Brief: Improving health service delivery transitions in public health emergencies: A Health Service Delivery Exit Matrix Tool

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Background

Recent attention by the global community on the 'nexus' between humanitarian and development work has been instrumental in the creation of CORE Group's Humanitarian-Development Task Force (HDTF), with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). This brief is part of an OFDA-funded collaborative with CORE Group entitled "*Addressing Gaps in the Evidence for Health and Nutrition in the Humanitarian-Development Nexus.*" The purpose of this initiative is to increase global capacity for coordinating, integrating and transitioning community health and nutrition services in response to protracted crises and transition from crises to recovery and included the development of two tools (i.e. matrix exit tool and community health service delivery framework tool), accompanied by two prospective case studies and briefs, and one retrospective case study on health systems strengthening within the nexus. A literature review included published and grey literature on primary health care approaches in the humanitarian development nexus and identified existing tools and approaches used in health systems strengthening, transitioning humanitarian programs, and the adaptation of development approaches that impact the community level for emergency settings (i.e. Care Groups and integrated community case management (iCCM)). The literature review confirmed minimal evidence-based information, tools or guidance has been developed on the use of exit indicator tools to guide humanitarian relief to development transitions.

Purpose

The aim of this tool is to provide visual metrics to monitor contextual readiness and guide planning for transition from humanitarian to development health and nutrition services. The usefulness of the adapted exit matrix tool for preparing and monitoring the transition from acute or chronic complex emergencies to long-term development health actors was assessed and documented, which informed on further modifications to the tool. This tool is for use by stakeholders who implement humanitarian interventions. The purpose of this tool is to aid in developing and monitoring their health and nutrition exit strategy and transition readiness at customizable levels (facility, location, country exit), and over customizable periods of time--weeks, months, quarters. The tool can be shared and adapted for community leaders, ministries of health and other government officials, health or nutrition clusters, local or international NGOs, donors and others. Results should be shared amongst key stakeholders.

Methods

There were several steps involved in development of this tool:
- Literature review of key documents and tools including global level indicators
- Development of a matrix tool- a health service delivery exit "spider diagram" tool in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (2012)
- Adaptation of the DRC tool for wider use in fragile settings in low and middle income countries with incorporation of a new exit indicator menu taken from global and country specific indicator reviews.[1] Selected country program staff in five countries trained on tool and sent back completed tools for global advisory review and assistance as needed
- Collection of country feedback on their impressions of the tool:
  - Rapid key informant interviews (n=8) with countries in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, and international NGO staff (n=2) following use of the tool (October/November 2019)
  - Collection of feedback from 10 country programs during the Medair workshop, Nairobi, Kenya (November 2019).

The initial Medair spider diagram tool aided implementers in DRC to visualize progress toward seven exit benchmarks: 1) security situation, 2) financial capacity, 3) access to health services, 4) quality of treatment, 5) preparedness, 6) potential sustainability and 7) measles coverage. Qualitative analyses of key informant interviews with compilation of country discussions from the Medair workshop was conducted on the updated tool, according to the following themes: use of tool/plans to use tool, any unclear elements of tool, strengths of tool, weaknesses of tool, and suggestions for improvement.

How to use the tool

Spider diagrams also called radar charts are used for data visualization from tables. They allow data to be aggregated on a common scale or axis and compared. In this tool, readiness to exit is assessed on a scale from 0 to 5 (red line) with 5 being the exit target and compared to baseline (green line) and targets (blue line) over time. The closer the current indicator score or red line is to 5 and the edge of the spider web (blue target line), the more ready for transitioning the program or clinic is based on the selected key exit indicators. See outbreak example tab on tool.

Recommended steps for using the tool and creating the visualizations in the Spider Diagram tab:

1. Gather your strategy team: although the tool can be used by one person, it is recommended that those involved in transitioning a clinic, intervention site or program meet with relevant stakeholders. It is important to agree on the key exit indicators and targets that the intervention is aiming to achieve and by when. Advocate with stakeholders to agree on a complete exit or handing over service delivery to another partner (i.e. community, ministry, developmental actor, etc.)

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[1] Sphere, Interagency Standing Committee, WHO's Global Reference List of 100 Core Health Indicators, OCHA Humanitarian Response Indicators Registry, People in Aid's IndiKit, and internal documents: Medair Triggers for Response in DRC, Medair Transition and Exit Guidelines (Iraq), Medair Health Location Exit Benchmarks (Iraq), Medair Country Strategy Plans, and Draft Guidelines for Transition from Health Facilities to Development (S. Sudan)).

2. Select and describe exit indicators: From the Exit Indicator Menu spreadsheet tab, select 5 to 10 maximum exit indicator categories (*column B*) and indicator descriptions (column C) that are relevant to your humanitarian intervention (s).

- Paste the indicator categories and descriptions into the Spider Diagram Template in columns 1 and 2.
- Select at least 5 categories and no more than 10 categories.
- Review and customize the indicator definitions to fit your context and timeframes. If there are indicators that are more important or specific for your intervention transition feel free to add custom indicators in as well. You are not restricted to the Exit Indicator Menu examples.

If you would like to combine several indicators into a category--just be careful to modify the excel formulas so the visualizations still work or ask for help.

Note: exit indicators are similar to but not the same as all program indicators. They should be very high level indicators that you think are so important that you should not plan exiting or transitioning out of service delivery if not achieved. For example exclusive breastfeeding prevalence is an important indicator in many projects; however, it is unlikely in a humanitarian situation that an organization would not exit if the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding was low.

3. Define a target for each indicator Type the target into the exit readiness criteria section 3 column D. This should be what is defined as an indicator score of 5.

4. Define your exit indicator scoring (section 4): Decide on how you will score readiness for each indicator selected with a score of 5 as your target exit criteria (defined in step 3 above). Enter the quantitative values (numbers or %) or descriptions if more qualitative in the indicator scoring section 5.

   - For numerical or % values this will be easier.
   - For more qualitative indicators it will take more time initially to define on the scale of 1 to 5.

5. Choose your monitoring timeframe: In row 8 of section 5 , under *the Achievement Timeframe*--from the drop down menus, choose a timeframe for reassessing your progress based on the intervention—i.e. weekly, monthly or quarterly. In the last tab, there is an example of a completed outbreak response with weekly monitoring —(i.e. Week 1 Achieved, Week 2 Achieved).

6. Calculate and record your baseline: Based on the indicator scoring that you defined from 1 to 5 in section 4, calculate your baseline from 1 to 5 (with 5 being the best, or your exit target) to monitor progress.

- Enter your values (1 to 5) for each indicator in the "Baseline" column of the Spider Diagram template.

- Enter the date of the baseline assessment or review in cell J8.

- If you input less than 10 categories in the table for baseline and results your spider diagrams will have gaps and look distorted. Follow the instructions on Excel tips in the template to fix this which are applicable for the latest versions of Excel.

7. Ongoing monitoring: At the planned time periods (which you can change), reassess and rescore your exit indicators and enter these scores (from 1 to 5) in the relevant timeframe column. Then, the spider diagram for that time period will be automatically created. With the template, you can reassess and compare these indicators up to 4 points in time.

8. Exiting analysis: Review and discuss the following questions with relevant stakeholders using the results from the spider diagrams, to determine next action steps for exiting.

> a. Are you close to your predefined targets (5) in all categories and should you prepare for transition?
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> b. What corrective actions are needed, if any? Are there areas scoring low that require extra program emphasis to improve readiness?
>
> c. Is the exit/transition plan and timeframe realistic if not near your exit target for most critical areas?
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> d. What should the stakeholders prioritize over the next monitoring period?
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> e. What action steps are needed *by whom and when* to be able to exit responsibly as initially planned?
>
> f. Who would it be helpful to share these exit monitoring results with?
>
> g. Which factors affecting exit are beyond your control?

Note: it is not expected that a score of "5" will be needed for all indicators in order to transition successfully, but if these are critical exit indicators than the majority should be achieved as far as the decision to exit lies with the implementing stakeholders.

Acknowledgements

Annex 1 – Matrix Exit Tool
Access the tool here.