

**Road Map for Improving the Quality of  
programs for  
Orphans and Vulnerable Children**

Draft

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## **Road Map for Improving the Quality of programs for Orphans and Vulnerable Children**

To achieve a measurable difference for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) requires understanding their needs and providing them with services to improve their situations. Improving the quality of OVC services means making them more effective, efficient, equitable and increasing their reach. This document outlines a Road Map for improving the quality of OVC services. This Road Map can be visualized in a series of phases, each one laying the ground for the next. It starts with creating a partnership for quality improvement (QI) that can support and sustain efforts along the way and an agreement about what stakeholders define as quality OVC services standards. When the standards have been vetted, tested, and communicated to all those managing OVC programs in the country, planners can celebrate and move on to the next phase.

It should be noted that while the major phases and steps are sequential, many of the milestones along the way can be achieved simultaneously.

### **Creating a Partnership and Broad Consensus on a Framework for Quality Improvement of OVC Programs**

This phase is critical for laying the groundwork for further efforts – it involves building a core group of organizations and individuals who are committed to improving the quality of OVC programs to develop the vision, strategies and mechanisms to support a broad QI initiative. This phase is lead by a group of key committed stakeholders who champion QI and lead a broader partnership of stakeholders who have the authority and desire to define policies at the service delivery level.

#### **1. Building constituencies and commitment for quality OVC care — planning and advocating for quality**

This set of activities focuses around setting the context for improving the quality of OVC services: Leadership, planning and advocating for quality and quality improvement for OVC programs and services are essential components of the Partnership for QI for OVC services. This set of activities lays the foundations in terms of vision and organization across partners and stakeholders to achieve it.

#### ***Are there a few champions to lead the way?***

Identify the one or two individuals (policy makers or donors) who will provide the overarching support for QI and who are truly committed to improving lives of children (child's rights approach). Identify individuals who have the ability to influence others to develop a common shared vision and also the ability to mobilize talent and resources to promote quality for OVC services.

***Have the essential stakeholders who need to be part of the Partnership for QI for OVC services been identified?***

Identify essential/key stakeholders, individuals involved directly, interfacing with children and clients, at the point of service delivery and who have a commitment/interest to see quality improvement efforts succeed. Stakeholders are also instrumental in being involved from the beginning in the QI efforts for OVC services. This group might include: service providers, clients (children, guardians), advocacy groups (such as NGOs regrouping PLWHA) donors or other representatives from funding organizations, and policy makers.

***Are key stakeholders aware of the need for quality improvement for OVC services?***

- Gather evidence that the current situation requires a paradigm shift towards quality for OVC programs (situation analysis or other activity). The situation analysis phase ensures that before embarking on a participatory standards-setting exercise, all current relevant information related to OVC programming and partners is available.
- Create a sense of urgency or tension to make changes in the way OVC programs are managed by advocating for quality among key decision makers and stakeholders by sharing evidence in order to create a sense of urgency/emergency/sensitize/create tension for change.

***Is there an organizational structure and plan to lead the Partnership for QI process?***

To travel effectively down the road to quality improvement, there needs to be organized momentum towards QI for OVC services. This means that those committed to QI for OVC services can be brought together to build on each other's energy and efforts, plan all along the Road Map, take stock of progresses, and continue to promote sharing of efforts and results. This group is fundamental to plan strategically how to move forward along the QI Road map, to ensure harmonization and consistency across all organizations and stakeholders, to provide guidance to the stakeholders involved in QI for OVC services, and to increase exchanges of best practices of QI for OVC services across organizations.

- Review and analyze currently existing structures in terms of their ability to fill this need (technical working groups, OVC task force, OVC steering committees, etc.) and what an expansion of their terms of reference might mean.
- If no such group exists that could be adapted to this purpose, organize a Technical Working Group (TWG) with links with existing structures/forum such as the OVC Task Force to lead the QI process, with USAID and OVC stakeholders and allocate time and resources for QI (identify someone

accountable/responsible for the whole process of developing consensus on what quality means in this context).

- Identify implementing organizations (NGOs and INGOs) that want to participate and promote quality improvement initiative and other key actors/champions to move the QI process forward (the doers).
- Identify basic operational rules (chair responsible, meeting frequency and duration, documentation, expectation).
- Develop a quality improvement plan for OVC services (how to reach consensus on defining quality, assess quality and measure progress; provide guidance for QI, share innovative approaches and increase inter-organizational sharing of best practices; document QI efforts and feedback into a larger national process.

***How do we know we have built the constituency needed? When is it time to celebrate?***

A ***strategic plan/work plan*** identifying time frame, resource, and responsibilities to support QI efforts has been laid out, developed by a ***group of implementers and key stakeholders who are convinced of the importance of quality***, and have an ***organizational structure*** in place that shares a common vision and can move the plan forward.

**Core competencies:**

- Strong understanding of OVC programming within the country
- Leadership skills (how to reach consensus, how to develop a shared vision)
- Advocacy skills
- Knowledge of quality improvement
- Skills in strategic planning
- Understanding of the importance to reposition quality within OVC programs

**2. Defining Quality: Establishing consensus about service standards.**

This set of activities defines in operational terms what quality OVC services at the point of service delivery for a county. Stakeholders reach consensus on service standards that will be applied across organizations. These standards clearly state desired outcomes per service area, and based on the dimensions of quality articulate minimum essential

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actions to reach the desired outcomes. The process of defining service standards is based on evidence, locally developed best practices, and a consensus among stakeholders and implementing partners. The guide, *Quality Programs for Orphans and Vulnerable Children: A Facilitator's Guide to Establishing Service Standards*, lays out in detail the specific steps to developing OVC services standards.

### ***Do stakeholders understand what an OVC standard for the point of service delivery is composed of?***

To reach consensus among all organizations to what it means for programs to effectively and efficiently serve a child, standards need to define the desired outcomes (what measurable difference do our programs need to make in a child's life) per domain (health services, food and nutrition, etc.) and minimum actions which need to take place to meet the desired outcomes, using the dimensions of quality that define this particular service.

### ***Do we have consensus-based OVC standards in country that are applicable at the point of service delivery?***

- Recognize any efforts that have been made already in country to develop OVC service standards, while highlighting the importance and scope of service standards.
- Clarify what is meant by service standards at the point of service delivery: how do we move forward from a general policy framework if it exists, to a point of standards at the point of service standards.
- Plan for developing OVC service standards (see Facilitator's Guide)
  - Build capacity of leaders for service standards development
  - Gather information to develop appropriate OVC services, including international evidence about best practices at the point of service delivery, include voices from providers, communities, and children (clients)
  - Reach consensus through a consultative process across organizations on the desired outcomes and essential actions, based on dimensions of quality to meet these outcomes efficiently and effectively while maximizing coverage.
  - Identify possible assessment measures around the question: How would we know if our programs are meeting the service standards: identify simple, doable/measurable, important/relevant, relevant indicators that can provide the information needed to assess if programs are meeting service standards.

***Has the feasibility and appropriateness of the standards been confirmed by those who work at the point of service delivery?***

- Using key organizations represented in the consensus building workshops for standards development and other fora, vet/review standards at point of service delivery with service providers, communities, and other stakeholders who would be responsible for implementing them: do they “ring true,” are they feasible? Will they be effective?
- Revise standards based on inputs from review.

***Do we have evidence that these service standards can make a measurable difference for children?***

- Organize testing of standards in pilot sites before roll-out on a national scale
- Field test process and outcome indicators for validity, reliability, and feasibility

***Are all implementing organizations and key stakeholders familiar with and committed to the standards and the QI initiative?***

This set of activities includes dissemination of service standards and engagement of stakeholders in reflection and dialogue about quality care for OVC, and their roles and resources to achieve quality services. It involves joint efforts to plan out communication strategies and develop partnership mechanisms for sharing and continued communication.

- Develop a communication strategy/implementation plan to inform all implementers (from national level all the way to the point of service delivery) on the final service standards and their implications (INGOS, local NGOs, CBOs, direct service providers, clients, donors, policy makers) that includes a range of specific strategies that implementing organizations can use to communicate within their organizations.
- Develop mechanisms for communication and exchange among stakeholders to share best practices in putting standards into place.

***How do we know we have a set of OVC service standards that are ready for wide implementation? When is it time to celebrate?***

***Existence of a set of standards that broader OVC Community (service providers, clients, and policy makers) knows, feels comfortable*** that these standards will better help them provide quality care for OVC and are committed to rolling the standards out within their various organizations

**Core competencies:**

- Understanding the value added of developing standards at the point of point of service delivery, where organizations interface with the clients.
- Understanding of what a service standard is and the process/steps to develop it.
- Knowledge related to desired outcomes, dimensions of quality, and the role of service standards in improving quality at the point of service delivery
- Knowledge of the steps to develop service standards
- Knowledge of previous work on existing standards in country
- Skills in synthesizing what is currently happening in OVC programs in the country
- Leadership skills
- Workshop organizational skills
- Communication skills to elicit inputs from youth and communities
- Skills in consensus building across organizations
- Measuring skills
- Skills in gathering evidence about the feasibility and effectiveness of service standards.
- Skills in developing strategic communication plans

(For more information, see Facilitator's Guide and also the website [ovcsupport.net](http://ovcsupport.net))

## **Improving Quality of Services at the Point of Service Delivery through a QI Framework**

The existence of good standards is critical but not sufficient to ensure quality service delivery. It is key that people are aware of the standards, agree with them, have the skills to implement them and create the organizational contexts in which the standards can be applied. It is through the process of quality improvement that organizations will be able to effectively operationalize the standards, understanding what they need to change in order for the standards to make a measurable difference.

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This phase of the Road Map is implemented primarily at the organizational level – where individual implementing organizations translate consensus into implementation within their service delivery context. However, quality improvement is a learning activity and learning needs to be shared across the partnership. Thus, many activities in this phase involve a coming together of various partners to reflect, share and learn from one another.

### **3. Achieving improvement of quality at the point of service delivery.**

This set of activities involves measuring and improving quality at the point of service delivery and organizational mechanisms to support quality improvement throughout organizations. It also involves operationalizing, sharing, and learning within organizations and across organizations. This means mobilizing participants in partnership to review current processes, measure achievement of service standards, identify opportunities to operationalize standards, test solutions, and share and scale up good practices through learning communities.

#### ***Do we know our performance in light of the service standards?***

Each organization can begin with internal reflection on the difference between current organizational practice and the quality standards. Each organization needs to engage their partners and stakeholders (regional level, district level, and village/level with CBO and local NGO and direct service providers/volunteers) in reflecting on the standards and their roles and assets to build quality services, addressing questions such as: “Based on what the standards say, are there any changes needed? What are my responsibilities? How am I going to know if I am achieving what I am supposed to be doing?”

- Reflect on how these standards differ from current competencies at various levels of the program (needs assessment) and develop action plans for building capacity to operationalize the standards for quality OVC service delivery.
- Collect existing information (qualitative and quantitative) to develop an understanding about whether the programs are currently meeting the service standards.
- Analyze, share and develop a broad consensus on what are some of the priority areas for improvement. Develop a common vision, an understanding of which priority issues need to be addressed.

#### ***Are service providers, their supervisors, other program support staff and communities aware of and committed to the OVC service standards?***

Individual organization need to engage in efforts to communicate to and prepare their staff and communities for operationalizing these standards at the point of

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service delivery. Along the continuum of care, INGOs, local NGOs, CBOs and direct service providers (the ones in contact with the children) share a mutual responsibility for quality of OVC services.

- Train service providers (workshops, supportive supervision, on the job training) about the service standards, across all levels of care (INGOs, NGOs, CBOs)
- Inform children, guardians, and communities about what to expect from services and about their roles and responsibilities to help improve service quality.
- Inform community organizations such as women's groups, youth groups, advocacy groups been informed about the service standards and their roles and responsibilities in promoting quality in services?
- Develop systems to promote communication of service standards and QI such as regular supportive supervision visits, development of job aids.

### ***Have we created a frame that will facilitate implementation and support of QI at the point of service delivery?***

Work collaboratively to build a structured Quality Improvement approach at the organization level based on QI principles: team-work, client centered, process analysis, measuring progress achieved

- Reach consensus at the organizational level on the purpose to engage in QI for OVC services: Develop at the organizational level a shared vision towards QI for OVC services, based on the service standards.
- Determine clear responsibilities and accountability for QI efforts within organizations at all levels.
- Build capacity at all levels towards QI for OVC services, support quality improvement activities.
- Identify communication mechanisms to share within groups, across groups and also back at the Partnership level
- Develop and plan implementation of overall quality improvement efforts that integrates QI into routine business: meeting time of QI teams, visits of coaches, expected results and time frame; sharing internal and external

### ***Do we have functioning structures at the point of service delivery (QI Teams) and support systems for those teams at higher levels of the system?***

- Identify roles and responsibilities of the different groups of the QI organizational structure:(expert group, QI teams, coaches)

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- Establish teams (learning groups) at the point of service delivery that will work together to operationalize the standards using a QI approach. Members of teams will include the various key actors involved (CBOs, volunteers, community leaders, representatives of children and guardians etc.).
- Identify coaches (internal and external) and experts to provide guidance in OVC programming and QI.
- Build capacity of the teams and coaches towards system analysis: understanding the need to analyze processes. "What do we need to do to meet the desired outcomes, what are the essential actions defined in the service standards?"
- Evaluate Quality Improvement efforts within organizations.
- Document QI work to be shared within organizations, across organizations and with the Partnership; recognize QI efforts and demonstrate success.

### ***Are we making structured efforts at the point of service delivery to improve the ways we provide OVC services?***

- Evaluate processes of care: flow of services, barriers, bottlenecks, opportunities to improve to reach desired outcomes as defined in service standards.
- Based on this analysis, propose possible changes to address causes of the problems.
- Clearly identify who needs to be involved in these changes, what resources and systems might need to be put in place, and how to act on these changes.
- Gather evidence that the proposed changes do make a positive difference in the ability of the service providers to meet the minimum essential actions and to improve outcomes.
- Evaluate collected results (qualitative and quantitative) within teams and across teams.
- Document results and share across teams and back to the Partnership.
- Systemize changes within organization, across organizations when sharing with Partnership.

### ***Are we measuring how well we are meeting standards at the point of service delivery on a routine continuous basis?***

- Agree on measures of quality (outcomes: child well being, client satisfaction, service providers' satisfaction; and processes) and on indicators (outcomes and processes).

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- Provide information on how well programs are meeting desired outcomes and the essential actions as defined in the standards.
- Agree on how information can be collected: quantitatively and qualitatively and how often (routinely).
- Plan collection of performance data: Identify who is responsible for developing tools (to be field tested) to determine progress, collecting data, training on data collection tools, collecting data, analyzing information, and identifying feedback mechanisms to point of service delivery.
- Develop strategies to communicate within groups, across groups, and back to the Partnership results and findings such as best practices for QI activities.

### ***How do we know have achieved effective QI efforts at the point of service delivery? When is it time to celebrate?***

- Organizations are ***continually actively making improvements at the point of service delivery, documenting*** effective and ineffective changes, ***sharing*** them with other teams ***within*** their organization and ***across organizations***
- Children receiving services are doing better.

#### **Core competencies**

- Knowledge and skills in applying modern quality improvement methods at the point of service delivery.
- Organizational skills to structure shared learning across organizations.
- Skills in assessing/reflecting how organizations are currently meeting service standards
- Skills in organizing QI at the point of service delivery, such as development of QI teams, identifying and training coaches
- Skills in training in quality improvement across levels of care (INGOs, NGOs, CBOs)
- Measurement skills for both processes and outcomes
- Skills in synthesizing and documenting
- Leadership skills

#### **4. Taking stock: reflect on results, outcomes, and lessons learned and plan the next phase of the journey**

Quality improvement is not a linear process; is an on-going iterative process. Thus, it is important to program specific moments for real reflection of where we want to be, where we are, and what we should be doing the same or differently to get where we want to be.

***Are we on the right track? Are we making progress? Were our assumptions about what was needed to make a measurable difference for children correct?***

- Organize a workshop/national stakeholders meeting that would share to date progress made towards quality for OVC services – examine what has really been achieved, how well it has been implemented, what we have learned, what we still have to learn, do we have in our programs and standards what it takes to make a measurable difference for these children?
- Communicate evidence of the results, the QI work, the outcomes, lessons, and remaining needs to policy makers.
- Re-engage all stakeholders to ensure a sustainable approach, a commitment to continuously nurture quality care for OVC

***Have we identified where we need to be making course corrections? Do we have a way of doing this?***

Identify new opportunities for improvement, unmet needs, ways forward to address them.

**Core competencies:**

- Strong understanding of quality improvement and OVC programming within the country
- Leadership skills (how to reach consensus, how to develop a shared vision)
- Advocacy skills
- Skills in strategic planning
- Synthesis skills
- Skills in promoting commitment for quality improvement for OVC services
- Skills in promoting QI as an overarching frame for OVC programs.

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