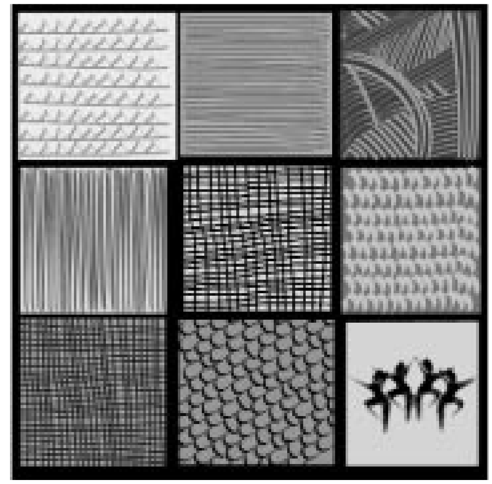

INSTRUMENTS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

PART II AT A GLANCE

➤ Offers guidance on adapting instruments for your M&E effort

➤ Provides sample data collection instruments

➤ Gives tips for collecting data through a variety of methods

Adapting Instruments to Meet Your M&E Needs

The questions and methods used in the sample data collection instruments have been collected from checklists, tally sheets, questionnaires, surveys, inventories and focus group discussion guides that are used to monitor and evaluate youth programs in a variety of contexts. The questions included are not necessarily the best questions for every context, nor are they exhaustive.

The instruments you choose should be adapted to your objectives before use. For example, Instrument 7 (Observation Guide for Counseling and Clinical Procedures) is designed to assess the quality of service provision in a health facility-based program. However, you could easily adapt it to reflect the counseling and services provided in a school-based program or during outreach effects.

You should also adapt instruments to your context before use. For example, you will probably need to add or delete questions from Instrument 12, the Comprehensive Youth Survey, before using it to evaluate your program's context-specific outcomes. Pre-testing data collection instruments before you use them will improve your efforts.

Table 1 provides an overview of what data collection method each instrument utilizes and how it can be used as a tool for your M&E effort.

Developing Surveys

Surveys are one of the most commonly used evaluation tools because they are a cost-effective way to gather comparable information from a large group of people. Surveys may be self-administered—completed by the respondent using a pencil and paper—or administered by an interviewer who completes the form by filling in the respondent's answers.

When designing surveys, you may choose to use either open-ended or closed questions, depending on your needs. Open-ended questions do not have a pre-determined response, and allow respondents to reply in their own words. Closed questions are accompanied by a list of possible responses from which the respondent selects. Open-ended questions often result in a greater depth of understanding, while responses to closed questions can be more quickly analyzed.

Table 1
Data Collection Instruments

No.	Title	Data Collection Method
1A	Program Design Checklist	Checklist
1B	Checklist of Stakeholder Involvement	Checklist
1C	Training Course Checklist for ARH Program Staff	Checklist
1D	Checklist for "Youth-Friendly" Service Characteristics	Checklist
1E	Checklist of Selection Criteria for Peer Educators	Checklist
2A	Monthly Tally Sheet for Counseling	Service statistics
2B	Tally Sheet for Communication Products	Service statistics
2C	Tally Sheet for Stakeholder Involvement	Service statistics
2D	Tally Sheet on Number and Characteristics of Youth Counseled	Service statistics
2E	Institutional Infrastructure Tally Sheet	Service statistics
3A	Reporting Form for Counseling	Program report
3B	Peer Educators' Reporting Form	Program report
4	ARH Coalition Questionnaire	Interview with key informant
5A	Index on Quality of Counseling (for individual counseling sessions)	Direct observation
5B	Policy Environment Score: Adolescents	Composite index
6	Inventory of Facilities and Services	Inventory and direct observation
7	Observation Guide for Counseling and Clinical Procedures	Direct observation
8	Interview Guide for Staff Providing RH Services	Staff survey
9	Guide for Client Exit Interview	Exit interview with client
10	Questionnaire for Debriefing Mystery Clients	Mystery client
11	Community Questionnaire	Interview with key informant
12	Comprehensive Youth Survey	Population survey
13	Focus Group Discussion Guide for In-School Adolescents	Focus group discussion
14	Assessing Coalition Effectiveness Worksheet	Survey of key informant
15	Parents of Youth Questionnaire	Interview with key informant

When developing a survey instrument, keep in mind the following rules:

- ➤ Be unambiguous: Try to avoid questions that can be interpreted in different ways. For example, if you ask a nurse, "How many patients did you see last week?" she might respond, "Whom do you mean, me or the clinic?" Focus group discussions can help clarify interpretations of terminology before you finalize your survey instrument.
- ➤ Use clear language that is not condescending: Try to strike a balance between using simple language and seeking complex information.
- ➤ Plan the survey well: Only include questions that you are sure you will analyze. Cluster your questions by topic so that respondents don't become frustrated, confused or annoyed by repetition.
- ➤ Make use of skip questions: For example, if a respondent reports that she has never been pregnant, the survey should skip over any questions pertaining to experience with pregnancy.
- ➤ In providing possible responses, make the lists exhaustive and exclusive: This is especially important when you want respondents to check only one response. Also give respondents the option of answering "Don't know."
- ➤ Don't ask two questions at once: For example, asking, "When did you leave home and go to work on your own for the first time?" wrongly assumes that all respondents left home before going to work for the first time, and that they went to work when they left home. To explore these issues, it is better to use a series of questions focusing on each step.
- ➤ If translating a survey, back translate to ensure accuracy: First, work closely with a bilingual translator who is a native speaker of the language you are translating into. Next, ask a native speaker of the language to translate the survey back into that language. The two versions should be essentially identical. If not, correct errors in translation.
- ➤ Confidentiality is vital: A respondent's name should not be written on the survey. Most evaluators assign a code to keep track of respondents.

If a survey is used to guide an interview, also keep in mind the following:

- ➤ Decide how simple or how complex you want the interview to be: Topics for individual interviews can range from a handful of simple, open-ended questions that take a few minutes to conduct, to a detailed survey that may take an hour or more to conduct.
- ➤ Be sensitive to the environment: Be aware of the image you are projecting, and aim to build trust with the respondent. For example, if you arrive in a Land Rover with a driver, you may be identified as an "official" person, influencing the respondent's perception of you.
- ➤ Make introductions and explain the purpose of the survey: Explain why you are conducting the survey, and ask permission for the interview to commence.
- ➤ Familiarize yourself with the survey instrument: You must be able to read the survey items without stumbling over words and phrases, know how to follow skip patterns and understand the correct procedure for probing and recording responses.

- Probe responses and rephrase open-ended questions: Open-ended questions should be presented in a neutral way. If you unknowingly hint at the "right" answer, respondents may try to provide it. Probing and rephrasing questions during an interview is helpful to explore respondents' real feelings, especially when they give short answers. Often the best probe is patient silence; verbal probes include "In what ways?" or "Anything else?"

Developing and Leading Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions are a qualitative research technique used to gain an in-depth, but not representative, understanding of the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of a specific group of people in their own language.

A focus group is a facilitated, open conversation, recorded and observed by a note taker. A facilitator asks questions that stimulate interaction among participants on subjects relevant to the evaluation. Each participant should have the opportunity to speak, ask questions of other participants and respond to the comments of others, including the facilitator.

Generally, it is best to hold several focus groups on the same topic. The first few focus group sessions are often longer because the facilitator is getting all new information. Thereafter, the facilitator is able to move quickly over points that have already been covered with previous groups if similar answers are emerging. The number of focus group discussions you should conduct depends on the project needs and resources and whether different views from separate groups are still emerging. In general, at least two focus group discussions should be conducted among each specific target group.

When designing focus groups, keep in mind the following:

- Develop a guide for facilitators: To get the most thorough information, offer tips and guidance to facilitators. If a facilitator is new to a topic, provide a list of possible probe questions that he or she should ask. Suggest that facilitators avoid leading questions. For example, they should not ask why participants don't eat certain foods; instead, they should ask participants to discuss what kinds of foods they like and dislike, and why. Focus group questions should be different from the questions you would ask in a survey; asking a group about an issue is different from asking individuals about their own behavior.

- Hold focus groups at a neutral and comfortable venue: For example, the community health center would not be a good place to meet if the topic were attitudes about health services.

- Carefully determine the composition of the focus group: When selecting participants, aim to recruit a homogeneous group in terms of age, sex, education, occupation, political status and authority. For example, do not combine counselors, nurses and the manager of a clinic in one focus group.

- Document the discussion: If possible, tape-record the focus group and transcribe it before it is analyzed. Minimally, have an observer present to take notes.

- Be supportive and nonjudgmental: Respondents will disclose more if they believe there are no right or wrong answers and that they are in a confidential group with people who are similar to them in terms of background and social characteristics.

Using Mystery Clients

A mystery client is a person selected from the target population to pose as a participant in a program and report back to the evaluator on his or her experience. Mystery clients are especially useful for collecting information about health facilities and providers. When using mystery clients, keep in mind the following:

- Develop a range of scenarios and personality traits for mystery clients to act out: Have the mystery clients present erroneous information (to determine whether and how the program corrects these ideas) and have them say they do not understand what the provider tells them (to determine whether the program ensures comprehension).
- Mystery clients should select scenarios that best suit them: Explain to participants that they will "become" the person described when participating in the program. Ask them to carefully read over the scenario they have selected.
- Discuss or role-play each scenario: Before participants act as mystery clients, have them discuss what their characters are like and how they would feel about the situation they are in. Be attentive to details such as how the person behaves, what kind of language he or she uses and body language. Then role-play the interaction so that each mystery client will be prepared for the questions and procedures he or she is likely to encounter.
- Prepare participants for what to do once they are in the role of a mystery client: Remind them to be "in character" upon entering the program, and tell them what to do if they see someone they know. Also ask them to record the amount of time spent waiting and participating in the program and to collect educational materials. Mystery clients should not undergo any type of exam or procedure.
- Debrief the mystery client as soon as possible: Using an open-ended survey, interview mystery clients soon after they complete each mystery client assignment. Relate questions on the survey to the specific indicators that the program is interested in assessing.