How to conduct a field assessment

# Purpose

1. See if the proposed channels are feasible
2. Understand how each channel would be implemented

Timing: Immediately after the stakeholder workshop. Therefore, you will plan for the stakeholder workshop and field assessment at the same time; planning starts at least 1 month before the workshop.

# Outputs:

1. Verbal report to the stakeholder group as to whether the proposed channels are feasible
2. Implementation guidelines
3. (Optional) PowerPoint slides summarizing 1 and 2

# Steps

## Preparation

* 1. At least 1 month before the stakeholder workshop
     1. The donor and NMCP should be aware that you are planning to conduct the field assessment. Typically these are done immediately after the stakeholder workshop.
     2. They should be able to tell you which partners will be implementing continuous distribution and (maybe) what the most promising channels are. Ask NMCP to assign someone to travel with you. Ideally this would be the ITN focal person. If school is expected to be a promising channel, ask to have someone from the Ministry of Education’s school health program join your team. Ask who else needs to be involved – some countries may advise the involvement of an administrative/compliance ministry (such as the Prime Minister’s Office for Regional and Local Government in Tanzania) or a ministry that focuses on community activities (such as the Ministry for Community Development in Zambia)…it depends on the context.
     3. Contact these partners and plan to do the assessment together.
  2. At least 3 weeks before the stakeholder workshop
     1. Develop and share a workshop agenda and a full field visit schedule with the donor, NMCP and partners. NMCP should communicate the planned workshop and assessment to the stakeholders and province/regional and lower levels. This prepares all to attend the workshop and to welcome you and answer your questions when you arrive to their region or district.
     2. The schedule should state which regions and districts you will be visiting, which meetings you would like to convene, and which partners, officials, health facilities, schools, and other structures (like warehouses) you want to visit.
     3. Start making travel arrangements like hotel, vehicle rental and per diem payments. Note that at least one official from each region and district may accompany you in your meetings when you are in their region or district. Plan to have enough space and funding for these folks. They will also be able to answer questions you may have while you are traveling together and they will help introduce you to other partners and officials on the ground.
  3. During and immediately after the stakeholder workshop
     1. Pay close attention to the discussions and reflect on whether if there is anyone else you should meet with or any particular aspects of implementation you should be mindful to check out. Health, education and community structures can differ a bit from country-to-country. You can also ask the stakeholders this question.

Resource: TOR for field assessment

Resource: Sample letter from NMCP

Resource: Schedule and list of planned meetings/sites for health facility and community-based distribution

Resource: Schedule and list of planned meetings/sites for school-based distribution

## Conducting interviews and site visits

* 1. General points about these interviews and site visits
     1. Go to few sites but probe deeply at each one. Expect an interview to take 1.5 hours. Factor in travel and wait time.
     2. You may need to split up into teams to cover all your sites.
     3. Interviews will likely happen in groups
     4. People are busy, be mindful of their time. State why you are there up front; demonstrate that you have the blessing of their donor or ministry; be prepared with your list of questions.
     5. Don’t rely on your interview questions as they won’t fit all situations. Take notes and try to keep close track of all the details you are hearing. You will need to ask many spur-of-the-moment questions depending on what you are learning.
     6. **Look at how they are already doing things and how the new system could fit into the existing system. Don’t be complacent and assume that you can do what other countries are doing because it may not fit in well into this country’s context. However, read up on what other countries are doing because there may be a lot of overlap and can help you test out theories and form questions.**
     7. Don’t just ask questions, observe. Look at registers, reports, databases. Observe storage sites. Take pictures of these things so you can have a copy to look at later and use in your report.
     8. **After you’re heard about their system, don’t be afraid to propose how you could fit ITN distribution into it. Use this time to go over possible implementation steps. They will guide you and say “nope, that won’t work, do it this way,” or “yep, that could work, here is a better way.”**
  2. A note on capacity building and country ownership

As much as possible, involve the ITN and SHN focal person(s) in the planning and leading of the assessment. He or she will be in a better position to understand the potential pitfalls and considerations around continuous distribution (and thus do a better job of overseeing it) if she or he has been actively participating in the assessment. One way to do this is to gradually give them more and more responsibility in leading the discussions. You can do the first one or two sites and they can lead the rest. You will be on hand to pitch in if needed.

Moreover, remember that they are the ones who will lead the trainings and supervision visits. By putting them in a visible leadership role in the assessment stage, you are setting the tone for country-led implementation.

Resource: Topic & question guide/observation checklist for health facility and community-based distribution assessment

Resource: Topic & question guide/observation checklist for school-based distribution assessment

## Writing the implementation guidelines

* 1. Before you even leave for the field, start writing the implementation guidelines. At least draft the table of contents. This actually primes your mind for interview questions.
  2. Every night
     1. Bring the team together to discuss what you’ve learned. Use your team members well – those from the government, for example, may be able to explain a lot of the processes for you, helping you digest what you have learned and prepare for the next round of interviews.
     2. Pull up your draft document and start filling in various sections of the guidelines
     3. By the 2nd or 3rd night, you will probably have the big picture. Start sketching out some flowcharts on the flow of nets and data. Use pencil to draw these and run them by your team.
     4. Get enough rest – field work involves early days and long car rides.
     5. Take a night off once in a while and try to relax and hang out with your team. The assessment is also a relationship/partnership-building activity.
  3. Two days before wrapping up the field visit
     1. Make sure the ITN focal person has reminded all stakeholders to reconvene
  4. When you get back
     1. With your team, do a run through of the presentation for the stakeholder meeting – this is to make sure NMCP, Ministry of Education and the partners agree.
     2. Debrief with the donor, the NMCP program manager and the MOE school health program manager (if applicable) so they know what to expect before the stakeholder meeting.
     3. Email the presentation to all after the run-through. Copy the donor and the NMCP program manager and the MOE school health program manager (if applicable)

Resource: Implementation guideline

Resource: Stakeholder presentation