

This is a Vignette from Ethiopia

The essential action: Ask child/caretaker about school attendance/absenteeism, educating family about importance of regular attendance.

My name is Alem. I am 22 years old. I live in Dire Dawa which is a semi-urban city with roughly 500,000 people. Most people in my Kebele work either at a factory or in retail. I, myself, am a factory worker along with my three sisters. I have lived in Dire Dawa all my life and have seen many people who are suffering. Thus, when my local Idir was recruiting more volunteers my friend Almaz and I decided to go to the first meeting. After this meeting with the committee, we learned how much need there is, especially for orphans and vulnerable children, and how we should help the children in our community. I have now been volunteering for almost 1 year. During this year, I was also selected to be part of a new team within my Idir. This new team is comprised of volunteers, committee members, OVC, LNGO, school principal, and someone from the regional HAPCO. We were selected to try and address quality within the education services we are providing to OVC. Before I learned about the concept of quality, I did not fully understand my role as a home based care provider. I would visit vulnerable children and their families but was not sure how to best follow up. I now understand that I should go to the school to see if they are attending. I will either go by myself or with others from the QI Team to talk with the teachers to see who has gone to school and who did not show up. I usually go once a week. Once I receive the name of who did not show up, I go to the child's home to ask them why they did not go to school. After I record the name of the student, I also record how many days the student has been absent as well as why the child did not go to school. I then provide this information to the other members of the Idir to keep track of the students. I am very encouraged to see how my work can help children and that the dropout rates have now decreased.

I. Questions to Discuss

1. What change did Alem make to meet the essential action as defined in the service standard?
2. How is Alem measuring the change?
3. What other indicators could you collect to track the change?

II. Why Measure: Talking points about the importance of measuring for quality improvement: (Summarize after the sharing of vignettes)

1. Measuring quality improvement for services provided to orphans and vulnerable children helps us to know if the services are meeting the desired outcomes. We want to know if ultimately we are making a difference in children's lives, and if we are providing effective and equitable services to vulnerable children. By measuring what we do, we promote the effective use of scarce resources to deliver needed services as stated in the draft service standards. In a sense, measurement of quality improvement in services helps us focus on the accountability of our programs. Are we truly making a measurable difference in a child's life? Measurement also helps us take stock of our accomplishments, what are we able to achieve, within the frame of the service standards. We feel rewarded and reenergized if our programs are meeting some of the desired outcomes.

2. We also measure to know if we are meeting the draft service standards for quality programs. What is our current situation? Which areas do we need to focus on? What major gaps exist between what we have defined as providing an effective service and what we are currently doing? Thus measuring allows us to identify opportunities for improvement, and then to observe if the changes we introduce have positive results.

3. We also measure to identify best practices that help us to apply service standards, and thus facilitate sharing among and across organizations. Measurement thus provides an objective, evidence-based basis for ongoing quality improvement in OVC programs.

4. Finally, measurement gives us some basis for continuous advocacy. We might be working very hard at implementing the service standards, but because of the context and other issues, we are not always able to make a measurable difference in children's lives. But by measuring, we obtain new information to help us to advocate to policy makers to address vulnerable children's needs with improved policies.