined as "support for the conduct of a given trial," but support may be indicated by a *lack* of negative media coverage or the *absence* of civil society controversy. The quick enrollment of participants in a trial may be a result of effective community engagement and a broad understanding of the trial in the community — which are stakeholder engagement efforts — but it also may be a result of efficient recruitment practices by the clinical team. Developing a meaningful M&E mechanism can help resolve some of these challenges.

Your overarching goals and the resulting objectives should have formed the basis of the stakeholder engagement plan (including a work plan and action plan) developed in Step One. The activities included in your plan should reflect a set of key objectives and should be linked to short-term and long-term goals. Your team will need to think about all of these factors — goals, objectives and activities — and define measurable indicators of progress at given times. Indicators may be qualitative or quantitative, and they may be focused on process or impact, depending on the goals you have identified. (See Task 3 in this section for an explanation of process indicators and impact indicators.) You will also need to consider whether your M&E mechanism will be participatory or not.

A number of resources are available for M&E activities about advocacy and HIV. You should use these tools as you develop an M&E mechanism for your stakeholder engagement program. Full references are included in the *Additional Resources* section at the end of the toolkit. Two of these resources have provided much of the background for the approach used in *Step Three*:

- *Measuring Up: HIV-Related Advocacy Evaluation Training Pack*.[1] This training pack consists of two guides that provide definitions and explanations of M&E related concepts, plus modules for training secondary audiences.
- *A Guide to Participatory Monitoring of Behavior Change Communications for HIV/AIDS: Getting the Community and Program Staff Involved in Assessing and Improving Programs.* This guide outlines processes for conducting participatory M&E.[2]

Goals of Step Three

- Define a set of indicators based on your long-term and short-term goals for stakeholder engagement activities.
- Agree on your team's M&E approach; if it is participatory, identify the stakeholders to be involved.
- Implement the M&E process as agreed by all relevant team members.

1 Davies N, Brotherton L. Measuring up: a guide for learners [Internet]. International HIV/AIDS Alliance and the International Council of Aids Service Organizations (ICASO). Brighton, UK: International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Secretariat; 2010 July [cited 2012 April]. Available from: http://www.aidsalliance.org/includes/Publication/Measuring-up-a-guide-for-learners.pdf

2 Gill K, Emah E, Fua I. A guide to participatory monitoring of behavior change communication for HIV/AIDS: getting the community and program staff involved in assessing and improving programs [Internet]. Seattle: PATH Publications; 2005 [cited 2012 April]. Available from: http://www.path.org/publications/detail.php?i=1138

Why you need to design a monitoring and evaluation system

A systematic approach to designing a monitoring and evaluation system enables your team to:

- Define the desired impact of the research team's stakeholder engagement activities on the clinical trial agenda.
- Justify the need and budget for these stakeholder engagement activities.
- Increase the rigor of stakeholder engagement programs, including the potential need to change your strategy and action planning.
- Establish your accountability with the stakeholders.

Task list

1 Establish a stakeholder engagement M&E working group.

Action: Identify appropriate people at your research center who can establish an M&E system, and determine who will be committed to continuously monitoring the team's stakeholder engagement activities.

Result: You will have an established team of people responsible for monitoring and evaluating the stakeholder engagement program.

Explanation: The stakeholder engagement program should be monitored and evaluated by a variety of research staff members. Data collected in *Step One* and *Step Two* will help you identify appropriate individuals to work on an M&E mechanism. The group should consist of a cross section of staff members, including those responsible for stakeholder engagement and finance, plus operational and clinical activities. The group should not be too large (ideally around five people and no more than 10), but it should be big enough to include the suggested cross section of staff. Members should be willing to meet at least once every quarter and devote additional work time to writing, reviewing and other necessary responsibilities. One member should be designated as the leader for the M&E activity.

2 Develop an M&E framework.

Action: The M&E working group should discuss and agree on the best way to implement an M&E process.

Result: You will have an established M&E framework and a timeline for collecting indicator data.

Explanation: There are various approaches to M&E. The most straightforward approach is to conduct all M&E internally. Your team will develop indicators, decide on the appropriate team members to regularly collect data, establish a timeline and collect and store indicator data on a regular basis. Several resources discuss the basic process of M&E for HIV programs and advocacy-related work. As noted above, one excellent resource is *Measuring Up: HIV-Related Advocacy Evaluation Training Pack*.[3]

Another popular approach is known as *participatory* program evaluation. This approach involves external stakeholders who monitor and evaluate your activities, rather than merely relying solely on internal M&E. A number of resources discuss participatory M&E, and these are listed in the *Additional Resources* section. Your M&E working group should review these resources and consider whether it might be necessary or beneficial to use participatory methods. For example, a participatory approach might be beneficial in situations where trust has been compromised with one or more stakeholders (by your research team or others).

The following steps outline a generic process for developing an M&E framework:

- **Determine who will receive evaluation data.** Who wants this information? Trial sponsors or networks? Funders? The community or other stakeholders? How do you ensure the information will be useful for internal program monitoring purposes? Will any of the information be confidential, i.e., for internal use only? If yes, consider the potential consequences if such information were to go public.

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3 International HIV/AIDS Alliance and the International Council of Aids Service Organizations (ICASO). Measuring up: HIV-related advocacy evaluation training pack [Internet]. Brighton, UK: International HIV/AIDS Alliance (Secretariat); 2010 July [cited 2012 April]. Available from: http://www.aidsalliance.org/publicationsdetails.aspx?id=477

- **Map your stakeholder engagement work.** In most cases, this would be your stakeholder engagement work plan or other plan.
- **Prioritize what to evaluate.** According to your stakeholder engagement plan, is it necessary to evaluate every activity? Should you group activities that might be appropriately evaluated together or evaluate progress according to larger objectives or goals?
- **Select indicators.** This step will be the core of your M&E mechanism and is described in detail below.
- **Decide on an approach to measurement.** Various monitoring approaches are commonly practiced; these are discussed below and in the *Additional Resources*.
- **Identify data collection methods.** This includes identifying the frequency of collecting indicator data, who is responsible for data collection and how the data and source documentation will be stored.

Remember that this is a recursive process that can be modified. For instance, you may choose to evaluate a different set of activities after you select the indicators and determine your data collection methods. Factors may change throughout the collection of indicator data.

3 Select indicators.

Action: Based on your established framework, your M&E working group will develop a set of indicators of success for your stakeholder engagement program.

Result: You will have established sets of process-related indicators and impact-related indicators for the short-term and the long-term. These indicators reflect your progress toward the goals and objectives of your stakeholder engagement program.

Explanation: Use the stakeholder engagement plan developed in *Step One* as the basis for selecting the indicators. For each goal, objective and activity, ask this question: How do we know whether we have achieved success? The answer will help you identify an indicator of success or progress. If your plan is in a matrix format, you may create an extra column for indicator information.

Stakeholder engagement generally focuses on program activities and advocacy, so you may need to develop an array of different indicators. You will probably conduct two types of monitoring, oriented toward process and impact.

Process indicators tend to reflect progress within a short time-frame or show outputs or outcomes that together will build into a greater goal or impact. They may be quantitative, such as recording the number of stakeholder meetings conducted, the number of outreach events or the number of contacts made. Process indicators may also be qualitative, where narrative information is given about the quality of operations or activities, such as the documentation of feedback — good or bad — received from stakeholders.

Impact indicators are broader than process indicators and often reflect a desired end result of stakeholder engagement activities. These may be short-term or long-term indicators. For instance, a short-term impact indicator may assess the number of stakeholders who have provided feedback on the trial or the number of times that the research center has effectively responded to media inquiries. A long-term impact indicator may reveal that the local civil society has a positive perception of the trial or that national policymakers are committed to the future rollout of the intervention being tested.

Figure 4 depicts the logical relationship between different links in the chain of events in a stakeholder engagement program.

FIGURE 4 *A stakeholder engagement program follows a logical chain of events.*

Inputs → **Activities** → **Outputs** → **Outcomes** → **Impacts**

In the logic chain of stakeholder engagement programs, resources and inputs are processed into outputs through activities. The activities produce outcomes — such as knowledge and behavior change — which eventually create an impact — perhaps changes in the conduct of a trial or the larger research agenda.

Inputs	Activities	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators	Impacts
Efforts of community liaison officer and other responsible staff Efforts of principal investigator Designated budget	Monthly meetings of the community advisory board (CAB) Annual briefings on research to policymakers and other national decision-makers Development of an issues-management plan for the research	CAB meeting reports, including outstanding needs and next steps Robust plan for issues management	Community members who are well informed about the research Policymakers who support the research Positive relationships with key stakeholders Influential champions at local and national levels	Efficient and ethical trial recruitment and retention Decreased time from research results to policy access Mitigation of controversy at local, national, international levels

(Adapted from: Davies N, Brotherton L. Measuring up: A guide for learners. International HIV/AIDS Alliance and the International Council of Aids Service Organizations (ICASO). Brighton, UK: International HIV/AIDS Alliance; 2010 July.)

For each of the goals, objectives and activities in your stakeholder engagement plan, consider process and impact indicators. You may want to make separate columns in your plan to record both types of indicators. It may not be necessary to develop both indicators for every element of your plan, but your group should at least consider the possibilities for each element (see *Tool 3A*).

Once your group has defined indicators, assess the list and prioritize those that will best reflect the progress in your stakeholder engagement program. You may need to eliminate repetitive indicators or arrange activities together that have similar indicators. Select the final list of indicators after you've taken these steps.

For each indicator you have selected, determine when it should be measured. For stakeholder engagement activities, the quarterly measurement of indicators is usually sufficient. In some cases twice a year will suffice. However, there may be some instances — such as during the conduct of a large-scale trial — where your team may want to measure indicators more frequently. Indicate the frequency of measurement somewhere on your M&E framework or other document you are using for M&E information.

4 Implement your M&E process.

Action: Conduct regular reviews to evaluate your progress according to your indicators.

Result: In time, you will have a well-documented collection of indicator data reflecting the progress of your stakeholder engagement program.

Explanation: Your last task in this list is to implement the M&E process. The process should be clear based on your identified indicators and other key aspects of your M&E framework.

The process should be led by one or two staff members who are primarily responsible for the stakeholder engagement program. They should ensure that all data are collected at the determined time points. If data are needed from other staff or stakeholders, these individuals will be responsible for collecting data in a timely manner. If your team is conducting a participatory evaluation, please refer to the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) *Guide to Participatory Monitoring of Behavior Change Communication for HIV/AIDS* for details on implementation. If necessary, you may decide to convene the M&E working group to review the data and the collection methods each time data are collected.

Case Study

Perspectives from a trial sponsor and advocate

Alex Menezes, International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI)

Indicators for community and advocacy-focused work can be hard to define due to the fluid nature of what "community support" means in each context. But there are a few ways to deal with this. It's important to find a systematic way to measure the stakeholder engagement work as one would measure other elements of the research process.

At the outset of a trial, or other relevant time point in the research life cycle, it's important to agree as a team on what you hope to accomplish through stakeholder engagement efforts. Based on these predefined goals, one can define indicators that break down the steps necessary to reach the team's objectives. In addition to process indicators, such as the number of people reached with messages about the research program, one can also try to capture how efficiently the research team is able to respond to changes in the environment or to community needs. This can be measured by the time it takes to respond to media enquiries or by the team's ability to effectively address concerns raised in the community.

It's also important to think beyond the life cycle of a given trial. Often, stakeholder engagement in a trial or in the trial's process can lead to an impact that may occur only *after* a trial is completed. Consider, for example, the response of local stakeholders to the results of an HIV prevention trial. Ultimately, a well-briefed set of stakeholders will have an accurate understanding of the purpose and outcomes of a research program before it is completed, so that the results can inform policy. In some cases, however, policymakers or community leaders may be suspicious and unaccepting of trial results; they may resist engaging in conversations about implementation, even in a context of demonstrated benefits. The ease and swiftness of these discussions, as well as the level of support from policymakers, are clear indicators of the impact of engaging such stakeholders during the research process.

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All aspects of the implementation should be adapted to increase effectiveness according to the needs of the key staff members and the M&E working group.

Remember that the M&E process is not linear. When data are collected, re-evaluate your selected indicators, your method and frequency of data collection and other aspects of your approach.

Most importantly, use your M&E data to improve the effectiveness of your stakeholder engagement process.

Checklist: Step Three

Use this checklist to make sure that you accomplished all the tasks required in Step Three.

- ❑ An M&E working group has been established and all members have made a commitment to the group.
- ❑ An M&E framework has been developed by the working group; all relevant members of the research team agree to the framework.
- ❑ Meaningful indicators have been established.
- ❑ Time points for data collection are clearly established.

T3

Appendix Tools: Step Three

Tool 3A: Indicator examples

Tool 3A: Indicator examples

This tool may be used by the M&E working group to help develop indicators for the stakeholder engagement program.

Tool 3A: Indicator examples

This tool may be referenced or used as a guide when developing your indicators. It contains examples of indicators for community and stakeholder engagement at different levels in the clinical trials process. Please note that you are not restricted to the examples given when developing your team's indicators.

Level	Process Indicators	Impact Indicators
Local/ community	• Number of CAB meetings conducted • Percentage of CAB members attending meetings • Number of community outreach events • Number of potential trial volunteers referred from partner health institutions or other partnering organizations	• Number and description of misconceptions in the surrounding community about research • Speed of trial recruitment • Number of local stakeholders declaring support for trial conduct • Description of feedback provided by stakeholders on a trial protocol • Successful referral of research participants and linkage to care and services
National	• Number of national consultations conducted • Number of country-specific policies or related documents written or revised concerning research or rollout of intervention • Description of supportive media reporting	• Level of funding committed by national governments • Qualitative description of statements made concerning research by national stakeholders • Commitment of policymakers and other thought leaders to future rollout of interventions
Global	• Number of peer-reviewed publications on the value of stakeholder engagement • Number of presentations, international conferences and other forums on stakeholder engagement work	• Level of funding by major international donors • Description of stakeholder input into the design of global, multisite, large-scale trials