THE SOCIETY FOR IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE IN NUTRITION



WEBINAR: Implementation and Science: A Two-way Street with Lots of Turns

#SISNFramework #InvestinIR

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Implementation and Science: a Two-way Street with lots of turns!



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Presentation Outline

- Suaahara II "Implementation"
- Suaahara II "Science"
- Implementation Science:
 - Opportunities
 - Challenges
 - Lessons learned







Suaahara II "Implementation":

Overview of Program Approach and Interventions

Integrated Nutrition - SUAAHARA II Project









Suaahara II: Intervention delivery context

- Is the target population being reached?
- Why do and don't they participate in program interventions?
- What is the effectiveness of implementation?
- How do we ensure Suaahara interventions are delivered as intended over the long term?
- How do we implement consistently but with variation by CONTEXT (geography, culture, language)?





Suaahara II: intervention packages

What are time and cost saving TARGETING strategies for a large scale programs like Suaahara?

How can nutrition interventions be effectively packaged and delivered within health systems?

What are the tradeoffs on program integration?

MCH/FP=Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning WASH=Water, Sanitation and Hygiene GESI=Gender Equity and Social Inclusion





How do we reach households efficiently ?

What is the ideal no. of home visits needed to achieve behavior change?

Can we depend on government frontline workers to conduct IPC?

Which interventions should I prioritize within X budget and Y amount of time?





Suaahara II "Science":

Overview of Monitoring, Evaluation and Research for Learning







Suaahara II: key implementation science questions

DIFFERENT people have DIFFERENT data needs and wants, requiring DIFFERENT approaches

Challenge: how to prioritize so that data generated is guided by program needs, used by implementers at all levels and to answer important questions about implementation and science!

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Suaahara II: monitoring



Monitoring: (tracking)

- Are activities approved in annual workplans being implemented at a rate to reach targets?
- How many/who was reached (gender, caste/ethnicity, post) by each activity?
- What is the quality of those activities being implemented?





Suaahara II: evaluation



Impact Evaluation

Evaluation: (attribution)

- Did Suaahara improve nutritional status among mothers and young children and related behaviors?
- Did Suaahara improve health services, including the providers' skills and knowledge?
- Did Suaahara improve the policy environment for nutrition?





Suaahara II: research



"Adolescent Girls' Panel (16 districts; N=1150) What are adolescent girls' nutrition-related knowledge and practice and how can they be reached? How does this vary by stage of adolescence?

SMS RCT (1 district: N=3,350)

Is SMS an effective means of improving diets of young children, in the context of pre-existing multiplatform SBC interventions?





Formative Research (purposive sampling)

What are barriers & facilitators for key behaviors? What factors are important for program design and implementation?





Suaahara II: learning and using the findings







Findings used to improve program performance

- Participation of district teams in data use workshop built skills to understand & use findings
- Prioritize areas for "deeper dives" and develop & adjust workplans



 Findings used by program team to strategize, understand & address uptake barriers





Suaahara II "Implementation Science":

Challenges and Solutions







Implementation science: challenges from implementers' perspectives

I. Conflicting interests between researchers and implementers 2. Understanding and assessing complicated implementation environments is limited

3. Multiple program activities needed at multiple levels to achieve one result

4. Limited engagement with diverse stakeholders





We can do better: scientists' perspectives

- 1. Engage early and often with implementation teams at all levels to understand prioritized research questions and how the program cycle works.
- 2. Prioritize in design and analysis and find a win-win between program teams' needs and researcher interests.
- 3. Bring in methods and collaborators who focus on systems and leadership, management. We need more nuanced ways to merge quantitative and qualitative findings.
- 4. Be patient and understanding of programming realities and how many factors are beyond control of the specific person or organization implementing.
- 5. SIMPLIFY methods and findings to be actionable and disseminate the learnings in user-friendly ways and timings!





Implementation science: challenges/frustrations from scientists' perspectives

1. Unrealistic/unclear expectations for each dataset, timelines, etc.

2. Shifting budgets, modalities, staffing, etc.

3. M, E and R are SEPARATE activities hiring and staffing should reflect this as different skills are needed for each

4. Lack of investment in building skills needed to use data at all levels





We can do better: implementers' perspectives

- Be clear from the design stage about priority implementation research questions and stick to these priority requests with MER teams.
- 2. Discuss planned programming changes and jointly decide how to adjust both implementation and research plans.
- 3. Involve implementation scientists in major program planning meetings and workshops to think, discuss, and revise budgets, staffing, training, etc.





Few concluding thoughts...

Donor and stakeholder expectations

- Plans SHOULD change (activities, budgets, timelines, staffing)
- Stop activities that aren't working; scale-up activities showing effectiveness
- It takes TIME to change culture and facilitate GENUINE evidence based programming

Its all about tradeoffs and compromises

- Prioritize "Essential, Important and Nice to do"!
- Useful for program Vs. GoN priorities
- Implementation priorities Vs. publications
- Don't underestimate the "INTANGIBLES" !
 - There is no substitute for "looking both ways" (team work, leadership, open communication, management support, mutual respect, trust)









Good luck to us!



Suaahara II would like to thank the Government of Nepal for their leadership.

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"I have been working on an integrated nutrition project in Tanzania similar in scope to Suaahara's. One of the challenges we face is how to manage and effectively use the massive amount of data (more than several million data points). Data collection has assumed a life of its own! Despite hiring dozens of data entry technicians to address backlogs in data entry, we don't have the latest data for our donors and can't always use data for programs in real time. Have you had this problem and how have you addressed it?"

– Kirk Dearden



"How do you control/adjust for confounding in an uncontrolled environment with a changing 'exposure'?

– K Gordon



"With so many interesting questions that come up almost daily that could inform SBCC programming, how does the implementation team decide which questions need to be validated by Kenda's team, and which are more best guesses?"

- Steve Miller



"Since it takes time to collect analyze and interpret data. How can research findings be provided for program implementation in a timely way and not get caught up with reporting preliminary findings that may be influenced by the interesting and novel findings/insights than the more thought out interpretations."

- Kelly McDonald

A&O

"To guide future program design and cost needs, what percentage of "the budget" should ideally be allocated to adequately develop and implement a robust M&E system (but excluding RCT studies) that includes the very important implementation research (data collection and use) that you've described today? Is there a %age rule of thumb you can suggest? Related to this, do you think that funders will be willing to cover these costs as typically the desire is to put "every single penny into program delivery"?

- Victoris Quinn

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