COMMUNITIES MEASURE CHANGE

A Reference Guide to Monitoring Communication for Social Change

Developed by the Communication for Social Change Consortium
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Questions

What is Communication for Social Change (CFSC)?

How does CFSC help people involved in HIV/AIDS prevention and care efforts?

How do we know if CFSC is working?

What is Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation?

What will help us to evaluate CFSC in a participatory way?

What are the stages of Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation?

What are indicators?

Can you give examples of CFSC progress markers or indicators?

How can we help community members check and make sense of what indicators show?

Answers

Q: What is Communication for Social Change (CFSC)?

A: CFSC is a process of public and private dialogue through which people themselves define who they are, what they need and how to get what they need in order to improve their own lives. It utilizes dialogue that leads to collective problem identification, decision-making and community-based implementation of solutions to development issues.[1] It is communication that supports decision-making by those most affected by the decisions being made.

Q: How does CFSC help people involved in HIV/AIDS prevention and care efforts?

A: Mass HIV/AIDS education campaigns aimed at changing individual behaviour play an essential role in HIV/AIDS prevention and care. But experience shows that even in the most information-rich societies, individual change is hard to sustain unless broader social and community changes also occur. That is, individual behavior change must be reinforced by shifts in what are considered acceptable beliefs and practices. This can include such things as cultural traditions, commonly shared stories, or how the community members think, behave, talk, act and teach its children about sex and sexual relationships. The term "changes in community norms" are often used to describe such shifts.

Creating long-lasting changes in social and community norms demands communication strategies that:

- Engage people actively as *agents* of their own change.

- Equip those most affected to play the central communication role and to decide how and when to call for assistance from technical experts and external agencies.

- Facilitate and support dialogue on key issues of concern and sensitively place "expert" information in a wider dialogue.

- Negotiate the best way forward through partnerships, rather than through persuasion and coercion.

- Develop a new capacity to work on other issues by developing the communication capacity of individuals and the community as a whole.

Q: How do we know if CFSC is working?

A: To know, we must ask tough questions, we must ask everyone involved, we must ask from the beginning and we must learn and share our ideas throughout the CFSC process.

Who is evaluating what and why? For whom? Whose agenda is being served? Who should decide what evidence is needed and what forms it should take? How are evaluation tools to be designed and indicators identified? Who will gather, analyze and interpret the data? How will the findings be used and by whom?

If we encourage ALL participants to engage in a dialogue about change, we must also enlist ALL participants in answering questions about evaluating that change. Participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation can help answer the questions above and others that participants believe are essential.

[1] For further information see:
http://www.communicationforsocialchange.org/mission.php

If we begin by assessing short-term improvements in community communication capacity, for example, we can look at how this enhanced capacity contributes to broader, longer-term social change. We might look for evidence of stronger communication skills and a higher degree of "connected-

ness" both among participants and with others in positions to support or block their efforts. When ordinary people are able to better make their opinions and voices heard, positive change can happen more readily.

Q: What is Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation?

A: It is a way of learning to change that involves learning from change. And it is a way of learning from change that involves changing who learns. While the definitions vary, a core set of principles guide the process. The what, how, whom and why of evaluation are closely inter-linked in PM&E (Box 1).

The PM&E process creates opportunities for participants to share their experience and concerns, articulate their needs, learn about each other's concerns, deepen their understanding, monitor their progress and arrive at a common evaluation of their communication for social change efforts.

Q: What will help us to evaluate CFSC in a participatory way?

A: • Understanding of—and commitment to—a CFSC approach.

• Trust, mutual respect and honesty.

• Flexibility, openness and creativity.

• Committed and able facilitators.

• Resources, including time, energy, valued communication methods and money.

• A group of key dialogue members who understand and support the process.

• The group's willingness to assume responsibilities, tackle important issues and work effectively with those in power.

• Evidence that key participants have thought about what they would like to learn from monitoring and evaluation

BOX 1: CORE PRINCIPALS OF PM&E

• Determination of the success of a change initiative is made by those the change is intended to benefit.

• In general affected people and communities evaluate and outsiders facilitate.

• There is an attitude of openness to change by both participants and facilitators.

• Intended beneficiaries create time and space for dialogue to determine if they have benefited (or not) and how.

• A wide range of people actively participate in the process.

• The learning from monitoring and evaluation has *practical value* to those participating.

• *Local* (lived) knowledge and experience is respected and emphasized.

• Information gathered during the dialogue is checked for accuracy and shared with all.

• Inequities of power and voice are acknowledged and addressed.

• Traditional hierarchies are broken down, including those between people and between types of knowledge.

• Capacity development (reflection, analysis, learning, problem-solving) is emphasized.

• There is conscious attention to learning amongst all involved.

• Understanding and mutual respect are deepened through a collaborative learning process.

• The process is educational and empowering.

• A receptive culture inside and outside the community: supportive, open and democratic.

Q: What are indicators?

A: Indicators are markers of progress—or a lack of it. They are quick pictures of complex processes, events and trends. They can measure the tangible (e.g., "service uptake" such as the use of condoms or treatment with medications), the intangible (e.g., "community empowerment" such as wider public dialogue) and the unanticipated (results that were not planned).

The most important indicators are often not quantifiable. For example, the number of people participating in a social network is relatively unimportant compared to the *quality of relationships and dialogue* within that network.

Of particular importance to HIV/AIDS communication teams is the need to develop indicators *that measure the processes and outcomes of Communication for Social Change* as it is applied to efforts to improve HIV/AIDS prevention and care. This is to be done in a way that *prioritises the perceptions, experiences and judgments of intended beneficiaries in their own terms*.

Progress toward long-term social change can be an acceptable measure of effectiveness.

Q: Can you give examples of CFSC progress markers or indicators?

A: Here are some examples of Communication for Social Change PM&E questions to stimulate discussion about the indicators the core team will choose.

• Are meeting times and spaces creating opportunities for poor and marginalized people to speak and be heard?

• How and where does private and public dialogue take place?

• In relation to the issues of concern, what increase or other changes have there have there been in:

  • Family discussion?

  • Discussion among friends?

  • Discussion in community gatherings?

  • Problem solving dialogue?

  • New ways of sharing relevant information?

  • Coverage and discussion in news media?

  • Focus and discussion in entertainment media?

  • Is debate and dialogue in the political process?

• Has the number of people from all community groups involved in involved in the dialogue increased?

• Who is creating and telling the stories around the issues? Is that changing?

• What cultural norms do the stories reveal? Are they changing?

• Are new connections between different groups being established within the community?

• Are members of the community making their views known to those who hold official power? How? Is this changing?

• Are community members connecting with outside allies, communities and groups who support of their efforts?

Q: How can we help community members check and make sense of what indicators show?

A: One way is to collect stories about the most significant change the participants have experienced, then share those stories with the community, and ask community members to choose those stories which best illustrate what has been happening.

This "most significant change" approach involves all participants in deciding what changes are important.

Stories are collected, analysed and used to identify the impact of their efforts. This approach:

- Strengthens understanding between the different groups involved

- Explores the values and priorities of participants

- Develops a clearer understanding of achievements

- Helps the project move towards desired change.

BOX 2: THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Flexibility is essential when identifying indicators in participatory initiatives like the application of CFSC to HIV/AIDS work because the work involves reaching agreement about development activities and their assessment *through dialogue*.

- As more groups become involved in the process there is a greater need for negotiated and community specific indicators, rather than pre-defined indicators.

- Sometimes several sets of indicators may be necessary to address the different information needs of diverse stakeholder groups.

Q: What are the stages of Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation?

A: Think of PM&E as a "spiral of key learning moments," usually occurring in stages during which there is much give and take (negotiation) during the dialogue.

Stage 1: Choose to use PM&E as part of the CFSC strategy

- Secure broad support, wide participation and ownership early on.

- Clarify what different participants expect from the process.

- Discuss the purpose, objectives and underlying values of monitoring and evaluation.

- Use and build on existing information and processes.

- Secure resources including time, people, skills and funding.

- Begin the dialogue around questions such as:
    - Why monitor and evaluate in this way?
    - What resources are available?
    - What will the challenges be?
    - Who will coordinate the monitoring and evaluation?
    - Who should be involved and why?
    - What are the main information needs of each stakeholder group?

Stage 2: Assemble a core PM&E team

- Select team members based on agreed-upon criteria.

- Enlist support for a core team that balances voice, experience and expertise.

- Ask potential team members to consider for themselves what types of skills, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes are required to be an effective core team member, and to strengthen their own skills.

- Identify the challenges the core team faces.

- Help team members understand the possible risks and benefits of the PM&E process so that they can make an *informed and committed decision* to be involved.

- Decide whether—and which—incentives might be appropriate for committed core team members.

- Develop a plan for the training and support of core team members.

Stage 3: Develop a PM&E plan through dialogue

- Conduct learning sessions about CFSC and PM&E principles and practices.

• Support the team in setting the agenda and developing the plan.

• Clarify the questions: who wants to know what and why?

• Identify indicators that will provide the information needed.

• Determine how to collect, document and interpret necessary information.

• Decide when and how to share and use the findings.

Stage 4: Collect, check, interpret and report the data

• Collect with respect, considering methods that are common and "traditional" in this community.

• Follow the "less is more" approach: it is better to collect less information and actually use it, than to collect information you will not use. Keep asking *why* particular information is needed and *by whom*.

• Document what you collect through words, pictures, stories, art and other means.

• Check what you collect with community members and with other sources of information to ensure that the findings are trustworthy and reliable. How does the team know what it is claiming to know?

• Interpret what you collect by looking for main points, themes, and surprises.

• Report what you find throughout the process of monitoring as well as when you complete the evaluation. Consider:

- Meetings involving different participant groups, to stimulate deeper understanding, critical reflection and dialogue, and constructive action
- Workshops as above
- Photographs and other visual displays
- Drama
- Video footage

• The distribution of briefs and/or reports (as appropriate) through pamphlets, posters, meetings, telephone calls, the Internet or any other resource available.
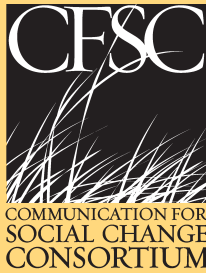
Stage 5: Use PM&E findings to adjust the CFSC strategy and develop action plans for the future

• Bring important monitoring findings to the attention of the CFSC process leaders.

• Adjust the CFSC strategy when needed.

• Call for public dialogue to discuss significant achievements or setbacks.

• Ask what the dialogue members and PM&E team members have learned individually, collectively and as a community.

• Decide what worked well, what could have been done better, and how you will ensure that the learning from the process is not lost.

• Consider the final evaluation as the first step in the next plan of action.

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