Reflection Session Guide for Ethiopia’s National NTD Program

*Developed by:*

*Katie Zoerhoff, RTI International*

*Elizabeth Fitch, RTI International*

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# Reflection Session Guide for Ethiopia’s National NTD Program

**Purpose**

The purpose of a Refection Session is to analyze and synthesize data, evidence, studies, and stakeholder experiences to understand if the NTD interventions are achieving the expected results and if so, what helped the team to be successful, and if not, which aspects should be modified. The NTD activities that can be included in the reflection session include mass drug administration (MDA), impact assessments, data quality assessments (DQAs), coverage evaluation surveys (CES), etc. The aim is to shift from data review to data use. The session should bring all conversations about NTD results and recommendations for program improvements together for clear, actionable planning. The session should result in a clear understanding of lessons learned, best practices, and necessary work plan modifications.

**Who uses this guide?**

Internal or External Facilitators and staff involved in planning the NTD Reflection Session.

**When to use this guide**

Used after NTD activities are conducted to learn from the results and prepare for the next year’s work planning at woreda, regional, and national levels, and to inform other activities such as data quality assessments or coverage evaluation surveys to be conducted yet in the same year. It is recommended that this session is incorporated into an already-existing meeting or reflection, to maximize resources. This could include as part of implementation plan preparation, post-MDA review meetings (woreda, zonal, regional, and/or national levels), etc.

**Logistics**: The Session will take place over the course of one day and involve, at a minimum, the woreda and regional NTD staff and implementing partners in the region. In addition, if available, NTD staff from the national level, relevant government partners (such as Ministry of Education), WHO country representatives, and donors (if applicable) are encouraged to participate. The session facilitator should be external to the direct implementation of the NTD activity so that they are able to remain impartial. However, results should ideally be presented by FMOH staff from Ethiopia that are involved in the NTD program; if they are not available, then someone from the in-country implementing partner can present. If resources permit, a notetaker is suggested. A computer with access to the populated NTD DHIS2 database should be available, as well as a projector.

## Key components of an NTD Reflection Session

**The NTD Reflection session seeks to address:**

* What results were achieved, and how does that compare to what the intended outcomes were? For example, what coverage was achieved in the last MDA, and how does this compare to the minimum coverage required?
* What worked well in the activity implementation?
* What can be improved?
* What should be done differently?
* What are some cross-cutting issues affecting the implementation of the NTD activities (e.g., MDA, impact assessments, etc.)?
* What are the key activities to scale, change, or discontinue? (feeding into workplans)

**A reflection section typically includes these steps:**

1. *Reflection session ice breaker and guidelines*
2. *Review results of the NTD activities,* including activity and supervision results related to planning, implementation, communication and dissemination. NTD activities may include MDA, impact assessments, etc.
3. *Learning questions*
4. *Moving forward,* a focus on adaptation

Each of these components involves discussions, definition review, and participatory activities. This guide covers each of these components below.

### Ice Breaker and Guidelines (20-40 minutes)

It’s important for the facilitator to begin with introductions, ground rules, and a foundational understanding of what a reflection session is, why it is important, and how all participants should contribute. This will help engage participants and encourage them to be more open with the challenges that they faced during the NTD activity implementation. It can be helpful to conduct an ice breaker activity to help participants feel comfortable. Have speakers introduce themselves and their roles before answering questions.

*Possible topics to cover in ground rules and explanation of reflection sessions*

* A reflection session is
  + - * A time for all team members to share an understanding of key results of the NTD activity (e.g., MDA, impact assessment, etc.);
      * A designated space for all team members to share honestly and discuss both the successful and problematic components of the NTD activity;
      * An opportunity for all team members to share experiences and decide how to improve activities.
  + Clarify that all opinions are welcome. This is not a space to blame others or target specific individuals. This is a time to constructively consider what is working and what can be modified in relation to program goals and objectives.

### Results Review and Discussion (2-3 hours)

During this time, the NTD staff should present to the group the major results achieved during the NTD activity, and then the facilitator should split participants into groups for discussion. Results will be presented using the NTD DHIS2 database to show the functionality and usefulness of the system for data visualization and learning as well as allow more people to become comfortable with using the database for NTDs. For the small group discussions, woreda-specific data should be printed prior to the meeting in case each group does not have access to a computer and/or reliable internet connection to explore data online in the NTD DHIS2 database.

* Woredas may wish to include presentations on cross-cutting issues related to operations, procurement, monitoring and evaluation etc.
* Presentations should cover major results, using evidence, describing achievements and actual progress toward coverage goals. This includes but is not limited to what coverage was achieved among by:
  + Geographical unit (woreda level or sub-woreda if available)
  + Gender
  + Age
  + Disease
  + Trends in MDA coverage from previous years
  + Drug tablet procurement and use
  + Impact assessment results
* In breakout groups, participants should review woreda-specific data and discuss how the activities contributed to the results. Below is a list of questions to consider, with the high priority questions in bold:
  + Consider all aspects of the project in this component: planning, implementation (timeliness, capacity, capability, procurement, technical and budgetary aspects), cooperation and coordination, and communication. **Was the NTD activity implemented following best practices?**
  + **Was sufficient coverage achieved during MDA this year, as compared to the minimum coverage thresholds?**
  + **Did MDA coverage increase or decrease this year, as compared to previous years?**
  + **What groups are not meeting the MDA coverage targets?** Explore by region, woreda, sub-woreda, age, sex, urban vs rural (if available), occupation (if available)
  + **What were the causes of low/high MDA coverage?**
  + What activities have been most impactful in achieving high coverage?
  + What activities have been least impactful?
  + **What have been the major challenges with achieving results?**
  + What have been the unintended outcomes of the activities?
  + **What is the quality of the reported data, and how does that quality affect your interpretation of the results?**
  + Are there risks that the team faces?
  + **What lessons have been learned during implementation?**
  + **Are there activities that need to be scaled up or reduced?**
  + **Are there different approaches or activities needed to achieve coverage targets?**

The facilitator should make sure that people in each activity group contribute to this discussion. Record notes on a flip chart and electronically. Consider using large flip charts, or individual matrices, to assist in covering each question and recording the discussion.

End the time with each group presenting on their observations and key findings.

### Learning Questions (1.5-2 hours)

Be sure to allocate specific time for to discuss what questions the team is already trying to address with these results and what additional evidence they need to be able to know if they are to be successful in achieving coverage targets and working toward elimination. More specifically:

* What do they wish they could find out from the data?
* What else do they need to know in order to know if their NTD activity was successful?
* Are there evidence gaps in the data that prevent them from answering these questions?

Split into working groups to develop and reflect on the learning questions. Specifically think about:

* How could the data be presented differently to better answer the evidence gaps?
* What is already being done to review data from a quality standpoint? How can this be improved?
* What is already being done to review data from a programmatic standpoint? Consider in advance of the MDA, during the MDA, and after the MDA, or before, during and after an impact assessment. Are there other points in time they could be reviewing and using their data to make planning or programmatic decisions? Do the people responsible for making decisions have access to appropriate data at the right time to be able to make decisions effectively?

### Moving Forward, a focus on Adapting (2 hours)

Crucial to a reflection session is moving past the discussion on lessons and challenges to explicitly discuss what activities need to change, need to be continued, or scaled. This exercise should come at the conclusion of the reflection session and ideally occurs before work planning.

1. Begin with an introduction of the concept of adapting, and the importance of intentionally taking action based on learning and reflection
2. Explain the connection to responsible program management; it’s not just about reporting, but using evidence, and making good decisions, and adjusting your implementation based on what you’ve learned to best achieve results.
3. In component-focused groups, participants should discuss
   * What do the key findings from previous sessions on lessons and challenges indicate to us?
   * Given the lessons and challenges, what needs to change? What do we need to do differently in the coming year to improve MDA results? Impact assessment outcomes?
   * Where do we need to focus energy and resource to address areas of low coverage?
   * Are there new assumptions to take into account?
   * Are there new activities that should be conducted?
   * Are there any operational, staffing, budget, etc., considerations that need to be raised given lessons learned and challenges?
   * Identify programmatic adaptations to be taken for the next NTD activity based on what you’ve learned
     + What actions should be carried out?
     + Who should be responsible for conducting?
     + Where should these be implemented?
     + When?
     + What are the resource implications?

Make sure that people in each group contribute to this discussion. Record notes on a flip chart and electronically. Include the timeline, person responsible, and rationale for activities to be able to easily incorporate them into the workplan. Consider using large flip charts, or individual matrices, to assist in covering each question and recording the discussion.

End the time with each group presenting on their observations and key findings.

### Conclusion and discussion of overall recommendations (30 minutes)

After the groups present back on their observations and key findings, the session facilitator will briefly summarize the main learnings and adaptations presented by the small groups. They will then discuss next steps and actions, follow-up activities, or changes to project implementation decided upon based on recommendations and evidence.

## How to prepare for and conduct the session

### Before the Session

1. Create the Agenda.
2. Compile a list of participants.
3. Review data sources that will be presented. Are all of the expected data entered into NTD DHIS2, or available through NTD DHIS2’s connection with HMIS? Which data are currently available that are not included in NTD DHIS2? These may be planning or procurement documents, training data, supervision reports, coverage surveys, meeting reports etc.
4. Notify participants of the session’s time, data, and place. Encourage participants to reflect on their experience, and review notes or journals as needed, to prepare to participate fully and share their experiences and perceptions. Notify anyone who will present during the sessions (generally presentation of data and results) and help them adequately prepare.

### Upon Arrival

1. Introduce the Session Facilitator and notetaker.
2. Share Reflection Session Agenda with participants.
3. Ensure note-takers and reporters understand their role.

### During the session

Facilitation Tips:

* **Set clear objectives and outcomes** for your meeting. But also, allow the conversation to unfold organically. Keep in mind as the facilitator, if the group wanders off topic, gently guide them back to the intended objectives and outcomes you set prior to the start of the meeting.
* **Set ground rules and expectations** for discussion between members.
* **Create a positive environment** to ensure that each member, despite challenging opinions, feels comfortable expressing their opinion.
* **Energize and engage** **your group**and encourage participation.
* If the session purpose is to discuss “big picture” ideas, **recognize when your group begins to become too entrenched in details** and begins to lose sight of the larger picture.
* **Encourage participant interaction** by allowing team members answer each other’s questions, rather than answering questions yourself, or directing all questions to the team leader.
* **Weave together related ideas** that were mentioned throughout the discussion.
* When appropriate, **ask open ended questions** to encourage further discussion of ideas and opinions.
* **Summarize your meeting results** and **address next steps for follow-up and action items** identified during the meeting.

### After the session

* Have all participants fill out a reflection session evaluation. This should include a space for participants to list their personal key takeaways and lessons learned.
* Thank participants for their time and give them contact information to reach session facilitators.
* Confirm notes and records are stored. Ensure key learnings and planned adaptations are directly brought to work planning sessions.
* Hold a team debrief, for leadership and those involved in planning and holding the reflection session did you accomplish what you wanted to, why or why not, note adjustments for the next region.
* Complete the learning and adaptation tracking tool to record
  + Key recommendations derived from the reflection session
  + Actions, follow-up activities, or changes to project implementation decided upon based on recommendations and evidence
  + Follow-up results of the actions, to learn the effects of the adaptations made

## Annexes

1. Results review and discussion tool
2. Adaptation discussion tool
3. Learning and adaptation tracking tool

# Annexes

## Annex 1: Results Review and Discussion Tool

### Guiding Questions to Facilitate Learning

* **Data Quality**
  + Are any woredas missing data?
  + Are the data showing any inconsistencies? (e.g., difference between drugs administered and persons treated)
  + Are there any strange outliers that are not explained?
  + Do any of the data points have the exact same value 2+ years in a row?
  + Is reported epidemological or program coverage grossly over 100%?
* **Program Performance**
  + Was sufficient coverage achieved during the last MDA?
  + Are there any woredas that did not achieve sufficient coverage during the last MDA?
  + Is coverage similar across all diseases?
  + Are there any woredas that have consistently not achieved sufficient coverage? Poor coverage across all diseases, or just one?
  + Are any woredas ready for an impact assessment?
  + Have any woredas failed an impact assessment?

### Examples of lessons learned based on data: Data Quality

* **Missing treatment data:** Woreda X did not have any data reported in 2017 but I know there was an MDA conducted there.
* **Possible issue with numerator or denominator in Woreda Y in 2016:** Reported coverage in Woreda Y was 150%.
* **Incomplete data entry across diseases:** Woreda Z is endemic for LF and oncho, and was treated with IVM+ALB in 2017, but there are only treatment data indicated for LF.
* **Inconsistent data entry with endemicity and treatments**: Woreda A is not endemic for trachoma, but has treatment data recorded in 2016.
* **Inconsistent data entry with drugs and treatments:** The ALB number of drugs administered in 2018 is not aligned with the number of people treated for STH in 2018.

### Examples of lessons learned based on data: Program Performance

* **Low coverage across diseases in Woreda B:** Woreda B had low coverage for both LF (50%) and schisto (45%) in the last MDA.
* **Persistent poor performance in Woreda C:** Woreda C has had low coverage for STH for the past 3 years (2016: 45%; 2017: 50%, 2018: 49%).
* **Coverage improvement in Woreda D**: Woreda D had insufficient coverage in for trachoma 2016 (60%), but increased in 2018 (85%).
* **5 woredas ready for Pre-TAS and TAS in 2020**: Based on reported coverage data to calculate the number of effective rounds conducted, Woredas F, G, M, N, P will be ready for pre-TAS and TAS in 2020.

## Annex 2. Adaptation Discussion Tool

1. **Discuss as a group:** Given the lessons and challenges, what needs to change? What do we need to do differently in the coming year to improve results? What activities should be maintained?
2. **Identify programmatic adaptations** to be taken based on what you’ve learned
   * **What** actions should be carried out?
   * **Who** should be responsible for conducting?
   * **Where** should these be implemented?
   * **When**?
   * What are the **resource implications**?
3. **Document plan for programmatic adaptations.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson learned** | **Data that contributed to said learning** | **Programmatic adaptation planned to take in response** |
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## Annex 3. Learning and Adaptation Tracking Tool

Using the information compiled previously about the learning and programmatic adaptation planned to be taken, update the table with the programmatic adaptations that were actually taken and what the results were. Provide details about the programmatic adaptations that were taken, including what the activities were, who carried them out, when they were implemented, where they were conducted, and how many resources were spent.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson learned** | **Data that contributed to said learning** | **Programmatic adaptation planned to take in response** | **Programmatic adaptation actually taken in response** | **Result** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |