

Building M&E Capacity Through eLearning Collaboration

“The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, signed by more than 100 bilateral donors and developing countries, states that the “capacity to plan, manage, implement and account for results ... is critical for achieving development objectives.”

The Need for M&E

In the face of increasing economic constraints, rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is crucial to determine whether public health programs are meeting their objectives, being implemented as planned, and are efficient in terms of using resources to achieve desired outcomes.

M&E officers and program managers must have the knowledge and skills to monitor and determine a program’s effectiveness and to communicate these findings so that evidence-informed decisions are made throughout the duration of a program and used to inform other programs.

This brief focuses on the collaboration between two USAID-funded projects: the [Knowledge for Health \(K4Health\) Project](#) at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs (JHU·CCP) and the [MEASURE Evaluation](#) project at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Carolina Population Center. The primary focus of this long-term collaboration centered around developing a suite of eLearning courses on key M&E-related topics, and working together to incorporate the courses into MEASURE Evaluation’s project-wide capacity building efforts.



eLearning as a Tool for Capacity Building

Incorporating eLearning as part of a capacity building strategy is a flexible, cost-effective, and sustainable method of transferring knowledge about state-of-the-art technical material, best practices, and organizational guidance in a consistent manner to staff, implementing partners, and others working in HIV/AIDS and other areas of health programming. The high cost of conducting in-person training can sometimes limit access to educational opportunities for staff critical to implementation success. On the other hand, relying solely on eLearning solutions to successfully transfer highly technical skills can be challenging. By [incorporating eLearning into a multi-pronged capacity building strategy](#), the transfer of learning, knowledge, and skills that takes place will be reinforced and more likely applied. Self-paced eLearning courses enhance a learner’s experience by serving as prerequisites, reinforcement assignments, refreshers, or complements to face-to-face workshops and trainings or synchronous webinars and online presentations.

According to a 2010-2011 evaluation, “[The Global Health eLearning Center] GHEL is a pioneer and leader in the field of eLearning. This initiative has continued to provide effective eLearning opportunities to large numbers of learners around the world for several years.”

The Beginning of a Collaboration

In response to growing demand from the field for technical updates, the USAID Global Health Bureau launched the [USAID Global Health eLearning Center \(GHeL\)](#) in October 2005. Since then, over 97,000 learners from 246 countries have registered and taken the 50+ courses available. Approximately 19% of learners are USAID staff (the original primary audience), while the remaining 81% represent developing world public health professionals. The GHeL Center helps to take distance education to the next level by promoting greater knowledge sharing through this open access and open source platform.

As an implementing partner, the K4Health Project provides expertise in course design and development. K4Health does this by working with technical experts, often other USAID implementing partners such as MEASURE Evaluation, to ensure that courses highlight essential concepts and objectives, prioritize key information, and synthesize content to avoid overwhelming the learners.

MEASURE Evaluation was an early adopter of eLearning and authored one of the first and most popular GHeL courses - M&E Fundamentals - in 2006. The M&E Fundamentals course has proven to be a significant enhancement to MEASURE Evaluation's capacity building efforts serving as a regularly recommended prerequisite course for its face-to-face regional workshop participants.

The Evolution

In 2007, K4Health and MEASURE Evaluation strengthened their collaboration and commitment to developing M&E-related eLearning courses as part of the PEPFAR eLearning Initiative. At its core, the PEPFAR eLearning Initiative is a collaborative partnership among key PEPFAR implementing agencies and partners, as well as other technical experts. Throughout the development process for each course, the eLearning team and the course developer seek country-level input in the creation and presentation of case studies, as well as in the review process.

Based on its experience managing and designing GHeL courses, K4Health has been managing the PEPFAR eLearning Initiative which leverages the platform and learner base of GHeL and enhances GHeL's technical course offerings in HIV/AIDS. As a technical expert in the field of M&E and the identification of data needs and the collection, analysis, and use of appropriate data to meet those needs, MEASURE Evaluation has been an integral partner and collaborator on this initiative. Along with other technical experts, MEASURE Evaluation provides substantial inputs into the course development process – from the initial brainstorming phases of course proposals and content development contribution, to serving as technical reviewers and integrating the courses into its other capacity building activities.

Under the PEPFAR eLearning Initiative, the K4Health Project and MEASURE Evaluation have collaborated on the following courses:

- Data Quality
- HIV/AIDS Surveillance
- M&E Frameworks for HIV/AIDS Programs
- Data Use for Program Managers
- Economic Evaluation Basics
- Geographic Approaches to Global Health
- PEPFAR Next Generation Indicator Guidance
- Mortality Surveillance Methods & Strategies
- M&E Guidelines for Sex Workers, Men Who Have Sex With Men, & Transgender Populations-National Level (just published in May 2013)
- M&E Guidelines for Sex Workers, Men Who Have Sex With Men, & Transgender Populations-Service Delivery Level (coming soon!)

Examples of Course Development Models

Expanding the Reach of International Guidance

The M&E Guidelines for Sex Workers, Men Who Have Sex With Men, & Transgender Populations-National Level course converts the 234-page [Operational Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluation of HIV Programmes for Sex Workers, Men who have Sex with Men, and Transgender People - Volume I National and Sub-National Levels](#) into a 2-3 hour-long eLearning course.

The Guidelines were developed as part of a multiagency effort involving the contributions of more than 30 individuals from a number of organizations – both governmental and intergovernmental. It is an excellent example of multiagency coordination for strengthening HIV/AIDS M&E systems. As co-chairs of the multiagency working group that developed the Guidelines, MEASURE Evaluation spearheaded this transfer of the Guidelines into an eLearning course in an effort to expand access to the Guidelines in a more simplified format.

The course can be taken by individuals as well as groups of stakeholders interested in and working to improve programs for sex workers, men who have sex with men, and transgender populations.

Ensuring That the Experience of Stakeholders in the Field Is Reflected in PEPFAR Guidance

The PEPFAR Next Generation Indicators Guidance course is an example of providing introductory training on how the [Next Generation Indicator \(NGI\) Reference Guide](#) can be used within the context of national M&E frameworks. In order to ensure the usefulness of the course, frequently asked questions from the field were included with responses. In addition, specific country-level examples were provided on overcoming challenges in reporting specific indicators. MEASURE Evaluation's headquarter and field staff – specifically from Cote d'Ivoire, Guyana, and Kenya – contributed to the course in an effort to ensure that it was reflective of experiences in-country. As a result of this course, learners should be well equipped to use the NGI Reference Guide to report on their own program's successes.

"I am currently working on a USAID-funded project targeting highly vulnerable children in Ethiopia. I will use the tools and indicators in this course to re-align our project indicators towards PEPFAR/USAID objectives." – PEPFAR NGI Guidance learner from Ethiopia

Integrating Courses into Other Capacity Building Activities

The Geographic Approaches to Global Health course was used as a prerequisite to a 2011 face-to-face GIS training workshop that was conducted in Kigali, Rwanda, organized by MEASURE Evaluation in collaboration with Monitoring and Evaluation Management Systems, and supported by USAD in collaboration with National AIDS Control Commission. The course provided workshop attendees with an introduction to spatial data and its role in decision making. Requiring workshop participants to complete the eLearning course prior to the face-to-face training meant that MEASURE Evaluation trainers did not have to spend as much time on the basic concepts. It also meant that the trainers were at least guaranteed that all participants had at minimum the same basic level of knowledge. This allowed the MEASURE Evaluation trainers to focus



Andrew Inglis and training participants use qGIS and local data to produce maps that can be used for monitoring HIV programs.

more on teaching the skills to produce GIS maps, how to interpret maps, and how to effectively use spatial data during the face-to-face workshop. Combining eLearning courses with face-to-face training events provides a great opportunity for reinforcing concepts and allowing more time to delve deeper into complex materials and to further develop skills.

Extending the Reach of the eLearning Courses

In an effort to reinforce and strengthen capacity training efforts and goals, K4Health has worked with MEASURE

"In my MPH, I did evaluation but didn't understand it. The way it was structured here now I understand M&E much better because of this online course." – M&E Frameworks for HIV/AIDS Programs learner from South Africa

Evaluation to distribute the PEPFAR eLearning courses on CD-ROM to its target audiences overseas with limited internet connectivity as well as to its workshop participants to use as refresher trainings once they leave the face-to-face training events. In this way, the workshop participants are provided with more learning opportunities beyond the intensive one, two, or three-week training workshops. Similarly, K4Health is in the process of translating all of the PEPFAR eLearning Initiative courses and will share them with MEASURE Evaluation for its Lusophone and Francophone Africa training partners and workshop attendees. In addition to Portuguese and French, all courses will also be translated into Spanish.

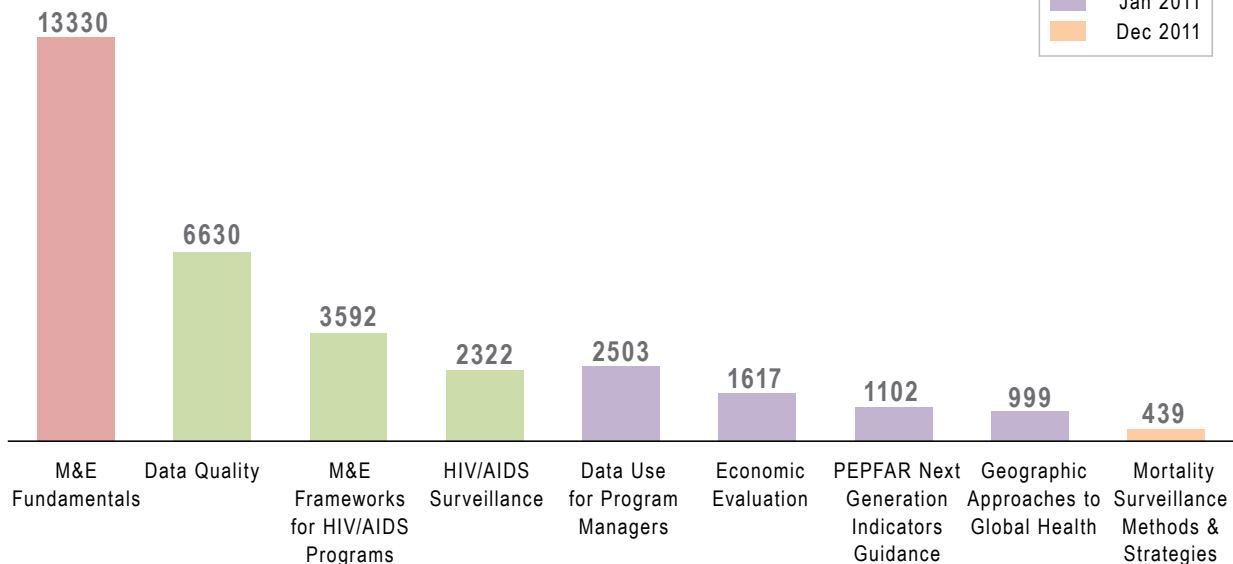
Measuring Our Success

The success of the K4Health and MEASURE Evaluation collaboration can be measured by the reach of the courses, the continued demand for new courses, learner feedback, successful completion of courses (certificates earned), and the incorporation of the courses into blended learning activities to strengthen specific capacity building outcomes as highlighted by the M&E Fundamentals and Geographic Approaches to Global Health examples.

"I have printed the scripts from this course and will have to revisit them because I found them very informative because I didn't know much about managing data." – Data Use for Program Managers learner from Botswana

eLearning Certificate Holders

Total number of learners who scored 85% or higher on the final exam



Statistics pulled on July 1, 2013



For more information, contact: Lisa Mwaikambo of JHU•CCP at: lbasalla@jhuccp.org or Melissa Dunn of MEASURE Evaluation at: mdunn@email.unc.edu

