Which indicators and methods to monitor and evaluate at the national level

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Presentation will....

- Provide a really quick overview of evaluation and its methodologies
- Present basic steps and questions to keep in the back of our minds as we prepare to monitor or evaluate
- Present some critical to successful evaluation factors/critical indicators
- Case study of a not so typical prevention program
Why evaluate program?

*the usual first question we ask ourselves*

- To determine the effectiveness of programs for participants --- MAKING A JUDGMENT;
- To document that program objectives have been met;
- To provide information about service delivery that will be useful to program staff and other audiences; and
- To enable program staff to make changes that improve program effectiveness.

(evaluations help to foster accountability, determine whether programs “make a difference,” and give staff the information they need to improve service delivery; help expand practitioners’ and policymakers’ understanding of the effectiveness of programs.)
Where do we start?

Use of the LOGIC MODEL (as a best practice)

- The evaluator looks towards the logic model that was formed by the stakeholders to solve the problem identified
  - The LM depicts the rationale underlying the existence of the problem
  - Depicts how various elements are expected to interact
  - The resources needed
  - The goods and services they produce
  - How these generate the desired results (short, medium and long-term)
How do we continue?

- Pinpoint the services needed—for example, finding out what knowledge, skills, attitudes, or problem behaviors a drug or alcohol prevention program would be addressing;

- Establish program objectives and deciding the particular evidence (such as the specific knowledge, attitudes, or behavior) that will demonstrate that the objectives have been met.

(The key to a successful evaluation is a set of clear, measurable, and realistic program objectives. If objectives are unrealistically optimistic or are not measurable, the program may not be able to demonstrate that it has been successful even if it has done a good job. In addition, did we implement actions as intended and if so, did they lead to the desired results)
What should we be aiming for?

- Developing or selecting from among alternative program approaches—for example, trying different curricula or policies and determining which ones best achieve the goals;

- Tracking program objectives—for example, setting up a system that shows who gets services, how much service is delivered, how participants rate the services they receive, and which approaches are most readily adopted by staff; or

- Trying out and assessing new program designs—determining the extent to which a particular approach is being implemented faithfully by school or agency personnel or the extent to which it attracts or retains participants.

(Through these types of activities, those who provide or administer services determine what to offer and how well they are offering those services)
The different dimensions of evaluation have formal names: process, outcome, and impact evaluation. These three dimensions can also be thought of as a set of assessment options that build upon one another, allowing program staff to increase their knowledge about the activities they undertake as they incorporate more options or dimensions into their evaluation.

(the overall intent behind monitoring and evaluation is to inform policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders of the progress of the programme in achieving its intended results)
What happens at the process stage?

**Process evaluation** describes and assesses program materials and activities (monitoring activities).

- For example, program staff might systematically review the units in a curriculum to determine whether they adequately address all of the behaviors the program seeks to influence.
- A program administrator might observe teachers using the program and write a descriptive account of how students respond, and then provide feedback to instructors.
What happens at the outcome stage?

- **Outcome evaluation** assesses program achievements and effects. Outcome evaluations study the immediate or direct effects of the program on participants.
  - For example, when a 10-session program aimed at teaching refusal skills is completed, can the participants demonstrate the skills successfully?

(The scope of an outcome evaluation can extend beyond knowledge or attitudes, to examine the immediate behavioral effects of programs)
What happens at the impact stage?

**Impact evaluation** looks beyond the immediate results of policies, instruction, or services to identify longer-term as well as unintended program effects.

- It may also examine what happens when several programs operate in unison.
  - For example, an impact evaluation might examine whether a program’s immediate positive effects on behavior were sustained over time.
- It might also look at whether the introduction of a community-wide prevention program with components administered by schools, agencies, and churches resulted in fewer teenage drug-related arrests or deaths.
Evaluation: for what purpose? And to be used by whom?

Before assessing a program, it is critical to consider who is most likely to need and use the information that will be obtained and for what purposes.

- **For project management** - monitors the routines of program operations. It can provide program staff or administrators with information on such items as participant characteristics, program activities, allocation of staff resources, or program costs.

- **For staying on tract** – this type of evaluation can help to strengthen service delivery and to maintain the connection between program goals, objectives, and services.
Evaluation: for what purpose? And to be used by whom?

- **For project efficiency** - Evaluation can help to streamline service delivery or to enhance coordination among various program components, lowering the cost of service. Increased efficiency can enable a program to serve more people, offer more services, or target services to those whose needs are greatest.

- **For accountability** - the users of the evaluation results likely will come from outside of program operations: parent groups, funding agencies, elected officials, or other policymakers.

- **For new program development and dissemination** – Rigorous evaluation of longer-term program outcomes is a prerequisite to asserting that a new model is effective.
What is the evidence to make our JUDGMENT?

- Regardless of the kind of evaluation, all evaluations use data collected in a systematic manner (the INDICATORS). These data may be quantitative—such as counts of program participants, amounts of counseling or other services received, or extent of drug use. They also may be qualitative—such as descriptions of what transpired at a series of counseling sessions.

(Successful evaluations often blend quantitative and qualitative data collection. The choice of which to use should be made with an understanding that there is usually more than one way to answer any given question)
Steps in planning for the evaluation

- **Identifying the Evaluation’s Consumers** – this will help to determine what questions are most important, what data will be viewed as credible, what analyses should be conducted, and how results should be transmitted and displayed.

- **Choosing the Important Evaluation Questions** - There is rarely enough time or resources to answer all of the questions about program practice and effects that consumers pose. A way must be found to establish priorities and to limit the number of questions, ask the questions: “I need to know _____ because I need to decide____.”
Steps in planning for the evaluation

- **Mapping Out an Evaluation Work Plan** - create a step-by-step work plan; review the questions and group them in some logical manner—by subject area, by the data needed to address them, by process/outcome/impact, or in some other manner.

(The plan should therefore outline the data that will be collected and how the information gathered will relate to each evaluation question)
Making good on the scarce resources

- Making sure adequate resources are at hand to carry out all functions
  - Be creative; use program staff and even students to do data collection and data entry
  - Use survey instruments that already exist for similar types of program intervention
  - Use national statistical offices or universities to support the analysis of the data and compiling reports
Making good on the scarce resources

- Use existing data sources where applicable and available (be mindful of validity and reliability)
- Do not put all of your information “eggs” in one data collection “basket.” It is useful to begin an evaluation with multiple data collection strategies or alternatives in mind
- Obtain technical information and help from outside the project
What is critically important in the long run?

- Establishing that implementation took place
- Ensuring that evaluations yield valid and reliable findings
- Interpreting and reporting evaluation findings

Q. What defines the findings? - INDICATORS
Evaluating students outcomes in the context of a drug prevention program
(minimum menu of indicators)

- Knowledge and attitude towards/about drug and alcohol
- Rates of drug use (incidence and prevalence) – has the program forestalled use or reduced use
- Intent to use drugs
- Perceived risk involved in drug use
- Drug education – from the students perspective
minimum menu of indicators

• School drug policy – is the policy reducing the availability of drugs in school, for example, how difficult/easy is it to obtain drug at school

• Disciplinary environment - What happens to a student who gets caught doing the following things, for example possession of drugs

• Drug availability and acceptability – do your friends use drugs, how often are you around friends that use drugs
Example of how outcome indicators can be displayed?

- Teacher reports of number of 50-minute class sessions per school year devoted to drug education
- Student’s indication of how many drug education sessions attended per school year
- Drug-related disciplinary actions per school year
- Percentage of students who reported being drunk at least once in the last 30 days, prior to and after implementation
- Percentage of students who reported ever trying marijuana, prior to and after implementation
- Percentage of students who disapproved or strongly disapproved of having five or more drinks in a row, prior to and after implementation
- Percentage of students who saw great risk in having five or more drinks in a row, prior to and after implementation
Changing the focus

- Not all drug prevention programs are school based. Some are community based and can sometimes form part of a wider social intervention for high-risk students or high-risk communities, and they too are subject to evaluation.

- I will like to present a two slide case study of such a program – a social safety net protective factor program.
Social safety net program in Jamaica
(Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH))

- Objectives: to support children of poor families to attend and stay in school and access health care

- Elements of the support:
  - Qualifying criteria
  - Monetary support provided by the state
  - Verification of attendance and use of funds (done through a national management information system)
  - Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes (in-person monitoring by staff, personal visits to homes and school to check records of attendance etc)
PATH program

- Intended benefits:
  - Poor families will afford to provide transportation means for children to attend school
  - Families will be able to provide books
  - Recipient students are enrolled in a school feeding program and given breakfast and lunch
  - Successful participation overtime (from one school year to the next) trigger additional social benefits to the family, for example enrolment in the health insurance scheme
PATH Program - outcomes
(accrued benefits on evaluation with comparison group)

- Increased school attendance with greater regularity
- Low school drop-outs among participating families
- Increased participation in protective life skills programs, drug education program, etc
- Increased attachment and participation in after-school activities
PATH Program - outcomes
(accrued benefits on evaluation with comparison group)

- Increased participation in community programs (greater community attachment)
- Increased good-faith efforts by parents to support children to participate in school and community activities (pro-social involvement)
- Reduced rates of drug use and intent to use drugs by participating students
- More pro-social involvement by students overall