

Minutes of OVC Programs: Quality in Focus Phone call

Date: 01/30/08

Time: 8:30-10:00 AM EST

Topic of the call: Moving the standards from the Workshop to the Field: how can we know if these standards are improving program implementation.

Participants:

Lynne Miller Franco (Facilitator), Senior QA Advisor URC
Renee DeMarco, Senior Advisor, OVC Programs, USAID Africa Bureau
Samantha Dovey, (Notetaker) Project Coordinator, URC
Patricia Williams, PACT Namibia
Lori DiPrete Brown, Assistant Director, Center for Global Health, U. of Wisconsin
Cephus Goldman, USAID/South Africa
Taline Haytayan, Technical Advisor Knowledge Management AIDS Alliance
Mildred Mushunje, CRS/Zimbabwe
Dorothy Brewster-Lee, CRS
Mychelle Farmer, Catholic Relief Services
Jane Calder, PACT/Tanzania
Florence Nyangara, Measure Evaluation
Gretchen Bachman, FHI/Washington
Todd Hoppenhaven, USAID/Namibia
Kendra Blackett-Dibinga, Save the Children
Carol Keller, Vietnam
Clara Dube, UNICEF/Swaziland
Holly Christofferson, Salvation Army World Services Office
Beverly Nyberg, OGAC
Gabriel Kalungi, USAID/Namibia
Darlene, Namibia
Daphnie, CRS/Tanzania

Introduction:

Renee: The purpose of call to discuss what is the journey involved in moving standards to the field. It is helpful to hear from others what their experiences have been, what the journey looks like, how does this improve programs and the outcomes of our programs.

Lynne: Call will discuss four areas of evidence we want to gather:

1. Determine the extent to which the service standards are understandable and "doable" at the field level.
2. Identify what organizations need to do/change to be able to implement the standards—best practices that facilitate the ability to meet the standards.
3. Ascertain whether following the standards improves the quality of programming and services delivered.
4. Investigate whether implementation of standards leads to a measurable difference for children.

Two Dynamics to discuss:

1. Piloting standards vs. moving ahead to widespread implementation, do we need to wait?
2. M&E vs. Quality Improvement-how to achieve a balance?

Presentation from the Field: Kendra-Save the Children/Ethiopia

Save the Children in Ethiopia and other partners are in the stage of piloting standards developed using the Facilitators Guide for Establishing Service Standards for OVC programs. Save has a large OVC program, which includes 512 CBOs, 36 NGOs, working within 3 tier level.

They are in the process of designing a way to test out the "critical minimum activities". It is difficult to measure quality for CBOs, but this process will help to assess whether the critical minimum activities can effectively serve in measuring quality.

Save the Children is implementing Child Status Index (CSI) in the field (based on a sample of children), and implementing standards at all levels, from the lowest to a national level.

QI teams at the CBO level will have learning sessions to discuss and share experiences and best practices, and this sharing will move all the way up to the national level through linkages with the national level OVC taskforce.

Save will be using the improvement collaborative approach to pilot these standards, in collaboration with several other partners: Christian Children's Fund, PCI, and other national level NGOs. This collaboration will allow piloting of standards in different service delivery models, for example, one partner's program aim is in schools, while others deliver services in the community and homes but with different levels of supervision and different models of care (i.e. home based care, volunteer supervisors)

Development of tools: how do we measure Quality in our programs? Answer: Using a general checklist with key areas. Implementation of the checklist can be challenging because of the capacity necessary to implement.

Questions/Comments after Kendra's presentation:

- 1) Critical min. activities/standards, is it easy to measure those using the CSI?

Kendra: It is more that they are testing the two together, measurement of quality (the process) and measurement of outcomes. CSI doesn't measure quality.

Renee: QI focuses not only on outcomes, but also on efficiency and equity.

Florence

Have to be careful on how we implement CSI; that our programs meet standards and also have better outcomes. Essentially that CQI/CSI work together.

Beverly

Quality should result in improved outcomes for children; it should also focus on efficiency-on increasing the number of children reached, cost-effectiveness of programs. There are many ways to evaluate impact.

Mychelle

CRS is in process of testing out a "well-being" measurement tool, and whether it can be used to measure quality, and in general they are exploring new tools to use (examples given: achievement in education, inclusion in vocational education, and health outcomes)

Presentations from the Field: Jane-PACT/Tanzania

PACT/Tanzania has been working to improve the quality of service provision in the programs for past 8-9 months. PACT works in 5 regions in Tanzania; targeting 80,000 children in 22 districts.

Processes discussed on how they are implementing QI: they have changed their process such that new partners now have 3 months lead in period in which they are not expected to provide services. During that time, they recruit and train volunteers and do an assessment of needs in the community prior to doing their program planning and budget. They have also put a volunteer in every village so as to extend their reach and capacity to serve the needs of the children.

They have begun to implement standards specifically for on-the-job use by the volunteers. The standards are a significant element of the volunteers' training. Goal: to build capacity of the volunteers-so they fully understand their role/job.

Not piloting standards because they have a short time to reach their targets so training their volunteers in standards and will assess the impact of the training and the use of the standards themselves as job aids, later on. Idea of and Improvement Collaborative could be useful, especially to help document what is really happening on the ground. There are challenges, though - bringing together volunteers from remote areas w/limited resources.

Workshop planned for later in the year, to review quality and impact.

Partners are excited about the standards; it helps them to understand if their work really is addressing the needs.

Would like for professional standards to be developed from these service standards. Para-social workers and volunteers that are trained could potentially receive qualifications.

Presentation from the field: Mildred Mushunje -CRS/Zimbabwe

Quality standards are being endorsed by the Government of Zimbabwe. The next step is to lobby for a policy mandating all organizations working in OVC to adhere to the set quality standards.

Aware that partners might consider the process cumbersome, especially when they haven't been held accountable in the past. To counter this, they are working on developing a simple tool that will assess various variables: the extent of use of the quality standards, impact on the child, and improvement in service delivery. CRS has a "Well being tool" which they are considering as a starting point.

Draft quality standards manual is ready and are in process of reviewing it (help reviewing draft from colleagues would be appreciated).

Quality standards are "doable." There is a general consensus that most NGOs have some quality standards, but are very informal. A set of nationally based and monitored quality standards will provide a harmonized approach to service delivery and make M&E easier.

Organizations will have to realign their services and conform to the designed quality standards. This will help eliminate practices by organizations that appear good on paper- thousands of children reached, but in fact do little on the ground.

Improvement Collaborative approach good tool to use for M&E, need to integrate aspects of it into our own systems. Challenge in doing this, partners already feel they over report and the info they share is not for their use. Aiming for African Partnership, might use this approach for this purpose to look at the impact of quality standards on OVC at African Union level.

Closing Remarks:

Lynne

The OVC website (www.ovcsupport.net) is a great mechanism for sharing knowledge. We will soon be adding a page on the Quality Improvement initiative (hopefully by the end of February). We will be asking country programs to share their experiences, standards/tools and other useful resources on this website.

Renee

Quality care has many components that need to be taken into account-improved outcomes, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, coverage.

Lynne

HIV/AIDS Implementers' Meeting-June 2008

Call for abstracts: Due Feb. 12

Country programs encouraged to participate and submit abstracts on "Effective ways to establish and use a Quality Improvement system to improve programs in treatment and palliative care settings as well as OVC."

We are planning to do an overview abstract of the Quality Improvement Initiative for OVC programs and several countries/programs are already planning to submit abstracts related to their experiences. We hope to be able to have a specific session on this!