M&E Animators Training Manual

Purpose of Manual

This manual is intended to assist THP Africa staff in the facilitation of training workshops for community-based Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Animators. It may also be used to train Epicenter Project Officers, who will in turn train M&E Animators. The content of this manual is intended as a guide and tool for trainers; the delivery should be modified depending on the needs of the audience.

The facilitator responsible for training should thoroughly review the content of this guide and prepare material for some of the sections in advance.

The contents of this manual are the following:

Module 1: Workshop objectives and expectations

Facilitator: Introduce yourself and try to set a comfortable and open atmosphere for the participants.

Participant introductions: Have each participant introduce themselves and say a little about themselves – perhaps where they live, what they are most excited to learn about, or what made them want to become M&E Animators. This is also a good opportunity to "break the ice" and make everyone feel more comfortable – participants could also be asked about their favorite or least favorite food, etc.

Set ground rules: It is important to set some ground rules to ensure mutual respect and foster the active participation of all. To work together to successfully achieve the objectives of this workshop, all participants are encouraged to:

- Respect each other's views
- Listen when someone is talking and wait until they finish to respond
- Respect the time provided for each topic
- Practice active engagement by sharing ideas and self-reflections

ACTIVITY: Set Goals and Objectives for Workshop

Each participant should take a few minutes to think about two things they are most interested in learning today. Ideas can be shared with the larger group and recorded by the facilitator. All participants should then agree as a group which objectives are most important.

Objectives may include:

- *Become more involved in the community's development activities*
- *Increase understanding of THP's approach to community development*
- *Learn about Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation*
- *Increase knowledge of basic research skills and methods*
- *Learn about data collection, different types of data (qualitative, quantitative), data collection instruments (surveys, interviews, etc.)*
- *Increase confidence among the community to monitor their own progress, identify successes and failures*
- *Etc.*

Module 2. Background: THP and the Epicenter Strategy

Facilitator: Open a discussion to the group. Ask participants what THP does, and about what the epicenter strategy does in their communities. Why did their communities decide to partner with THP? Ensure that the discussion touches upon the content below.

The Hunger Project (THP) is a global, non-profit, strategic organization committed to the sustainable end of world hunger. In Africa, South Asia and Latin America, THP seeks to end hunger and poverty by empowering people to lead lives of self-reliance, meet their own basic needs and build better futures for their children.

Epicenter strategy

In Africa, THP has pioneered the ***Epicenter Strategy*** *to empower people to meet their basic needs on a sustainable basis. This strategy is a unified, people-centered approach currently being implemented by local staff in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Senegal and Uganda. Clusters of rural villages join together to form epicenters where women and men are mobilized to create and run their own programs to meet basic needs. After several phases over a five to eight year period, an epicenter becomes self-reliant, meaning it is able to fund its own activities and no longer requires financial investment from The Hunger Project.*

The Epicenter Strategy is integrated and holistic, with programs addressing health (including HIV/AIDS prevention), education, adult literacy, nutrition, improved farming and food security, microfinance, water and sanitation, and building community spirit with a momentum of accomplishment involving the entire population. The Epicenter Strategy is also designed to be economically sustainable. The primary resources for the strategy come from community members and local governments.

THP's approach is fundamentally people-centered and people-driven, with epicenter priorities and activities driven and led by community members. This people-driven approach extends throughout the project cycle – as well as prioritizing community participation in the planning and implementation of programs, THP believes it is important to include participants in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the programs addressing their needs. ***To foster this participation, and to build the capacity of partner communities to be self-reliant in the pursuit of their goals, THP trains and utilizes community-based M&E Animators.***

Module 3. What is M&E? Why do we do it?

Monitoring

Facilitator: Explain the concept briefly, and then ask for examples of monitoring from participants.

Monitoring is the process of collecting and analyzing systematic regular information about the progress and operations of a project or program, and its implementation over time. Monitoring helps keep track of what is happening where, who is doing what, and whether activities are being accomplished.

For example, THP's monitoring activities include keeping track of how many workshops occur, how many people attend, etc. and reporting this information on a quarterly (four times a year) basis.

Evaluation

Facilitator: Explain the concept briefly, and then ask for examples of evaluation from participants.

Evaluation is an assessment conducted at one point in time that focuses on whether the objectives of the project or program have been achieved, and what impact it has had. An evaluation can examine whether the project was implemented well and effectively (process evaluation), what results it has had in the short to medium term (outcome evaluation), and/or the long-term changes (impact evaluation).

Additional information: THP generally conducts evaluations every few years for particular epicenters. These evaluations partly draw on the monitoring data that has been collected for the duration of the program, and partly on separate surveys conducted for the purposes of evaluation. A good evaluation is highly dependent on a well-functioning monitoring system.

Facilitator: Ask participants to explain the difference between monitoring and evaluation, and continue the discussion until this distinction is clear.

Why do we do M&E?

ACTIVITY: Purposes and Stakeholders of M&E

Some people say that monitoring and evaluation is a waste of time and money that could be spent on implementing or expanding programs instead. In small groups, ask participants to suggest reasons why an organization like THP might devote time and resources to monitoring and evaluation. Share results with the group.

Ensure that the discussion touches on the below points.

a) Testing expected results

In order to know that THP's programs and investments are effective ways of achieving the goal of ending poverty and hunger, we would want to know whether the desired outcomes and impacts are in fact occurring in the community. We measure links all the way along the chain connecting the epicenter strategy to the ultimate goal, to make sure that change is happening, and if not, which links are broken. Otherwise, everyone may continue investing time and money into a process that does not work.

b) Verifying operations

In order for the expected changes to occur, activities have to happen! Monitoring and evaluation help ensure that time, money, and other resources are getting where they are supposed to, and that activities are occurring as planned.

Verifying operations can be a way of guarding against corruption – the misuse of resources for private gain. However, there are many reasons that activities may not be occurring as planned; perhaps there were unforeseen challenges, the planning was not accurate, there was a tragedy in the community that interrupted operations… Regularly collecting information on how the program is progressing means that corrections and improvements can be made if necessary, and the expectations of the program can more accurately reflect the situation on the ground.

c) Accountability to the community

THP's programs are ultimately driven by, and accountable to, the communities that they serve. It is critical for community members to have information on what the program has been doing, and what the results have been, so that they can determine whether their development goals are being met.

d) Accountability to investors

THP's activities are funded by generous organizations and individuals from around the world who believe in and invest in the ability of communities to drive their own development. It is *important for THP to be able to report back to these investors on where their money has been spent, and what the effects have been.*

THP's approach: Participatory monitoring and evaluation

Facilitator: Ask participants who should be involved in M&E. Who should be involved in collecting information, and who should have access to this information? Lead into a discussion of participatory monitoring and evaluation. See below for notes.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) is designed to recognize and include communities as important stakeholders in data collection and evaluation. M&E animators are critical to this approach – they are responsible for collecting key pieces of data, and for communicating the results of M&E activities to community members.

Traditionally, monitoring and evaluation is designed to provide top-down accountability – for donors to ensure that organizations are spending their funding properly, for organizations to hold local partners accountable for activities, to verify whether the organization's expected results are in fact occurring. This accountability is important, but too often misses the voices of communities.

PM&E expands the notion of accountability to answer not only whether organizations are fulfilling the terms of the funding they receive, but also whether they are fulfilling the needs and goals of partner communities. It requires both including community voices in monitoring and evaluation, and building the capacity of community members to become active partners in this process. THP includes community members in data collection through training M&E animators, and communicates the results of monitoring and evaluation activities to communities on a regular basis.

THP's approach to PM&E is intended to:

- *Make epicenters and THP accountable to community members*
- *Empower communities to define their own criteria for progress, success, and failure*
- *Give communities a sense of ownership over epicenter development work and demonstrate that their active participation and input are valued*
- *Build the capacity of communities in monitoring and evaluation, data collection, etc.*

Module 4. M&E Animators: Defining Roles and Expectations

Facilitator: Before the training session, be sure to prepare material for this section on animator roles and expectations.

M&E animators are critical to the operation of THP's PM&E system. Without them, crucial links in the data cycle – from data collection, to communication with THP, to feedback from community members – are broken.

Animator requirements and expectations

Facilitator: Explain what will be required of M&E animators.

Minimum qualifications/requirements to be an animator:

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Expectations of animators:

- Responsibilities:
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- Time investment required: _______________
- Other expectations:
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    -
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Collecting data

Facilitator: Prepare a list of the kinds of data that M&E animators will be involved in.

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Reporting

Facilitator: Fill in the below and explain how animators should record and communicate the data they collect.

One of the most important responsibilities of M&E animators is recording the results of their monitoring activities and reporting these results to THP.

How and where to record data

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Who is data reported to?

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How is data reported, and how often?

-
-

Other information

-
-

Presenting results

Facilitator: If animators will be involved in data presentations at quarterly or annual meetings or other settings, explain these responsibilities.

A key component of participatory monitoring and evaluation is communicating the results of M&E back to communities. M&E animators are the primary mechanism for this communication.

When do presentations occur, and how often?

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What information is given? To whom?

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-

Tips for successful presentations

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ACTIVITY: Challenges and Benefits of Animator Roles

In groups of 2-4, have participants brainstorm a list of some challenges they may experience in fulfilling their duties, and how they might overcome these. They should also brainstorm ideas of how they will personally benefit from their work as M&E Animators. The entire group should discuss the results of these discussions.

Possible benefits include:

- Active engagement in advancing the goals of their community
- Presentation and communication skills
- Understanding of monitoring, evaluation, and accountability that can be applied to many areas
- Etc.

Module 5. Key Concepts in M&E

Definitions *(FOR FACILITATOR USE)*

Data collection tools/instruments: Methods used to collect information (data) during monitoring and evaluation. For example: field reports, surveys, interviews, observation, etc.

Indicators: Measurements selected to represent progress (or lack thereof) towards goals and objectives. An indicator is a quantitative or qualitative variable that provides a simple and reliable basis for assessing change or performance. For example: the number of people trained in a workshop, the percent increase in agricultural production, the female literacy rate, etc.

Qualitative data: Descriptive information or facts. For example, people's feelings about the effectiveness of their leaders.

Quantitative data: Numerical information or facts. For example, how many children sleep under a bed net, how many workshops were conducted, etc.

Introduction to indicators

Facilitator: This discussion should lead participants to an understanding of indicators and measurement. The below is an example of how that discussion could flow. Review this content before the workshop and prepare your talking points.

We know why we are collecting data, but what is this data? When we want to know whether activities or changes are occurring, how do we measure them?

Example leading questions: To measure "literacy," what would you actually assess?

- Whether a person could read – how would you measure that?
  - Would you ask them if they can read, would you have them read a paragraph aloud to you?
- Whether a person can write – but how much writing is required to be literate?
  - If they can write their own name, is that enough, or must they be able to write one sentence? Three sentences?

Example leading questions: If you want to know whether a food bank exists and is operational, what would you look at?

- Perhaps first, whether there was physical location for it; then how much food was being stored; and what kind of food.

- Is this really enough to know whether the food bank is doing anyone any good, or whether the food is just sitting there and going bad? Perhaps we might want to include how many people are using and benefiting from the food bank.

All of these issues are carefully thought through to create "indicators" – what is actually measured to assess the issues that we care about.

- Examples of indicators from the above discussion:
  - Being able to read a paragraph
  - Being able to sign your name
  - Number of kg of food distributed from a food bank

Indicators can be **qualitative** or **quantitative**, and can be **primary** or **secondary** data.

Quantitative data is information or facts that consist of numbers.

- How many people attended a workshop; for how many months a child is breastfed; how much food is stored in a food bank; how many acres of land were tended.

Qualitative data is descriptive information or facts.

- How people feel about the trustworthiness of their leaders; how much they love their children; how their lives have changed as a result of involvement with THP.

Primary data is collected firsthand, and does not go through another institution or organization.

- Animators collecting primary data for THP using tools like surveys, interviews, focus groups, and direct observation (see below for details).

Secondary data is collected by another institution or actor, and used by THP.

- Information from the government census, research done by other organizations, or data collected by government agencies are secondary information for THP (but primary information for the actors that collected the data in the first place).

Data collection tools

ACTIVITY: Ways of collecting information

Open the discussion to the group for discussion and brainstorming. Pose a question, such as, "if you wanted to know which shop had the best prices, how could you try to find out?" Answers could include going to the store to check the prices; but you may not have time to do that, or to compare the prices with other stores. What are some other ways? You could ask everyone you see that day, and see which shop is recommended most often. You could ask a smaller group of people, perhaps women you see carrying purchases. Or you could ask one or two people whose opinions you very much trust.

Connect the results of this conversation with the data collection tools described below.

Direct observation: Literally watching what is happening or examining something and documenting what is going on.

- Direct observation allows researchers to a) collect information without burdening respondents - for example, there is no need to ask what a home's floor is made of when you are in the home and can see for yourself – and b) to see participants in their own environment.
- Observations are also a good way to verify information that was obtained through quantitative surveys and questionnaires or through qualitative interviews.

Surveys: In a survey, respondents (those who are completing the survey) are asked a series of questions that are worded the same way for all respondents.

- **In-person surveys:** Enumerators read the survey to the respondent and record their answers.
- **Self-administered surveys:** Respondents receive the questionnaire and fill it out without the M&E Animator present. The respondent returns the completed questionnaire. (This approach depends on the reliability and literacy levels of respondents.)

Focus Group Discussions: A focus group is a small group of people sitting together with a trained moderator to discuss particular topics. These participants should be purposefully selected, and will often share some characteristics – such as age, gender, or organizational affiliation.

Interviews: Interviews allow researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the respondent's perspective on the research topic or interview theme. Interviews are useful because they can reveal nuanced information showing the connections and relationships the respondent sees between events, experiences and beliefs. This is appropriate for asking about individual experiences, opinions, and feelings as well as addressing sensitive topics.

Theory of Change

Facilitator: This discussion should lead participants to an understanding of the Theory of Change concept. The below is an example of how that discussion could flow. Review this content before the workshop and prepare your talking points.

Like any organization, household, or individual, The Hunger Project does not choose randomly what to work on or where to focus its efforts. THP's activities are carefully planned and focused around what it hopes to achieve, and how it believes that can be done. This set of beliefs about what is important and the building blocks necessary to accomplish it is called a **Theory of Change.**

Definitions ***(FOR FACILITATOR USE)***

Inputs: The resources needed for an activity or project to operate. *Examples: funding, staff members, land, equipment, training.*

Activities: Actions taken or work performed as part of a project/program. *Examples: Vision, Commitment, and Action workshops; construction of Epicenter Health Clinics; adult literacy classes.*

Outputs: The direct results of a project or program through its activities. *Example: an output of HIV/AIDS workshops could be the number of workshop participants who understand how the disease can spread.*

Outcomes: The short and medium term effects of a program, its activities, and its outputs. These effects could be changes in behavior, knowledge, institutions, skills, attitudes, policies, and conditions. *Examples: the desired outcome of workshops on improved agricultural production techniques may be increased crop yields.*

Impact: The changes generated by particular activities, projects, or programs. Impact is the long-term or ultimate result attributable to the intervention (in contrast to outputs and outcomes, which are shorter-term results). *Examples: improved food security, higher income, increased gender equity, better health outcomes.*

The Theory of Change is a simple concept that can apply to all areas of life.

- **EXAMPLE:** If you want your child to have a good quality of life, you may choose to send them to school. The "theory of change" behind this decision could be that going to school will teach the child to read; learning to read will mean that she gets a good job; getting a good job means that she will have a higher income; and having a higher income means that she will have a better quality of life, which was what you really wanted. THP's Theory of Change works a similar way.

Why does the Theory of Change matter for M&E animators? This theory informs the information that is collected during monitoring and evaluation, and the results we expect to see from activities. Understanding the theory of change is an important foundation for understanding THP's monitoring and evaluation system.

A theory of change has five components.

- First, **inputs**: what is necessary for the activities to take place? For the schooling example, this could be a school building, teachers, books, uniforms, money for school fees, and transportation.
- The **activities** are the work carried out in pursuit of the goal. For students, this could be attending lessons, doing homework, and studying.
- The **outputs** are the immediate results of the activities – number of hours spent in school, number of assignments completed, etc.
- The **outcomes** are what happens in the short to medium term – such as learning to read, earning good grades, graduating to the next level in school, and eventually completing schooling.
- The **impact** of this process is getting a well-paid job and enjoying a good quality of life.

ACTIVITY: Understanding THP's Theory of Change

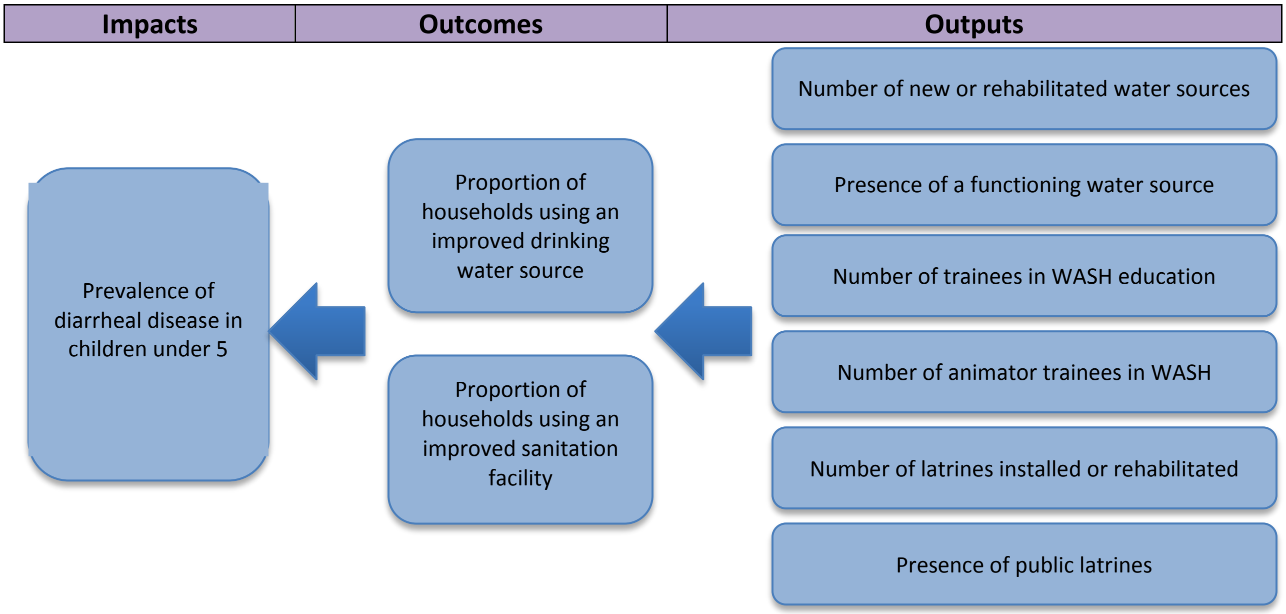
To achieve the ultimate goal of ending hunger and poverty, THP raises money to fund epicenters in communities across Africa. How are these epicenters expected to achieve this goal?

In small groups, participants should list 2-3 activities that THP funds or operates in their home community or epicenter (e.g. functional adult literacy classes, food bank, nursery school, etc.). What are the immediate results (outputs) of those activities? What does THP hope these outputs will accomplish in the short and long term, and how does it connect to ending poverty and hunger? The group should then discuss the results of their discussions. The facilitator can place sample activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts in a grid like the one below using words or images, if useful to the participants.

A few examples:

- Literacy classes – Outputs: number of adults enrolled in FAL classes; Outcomes: participants learn to read and write; Impact: participants have greater income-earning potential, can better help their children with homework, etc.
- Food bank – Outputs: number of kg stored, number of kg distributed, etc.; Outcomes: households are less likely to suffer from hunger outside of harvest season; Impact: household food security is improved.
- Nursery school – Outputs: presence of nursery school at epicenter, number of children attending; Outcomes: children experience greater readiness for primary school; Impact: greater success in school, ultimately increased formal education and literacy in rural communities.

In THP's view, the most effective way to achieve its ultimate goal – sustainable rural communities free from hunger and poverty – is to make communities the primary authors of and actors in their own development. THP's theory of change informs all of its programming. A large, complex organization like THP has a similarly large and complex Theory of Change. However, looking at smaller pieces of this theory is instructive.



For example, the impact we want to accomplish is a reduction in the prevalence of diarrheal disease among young children.

- We expect that when households use improved drinking water sources and sanitation facilities, children's exposure to water-borne diarrheal diseases will decrease, and rates of diarrheal disease will also decrease.
- How can we increase household use of improved water and sanitation facilities?
- We can ensure that improved water sources and sanitation facilities exist, and we can teach households about the importance of using them.

This is the basic theory underlying the above logic tree.

Module 6. Challenges of Good Data

Importance of animators' work

Facilitator: Highlight the importance of what animators are doing in the global and local functioning of THP; make sure they feel important and valued.

M&E animators play a very important role in the global functioning of THP's M&E systems, and the quality of the data they collect is important. When animators report how many people attended a workshop or how much grain is stored in a food bank, that information is communicated to THP's staff in that country, then to THP's Global Office in the United States, and those numbers inform THP's reports to investors and organizations all over the world. The quality of all of this information depends on the work that animators are doing in their epicenters.

Research quality

Facilitator: Pose the following prompt to the group, and write down and discuss all ideas, including potential solutions to each. Ensure that the discussion touches on the listed challenges, and any others you think are important.

The information that THP has is only as good as the information that animators collect. What are some ways that might lead people to collect incorrect information?

- Improper documentation – if you counted the number of participants at a meeting but didn't write it down right away, you might not accurately remember it later.
  Best practice: Record data in a consistent way as soon as it is collected (e.g. log books).

- Inappropriate sampling – if you were trying to find out how many households dispose of their waste in a nearby river, but you only asked your friends, you might not get an answer that reflects everyone's experience.
  Best practice: Collect information through pre-defined, systematic procedures. For example, ask every third household; pick 20 households out of a hat and ask them; ask village leaders what happens in their community.

- Inconsistent methods – if you want to find out what most people do with their waste in a whole epicenter, but in one village you ask village leaders, in another you ask every third household, and in another you pick households out of a hat, can you compare or combine those numbers? No. What if in one village, you check the stock of grain in the food bank yourself, but in another you ask the epicenter committee leader how much is there? You may not get the right data.
  Best practice: Use predefined, systematic procedures applied consistently.

Research ethics

As an M&E Animator, you will have access to documents and information that not everyone has. As a result, we need to think about ethics – what actions are right and wrong when you are doing your work?

Facilitator: Pose questions to the group, and discuss responses. Ensure that the discussion covers the appropriate ethical conclusions.

Sample questions:

- As you are collecting information on food bank storage, you overhear a conversation between two community members about personal family problems. Should you share this information?
- When you are placing a report on the epicenter officer's desk, you see a letter that is open. Should you read it?

ISSUE: Confidentiality. As an M&E Animator, part of your job as animators is to share information with others in your community – for example, the number of health and nutrition trainings conducted in the past quarter, whether planned construction activities have occurred, etc. But you may also find out information about people in your community that is not relevant to monitoring epicenter activities. If you do, it is important that you keep this information to yourself.

Sample question:

- You are asked to document who is participating in an epicenter construction project, and what services they are providing. Do you tell people that you are collecting information, or just ask questions without informing them that you are reporting their answers?

ISSUE: Openness. When you are collecting information, you must share what you are doing and what it will be used for. Sometimes it can be tempting to keep this a secret – perhaps you are worried that people will act differently or better if they know that you are watching. But this is not right. People must be made aware of the fact that you are conducting research, what the information you collect will be used for, and who it will be shared with.

Sample question:

- You have found that fewer activities than expected are happening in a particular area. However, everyone has been working very hard and you are considering reporting only successes to make everyone happy. What should you do?

ISSUE: Honesty. You may be tempted to report only a part of the information you have found that is related to epicenter activities. Perhaps some areas were not going well, and you do not want to make people feel disappointed. Perhaps you are nervous that people will be angry with you if you tell the whole story. However, not reporting all of the relevant information is a kind of dishonesty.

Module 7. iFormBuilder and Surveys

Facilitator: If participants may be involved in data collection with iFormBuilder, provide a brief introduction to the technology and how it works. A separate in-depth training should also be held; this is just an introduction.

Prepare a short sample survey before the workshop and upload it onto the devices you are bringing to the session.

Surveys: A survey is a questionnaire, which may have many or few questions, that is asked the same way to many respondents. Their responses are then analyzed to provide an overall picture of what is going on in a community.

iFormBuilder: THP uses tablets/iPods to implemented many of its surveys.

Facilitator: Show participants how iFormBuilder works on a tablet, how to answer questions, how to move through the survey.

Facilitator: Distribute devices to small groups, and have each person interview another and fill out a survey with their information.

Module 8. Focus Groups & Interviews

Facilitator: If animators will be conducting focus groups or interviews, include this module as an introduction to these techniques. However, a separate in-depth training should also be held.

Before the session, review the document referenced below (*http://www.datacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Interview_toolkit.pdf*) and prepare some interviewing exercises and examples.

Interviews: Interviews are often conducted with key informants. Key informant interviews (KII) involve interviewing purposefully selected individuals who are likely to provide useful information, ideas, and insights on a particular subject. For example, if you are interested in schooling and education, you may want to interview local teachers and headmasters; if you are interested in food production, you could interview farmers; for information about the locality as a whole, you could ask community leaders.

Interviews must be documented in some way. This could include recording the conversation (always inform an interviewee if you will be recording them!) or writing detailed notes. A record is required so that the information collected in the conversation is accurately preserved.

For a guide to participatory interview tools, see: http://www.datacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Interview_toolkit.pdf

ACTIVITY 6: Interviewing

Have participants pair off, give each person a short interview guide (each with different questions), and have them interview each other. Discuss what techniques or approaches worked well for making the interviewee feel comfortable, and what could be done better. As a group, brainstorm what difficulties could come up during an interview and how they could be addressed. (See the above guide for ideas and examples.)

Focus groups: Focus groups should be about 1 to 1.5 hours long, and should be held in a private and quiet place such as a meeting hall, conference room, or other setting with comfortable air and lighting.

Guidelines:

1) Introduce yourself and any co-facilitators and explain the purpose of the discussion. Explain that there are no wrong answers and all opinions are welcome.

2) Establish some ground rules for the discussion, such as that everyone will keep their comments focused on the issue being discussed; will treat each other's views with respect; will not interrupt each other; etc.
3) Explain each question before it is addressed by the group, and conclude each topic before moving on to the next. Keep the discussion focused on the question at hand.
4) Ensure that all participants have the chance to speak. If a few people are dominating the discussion, gently call on quiet participants to share their views.
5) Ensure that you are or someone else is taking careful notes to record all of the results of the discussion, or record the discussion.