

Seminar Summary Day 5: Creating an Enabling Environment for M&E Community of Practice

Today marks the last day of our MEASURE Evaluation seminar on creating an enabling environment to strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practice for HIV/ AIDS and other health programs.

Today, **73 LeaderNauts** from 24 countries in 4 continents visited the site, and 38 of you made **71** posts. For the week, **247** LeaderNauts from **44 countries** in 4 continents visited the site, and 104 of you made **384 posts**.

Congratulations and thank you to each LeaderNaut for turning this into such a busy and engaging virtual classroom! The posts were both rich and instructive – reflecting a wide variety of challenges as well as opportunities, skills, perspectives and experiences with strengthening M&E in our organizations.

Today we took some time to engage in some reflection, looking back on the week's dialogue, making some personal commitments and beginning to think through how we are going to apply some of the ideas, suggestions and tools from the seminar in our own work. It was inspiring to read everyone's good thoughts, commitments and actions to apply some of the learning and ideas from the seminar, as well as tools from the CBKEN website (www.aidstar-two.org) to address specific challenges in your work situations.

Kenneth in Uganda declares: "I am going to be a leading advocate for the funding of M&E efforts so that there is a clear budget line for a functional M&E system both within the organization and among the partners that we collaborate with. I will strive to provide the rationale for a functional M&E system through demonstrating the uses that data and information obtained through M&E activities has for planning, forecasting and decision-making. I will strive to provide critical leadership in times of need and when a sense of direction is required." And we say, Amen...good luck, Kenneth!

Abba Abdullahi in Nigeria (like many other participants) expresses appreciation for the seminar and also makes a personal commitment to utilize the skills and ideas he has acquired: "I actually benefited tremendously from this seminar, as it widened my knowledge in M&E activities, and I also understood where our organization is weak that is ownership and leadership. This area is of great importance in public organization. I will make sure that the knowledge I gathered in the seminar is tailored towards that area, to make sure that our organization owns the processes of all M&E work rather than leaving it to partners to drive it".

Dr. Gani in Ethiopia lays out the steps for establishing an enabling environment for a fully-functioning M&E system: "...Ensure that, (i) all stakeholders in a project/program are involved and fully participate in joint planning, implementation, supervision, monitoring and evaluation, (ii) all implementation plans have a clear-cut M&E component that is fully subscribed to by all and sundry and, most importantly, (iii) all parties must strictly support the implementation of the recommendations of M&E findings on a continuous basis until end of project/program."

Niyi in Australia stresses the importance of appropriate budget allocation for M&E capacity building: "Given the importance of assuring adequate and sustainable finance in organizational capacity building,

developing policies for a fixed percentage (~ 15%) of all external aid to be devoted to organizational capacity building, adaptive capacity building and health systems strengthening constitute a useful first step.” **Reuben in Kenya** adds: “It is also important that M&E be seen as an organizational goal and not just for the M&E department.”

James in the Philippines points to the growing role and importance of information and communication technology in the field of M&E: “The projects that we are implementing now deal with building capacity on the ground so that data collection becomes more credible and timely, fostering and advocating for integration of the national and local data collection systems, engaging partners across all sectors to come up with an interoperability framework for better information exchange and well-informed decision-making, and promoting use of ICT and free and open source software for data collection and analysis.”

Ayman in Egypt outlined for us some of the key markers of an enabling environment: “The work environment is influenced by a number of factors, including the type of leadership exercised by management, the strengths and weaknesses of the work force—including its overall competence—and physical work conditions. For example, the type of leadership being exercised can significantly impact on the extent and the nature of employee involvement and participation in decision making. It can also affect the degree of people's empowerment and motivation. The competence of the work force influences its capacity to achieve desired results and its ability to change, and, consequently, its reaction to both internal and external factors. Physical work conditions affect individual needs and comfort, and health and safety considerations. In short, the work environment is the result of a number of combined influences, each profoundly affecting the other.”

Godwin in Kenya reminds us: “When institutions evolve to appreciate M&E beyond numbers into assessing quality of interventions; the cost effectiveness and as the reference point for planning and decision making, the environment is ready for systems strengthening and sustainability”.

Evelyn in Nigeria spoke for most of the participants with these words of grace and a sense of accomplishment: “The last five days has been so interactive and educative, thanks to all participants who sincerely shared their experiences with us. Congratulations to you all. This seminar has reawakened my consciousness on sharing the outcomes of our monitoring and evaluation programs with other members of staff at regular meetings for their input”.

Most of you have made specific, personal commitments on how you are going to apply the skills and ideas from the seminar to resolve or address some M&E challenges in your own organizations. As they say, when we make commitments to ourselves we are actually “committing to meet” certain important goals or objectives. We hope you will hold yourselves accountable for fulfilling these commitments.

Throughout the seminar, we explored what it takes to create and sustain effective M&E systems. We raised the importance of organizational functions such as leadership, governance, management processes, structure, building relationships and partnerships in this effort. Clearly, we can't do this alone and not just by building the technical M&E skills of our staff. We also need to remember that what is

really important to the process of collaboration is the leadership necessary to promote and sustain it. Additionally, continued dialogue about our internal management processes and structure to determine if what is in place is working, is absolutely necessary for the creation of the required enabling environment.

Once again, many thanks indeed for such a lively and engaging week. As your facilitator, I thoroughly enjoyed being part of it and I hope you also found it enjoyable and professionally rewarding. Of course, all of you are making tremendous strides to address these M&E challenges each day, but a lot remains to be done. Please join us on future seminars for this Community of Practice and encourage your friends and colleagues to join as well.