

LINKING RESEARCH AND INTERVENTION: IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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How do you check the quality of the data?

We carry out numerous checks when designing the questionnaires. We also make significant investments in range checks on phones to minimize the possibility of error. Finally, the entire team was trained in Stata software, which we use to the exclusion of all previous tools (Excel, SPSS ...). Until the adoption of this tool, the different teams worked on different data sets, and generated different results. When we make sure people use the same system and data sets, the possibility of errors is minimized. We also train extensively the users on data interpretation. It would be impossible for us to monitor each data for all districts and on all indicators. However, we indicate very clearly our availability to answer any questions from users, and in fact, are ready at any time to check an element on which there is doubt.

How do you get government authorities to treat and analyze data the same way you do? Did you work closely with them at any points in the program on appropriation?

I want to clarify that the final aim of the program is not that the government takes over; the scale at which we work is so large, we generate this kind of expectation and there was indeed a desire at the beginning to collaborate with the government who was building their own system. Unfortunately, this has not been developed yet. Also, our contractors were different and it was hard to make the systems compatible. However, I think that **the reflection on our role building government capacity in data systems is extremely important.** Unfortunately, this is not reflected into the program's theory of change. However, it is worth noting that **our 2,000 staff will stay in the country after we go and will keep working for the government and NGOs.** In the end, country capacity is indeed strengthened.

Are there frameworks or models for scaling up the actions implemented that you would recommend?

We don't really have lessons learned on scaling up and growing big from small as this program was implemented at large scale from the very beginning.

What lessons have you learned from your experience so far with donors, especially in the context of multisectoral programming?

We were very fortunate to design our program on the basis of what the data was suggesting. However, **the challenge is the short implementation timeframe**, especially with bilateral donors. **Program and research studies take time** – it took us two years to find a good cruising speed using the data-, a period far too long according to many of our interlocutors. Faced with donors, we must be able to speak frankly about how long behavior change takes, and how long it takes to change attitudes on using data. Let's not forget that we work together with 42 local NGOs and 42 district offices. It took us more than a year first to train our interlocutors on the meaning of the data and then to spur their interest in using data to facilitate their work. In the NGO sector, monitoring and implementation have been separated for too long. Some implementers have come to believe that data is by definition not useful, arriving too late and being too complex. As implementers, **it is very important that we change field teams attitudes towards the use of data and that we set realistic expectations with donors on the timeframe needed** for the adoption of this new modality.

Have you encountered any difficulties in publishing program data due to lack of ownership?

We put our entire monitoring system under **ethics approval** from the beginning, knowing that a typical challenge in NGO settings is that data is not compliant with traditional research ethics rules and therefore not usable. Data of this program is property of USAID and, like for other programs, data might be available after program closure. In the meantime, **we have short-term data sharing agreements** with master students that collaborate with the program. **The more data sharing the better**: we have a wide amount of data and the more analysis you can make of it the better.