Quick Guide

Tools for Data Demand and Use in the Health Sector

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This pocket manual serves as a cursory reference to the tools used to improve the demand for and use of information in health decision making.

Each of the tools presented in this toolkit can be modified and adapted to fit the needs, timeline, and budget of the context in which they are being used. There may be circumstances where a need arises to facilitate data use but the existing tools are not an exact match for the specific situation. In this case, the tools can be modified to fit the need. It should also be noted, that every context is different and may require a different type of intervention, beyond the application of a tool, or combination of interventions to facilitate data use. Oftentimes, capacity building efforts along with other strategies may need to be applied as well. The combination of capacity building, data demand and use tools and other approaches ensures that health professionals have a broader menu of interventions to choose from to improve data use in the contexts in which they work. http://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure/publications/fs-11-43

1 Assessment of Data Use Constraints

Why is this tool important?

In many areas of the world, decision-makers do not have access to the required data, do not realize how data can be used to improve decisions, or the information they need does not exist or is not trusted.

What does this tool do?

It identifies the barriers and constraints to data use, and leads to effective approaches to address them. Two sets of interviewing guides have been developed:

1. Version 1: provides a broad view of constraints at the national and sub-national levels by collecting information from decision-makers and data producers on their current data use and on their perceptions of data use constraints.

2. Version 2: provides an understanding of constraints when generating and using data at lower levels of the health system, requiring separate interviewing guides for data users and data producers

Checklist for Implementation

- ❑ Perform pre-assessment planning
- ❑ Engage a senior national consultant to perform the assessment
- ❑ Meet with project stakeholders and partners
- ❑ Conduct and document the interviews
- ❑ Analyze and report the findings
- ❑ Share the findings with stakeholders

2 Framework for Linking Data with Action

Why is this tool important?

Even when a wealth of information is available, important program and policy decisions are often made based on insufficient data.

What does this tool do?

It supports evidence-based decision-making by creating and strengthening links between the data and decision-making processes. Two versions of the tool have been developed:

1. Data: should be used when a new data collection or analysis activity has been completed. This version provides a framework for identifying and documenting key findings, recommendations linked to those findings, and specific actions that can be taken based on the recommendations.

2. Decisions and questions: should be used when there is a specific decision to be made, or stakeholders have specific questions around program or policy issues. It facilitates evidence-based decision making by providing a clear, systematic process for identifying and documenting:

- Actions and/or decisions
- Questions that decision makers need to answer in order to take action or make a decision
- Data required to answer the question and sources for these data

Checklist for Implementation

- [ ] Identify the need
- [ ] Create an internal plan for responding to the need
- [ ] Engage project stakeholders
- [ ] Plan the approach and identify major milestones for implementation
- [ ] Facilitate the creation of the tool and the Expanded Timeline
- [ ] Build capacity to use the tool
- [ ] Monitor and document results of using the tool

3 Information Use Map

Why is this tool important?

Existing M&E systems typically focus on data collection and reporting to higher levels, while little attention is paid to how the data can be used locally for program improvements. As a result, there are many missed opportunities for feedback mechanisms and the identification of specific ways in which the data can be analyzed to make mid-course programmatic corrections.

What does this tool do?

1. It identifies how data flows from the point of collection through to storage, analysis, reporting and use. Opportunities to improve the flow of information to benefit programs and people are also identified.

2. It uses a flowchart framework that identifies existing data reporting channels and opportunities to increase use of information to benefit programs and people.

3. Its visual nature makes it uniquely effective in capturing a highly conceptual process in a clear and concrete way.

Checklist for Implementation

- [ ] Perform pre-assessment planning
- [ ] Define details of the activity
- [ ] Engage stakeholders
- [ ] Gather information for the baseline Information Use Map
- [ ] Conduct a validation workshop with key stakeholders and complete the Planning Matrix
- [ ] Document and share the results of the validation workshop
- [ ] Monitor and document results of using the Information Use Map

4 PRISM Tools

Why are these tools important?

Routine health information systems (RHIS) generate potentially useful data, but it is often of low quality and not trusted for decision-making.

What do these tools do?

The PRISM (Performance of Routine Information System Management) Tools support RHIS improvements by objectively measuring and identifying the factors that hinder performance. The set includes:

1. RHIS Performance Diagnostic Tool
2. RHIS Overview and Facility/Office Checklist
3. Organizational and Behavioral Questionnaire
4. RHIS Management Assessment Tool

Checklist for Implementation

- ❑ Identify the need
- ❑ Perform pre-assessment planning
- ❑ Assess and analyze current RHIS performance
- ❑ Define a plan for reaching the desired level of RHIS performance
- ❑ Implement the plan and monitor progress

5 Stakeholder Engagement

Why is this tool important?

Data is only valuable if it is seen as relevant and will be more useful if it is felt to be ‘owned’ by prospective users. These realities call for engaging an appropriate set of stakeholders when proposing, designing, implementing, and reporting on research and M&E initiatives.

What does this tool do?

It provides a structured way to identify and engage stakeholders to improve data initiatives by using guiding principles, suggested practices, and a matrix for recording information.

Checklist for Implementation

- ❑ Identify stakeholders
- ❑ Define their potential roles in the activity
- ❑ Identify the resources they can bring to bear
- ❑ Identify dynamics among stakeholders
- ❑ Set the optimum stakeholder group
- ❑ Create an engagement plan
- ❑ Track stakeholder engagement throughout the project