Dear Data Use Net colleagues,

Thank you for your active participation is last week's discussion on **Strategies to Increase Data Use at the Community Based Organization Leve**l. On Day 5 of the discussion, we received a thought-provoking post that provides an excellent segue into our final conclusions for the week. First, we'll provide the post for Day 5, moderator comments related to that post as well as other key issues raised during the week, and at the end a list of some of the key points discussed during the week. All of the posts for the week, including this final summary will be available on the Data Use Net discussion website:

https://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure/networks/datausenet/strategies-to-increase-data-use-by-community-based-organizations.

The day 5 question we asked was: Based on the discussion forum this week, what do you think you'll do differently to encourage data use at the CBO level? What are some concrete steps you as an individual can take? What are steps that you might recommend to others such as CBO leadership, donors, governmental partners, and international NGOs?

Harriet form Uganda wrote,
We shall have to strengthen our districts and CBO based performance review meetings which help CBOs and lower health centers to appreciate their contribution to the national aggregation and also come up with recommendations and suggestions which help them to improve their performance.

Some of the steps I think I will consider, one will be having internal discussions within our organization and determine means of centralizing CBO data; since we have already trained M&E officers from some CBOs, we shall train more M&E officers in data utilization and having discussions with the Ministry to devise means of introducing HMIS tools to the CBOs. I will appreciate getting other people's views on what they plan to do as they scale up.

Thanks to Harriet for that post - her post raises two critical points regarding data demand and use:

1) It takes action – we as individuals can initiate data demand and use in our organizations by advocating for and creating opportunities for it. Harriet indicates that she'll take action by first holding internal discussions about CBO data within her organization. That's a great starting point! While leadership, relationships with international NGOs, and government relationships/reporting structures are all important to data demand and use, we as individuals can take action by doing things such as:
   a. Ask for data the next time we need to make a decision
   b. After a data collection exercise, hold a meeting with our colleagues to discuss the findings and consider programmatic changes we might make as a result of the findings
   c. If our findings may be relevant to others outside of our organization (likely), hold a meeting with another CBO, international NGO, or government partner to discuss the findings and engage those stakeholders in considering how the findings might be relevant to them and lead to programmatic improvements. Always ensure these meetings culminate in an action plan with next steps, timeline, and an individual responsible for following through on the action.
   d. Not relying solely on sending written reports with our findings – as mentioned earlier during the week – dissemination of a report is NOT data use. We have to actively engage others and help foster the link between data and decision making. MEASURE Evaluation

has a tool to help facilitate this process: the Framework for Linking Data with Action, available at: www.measureevaluation.org/ddu-toolkit

    e. Not reinventing the wheel - reach out to others in this Data Demand and Use Community of Practice to ask others about their experiences and to share strategies and success stories.

2) Building capacity – as many have written in this week (and as Harriet addresses in her post), capacity at the CBO level for data aggregation, analysis, reporting, and use is often insufficient. Harriet discussed expanding training for more M&E officers in data utilization. The extent to which we sensitize M&E officers, as well as leaders, policy and decision makers, and other key stakeholders to data demand and use concepts, strategies, and tools, we can help build an information culture that many of you have referred to during the week. MEASURE Evaluation has several training curricula available on the website: www.measureevaluation.org/ddu. These curricula can be used for policy makers, program managers, M&E officers, and nurses or other community based workers whose work populates the national health information systems. Each training provides a facilitator guide, slides with speaker notes, and activities/exercises. At trainings, we recommend bringing together those who produce the data (M&E officers for example) and those who use the data (program leads) to make the connection between data collection and use.

Week SUMMARY – Strategies to Increase Data Use at the CBO Level

At the start of the week we had some discussion about what data use at the CBO level means. We provided the MEASURE Evaluation definition of what data use is and what it is not:

Something is considered data use if data were reviewed to: monitor, create or revise a program or strategic plan, develop or revise a policy, advocate for a policy or program, and allocate resources. The review of the data could have led to an action (as stated above) or no action (no change was necessary). It is important to recognize that the review of data at dissemination meetings and scientific meetings and/or the reporting of data is NOT data use. These activities are critical to making data available but for data to be used the review must be linked to a specific decision-making process.

Contributors provided several activities they have conducted to encourage data use in their organizations:

- Trained CBO data entry clerks on data entry, analysis, and presentation, as well as presenting findings to technical teams;
- Encouraged CBO managers/coordinators (during workshops, presentations, meetings) to review data before making decisions;
- Developed a state level data reporting tool, and provided training on tool application and how to use data generated from the tool;
- Convened state level meeting for CBOs to review aggregated data from the state level data reporting tool;
- Developed a Community Based Activity Reporting (COBPAR) system to facilitate discussions where stakeholders can identify gaps in the response to HIV and AIDS and make strategies within guided local context;

- Developed a low cost approach to conducting baseline assessments for children and families using the Ethiopia Child Support Index which was developed with local input and field tested in target communities;
- Engaged community based workers in Ethiopia through the entire quality improvement process to determine ways for strengthening community processes for improved care during the critical 48-hour period after birth.
- Worked with Health Extension Workers on identifying what information they find useful and then developing a strategy (Tickler File System) to reduce defaulters in their program.

We asked contributors to discuss what contributes or facilitates data use in their organizations. Below is a list of some of the key things contributors posted:

- Having questions drive the data collection activities;
- Technical capacity at the CBO level for collecting, aggregating, and analyzing information
- Information culture at the CBO level;
- Demand for data by partners and donors;
- Relevant and useful data that can be used by the CBO;
- Simple data collection, aggregation, and analysis approaches that can be accomplished by CBO staff;
- Participatory approaches that include CBO staff in all aspects of M&E;
- Funding climate exists for implementing data use strategies;
- Coordinated efforts between CBOs, donors, international NGOs and other partners on reviewing/interpreting findings – works up the chain and down the chain.

Key Points/Lessons Learned from the week – based on posts/responses and moderator comments

- Ensure information is relevant for CBOs. Potential strategies include:
    o Determine the questions that the program needs to answer;
    o CBO staff should drive program monitoring and evaluation activities that aim toward answering these questions, with M&E consultants or advisors supporting the team with application of basic M&E principles;
    o When data collection is initiated outside the CBO, ensure active engagement of community based workers – from creating necessary forms, to developing a process for data collection, and being involved in the review of findings
- Create an information culture. Potential strategies include:
    o Increase demand for data – sensitize managers to the importance of evidence-based decision making;
    o Managers, technical advisors, and service providers need to incorporate program monitoring into their daily work and should have a strong understanding of data quality standards in order to interpret data to make evidence based decisions.
- Use a team approach. Potential strategies include:
    o Have data producers and data users review the information together to see how it is relevant to the program and what programmatic decisions can be made based on the information generated;

- - Bring CBOs together on a routine schedule to share aggregated information to allow CBOs to see how they fit into a bigger picture and foster sharing across, not just within, CBOs [also related to creating an information culture].
- .Take initiative at the CBO level. Potential strategies include:
  - CBOs may have to wait for information generated from special studies or for routine data to be cleaned and analyzed to use data; however, there are numerous opportunities to use data in our daily work given that evidence should drive every decision we make;
  - While feedback mechanisms can be important for data use, CBOs do not have to wait someone to report the data back to them if they are collecting the data themselves. Determine ways to use the data you are collecting.
- Identify constraints to data use. Potential strategies include:
  - Each CBO may be experiencing different constraints to data use depending on contextual factors. Consider using the Assessment of Data Use Constraints tool to learn about the unique factors limiting data use at the CBO level and then create an action plan to start addressing those barriers.
  - When a CBO is part of a larger network of CBOs, international NGOs, and government, consider using the Information Use Map tool to determine the information flow and identify strategies to improve the flow of information.
  - Both of these tools are available at: www.measureevaluation.org/ddu-toolkit

In addition to the resources already mentioned, MEASURE Evaluation has other resources available to enhance data demand and use in your organizations. While our discussion this week focused on data use at the CBO level, many of the barriers and underlying causes of data use are applicable to different types of organizations. In addition to the Framework for Linking Data with Action, Assessment of Data Use Constraints, and Information Use Map, the DDU tool kit (www.measureevaluation.org/ddu-toolkit) also includes: a Quick Guide which is a summary of the DDU tools available, Stakeholder Engagement Tool, and the PRISM (Performance of Routine Information System Management Framework. **Using one tool or training methodology is likely insufficient for increasing DDU in your organization. We encourage an approach where a combination of tools, training, and organizational development strategies are combined**.

If you use any of the tools provided through the link please **let us know how you have used them**. We are always looking for user feedback on our products. Also, if you are aware of other tools that can be used to facilitate data use please share them with the Data Use Net community.

I'd like to thank Mary Freyder, this week's co-moderator, for her insight and comments throughout the week.

Warm Regards,

Molly Cannon

Data Use Net Moderator