

## **Blood: Water Technical eUpdate Vol. 7 – Data for Decision Making**

Dear Partners:

Happy New Year all! Let's kick off this year with a very critical area affecting us all! This month's edition of the Technical eUpdate is dedicated to the exciting topic of Information Use! We all know that our programs could not exist without monitoring and evaluation (M&E). More often than not, our M&E systems typically focus on data collection for the purpose of reporting to higher levels or external stakeholders. Little to no attention is paid to how the data can be used internally for program improvement and performance management. As a result, there are many missed opportunities for feedback mechanisms and the identification of specific ways in which the data can be analyzed to make improvements on our programs and how they are implemented.

The ultimate purpose of collecting and analyzing data is to improve programs by enabling us to make more informed decisions—evidence-based decisions. Did the awareness campaign increase use of better hygiene practices? Have our counseling efforts increased acceptance of HIV/AIDS testing? Questions such as these must be answered with facts, rather than intuition or perceptions.

We know this. We design tools and forms to track our activities for this purpose. Still, in many organizations, decision-makers do not have access to the required data, or they do not realize how data can be used to improve decisions, or the information they need does not exist or is not trusted. This is often the result of a combination of variables including: organizational culture, individual comfort or familiarity with using data and investing in skills and systems that improve access to clean, complete and correct information.

This is a huge topic that Blood:Water intends to dive deeper into over the next year through organizational work, the Fulcrum pilot as well individualized partner technical assistance. As we begin charting that path with each of you in 2016, we wanted to make available to you a set of tools, guides and manuals that will enable you to start exploring the world of ***Data for Decision Making***, from the global leader in M&E MEASURE Evaluation. The links are provided below for you to download as well as attachments provided in this email:

### **[Using Data to Improve Service Delivery: A Self-Evaluation Approach:](#)**

This guide will help frontline health workers use the data collected at health facilities to solve common problems in service delivery and improve their response to community needs. It is intended for doctors, nurses, and midwives in community-based health centers. The overall aim of the guide is to promote greater use of existing service data to improve health services, as part of good data demand and use (DDU or DDIU) practices. The guide does not require health workers to collect any additional data

**[Building Leadership for Data Demand and Use: A Facilitator's Guide:](#)** This guide aims to provide the conceptual basis for leading data use within an organization or program, or at the national, state, or district level of government. It includes a

variety of leadership, management, and data demand and use (DDU) tools created by MEASURE Evaluation partners to facilitate the sustainable use of data in decision making. The specific learning objectives are to:

- raise awareness of the importance of data in decision making
- define the role of leadership in promoting sustainable data use
- build individual and team capacity to apply DDU concepts, approaches, and tools
- promote and sustain them through strong leadership
- develop and implement specific plans to overcome barriers to data use

The guide is for both experienced and novice workshop facilitators to use and learn from. It presents them with the foundations of a workshop, explains how to conduct all the necessary activities, and is designed to be easy to use and adaptable to suit the specific needs of various audiences.

**Framework for Linking Data with Action:** In areas of the world where the need for health services is great and resources are limited, policy and program decisions must produce the best possible outcomes. The urgency and expense associated with major health issues, such as disease mitigation, require that decisions be based on more than “gut feel” or past experience. The Framework for Linking Data with Action assists program managers and policy-makers to better understand the vital need for good data to support decision making. It also helps those that collect data, researchers and M&E specialists, visualize how their work can be applied to the program and policy context. Lastly, the Framework benefits all health stakeholders by prioritizing decisions and data-collection activities.

### **Assessment of Data Use Constraints:**

The practical utility of health information—how often and how effectively data is used or not used—is determined by multiple factors that can be categorized into three general categories: the attitudes and actions of people who produce or use data, the technical aspects of data processes and tools, and the organizational context that supports (or inhibits) data processes. The Assessment of Data Use Constraints tool focuses on these categories and uncovers issues in the areas that can usually be addressed with targeted interventions.

### **Data Demand and Use Coaching Guide:**

Coaching has been identified as a successful approach to supporting newly trained staff as they apply their new skills in work settings. The goal of individual coaching for health professionals implementing a data demand and use (DDU) intervention is to continue to grow their problem-solving skills to achieve their objectives. The DDU coach can provide a team of health service providers the individual technical guidance to strategically adapt their DDU skills to their specific work environment and health goals. This on-going capacity building is as important as getting the job done.

***More to come!***