

i-TEC APPROACH ON CONDUCTING DATA QUALITY ASSESSMENTS

WHY DO WE NEED TO CONDUCT DATA QUALITY ASSESSMENTS (DQAs)?

Managers of programs or projects need to know the strengths and weaknesses of data they collect. In addition, they need to understand the integrity of such data to be able to use it for making decisions.

i-TEC provides technical assistance to both program/project implementers and funders to assess the extent to which the data generated can be trusted.

i-TEC follows selected data quality standards to assess the quality and integrity of the data that projects collect in order to inform the client about its strengths and limitations.

The data quality standards that are assessed include but are not limited to the following:

Completeness: Data collected should reflect a comprehensive picture of performance of the result being measured.

Validity: Indicator and/or the resulting data should clearly and adequately represent the intended results.

Integrity: Data collected, analyzed, and reported, should have mechanisms in place to reduce the possibility that they are intentionally manipulated for any reason, such as political or personal.

Precision: Data should be sufficiently precise to present a fair picture of performance and enable management decision-making at the appropriate levels.

Reliability: Data should reflect stable and consistent data collection processes and analysis methods over time.

Timeliness: Data should be timely enough to influence management decision-making at appropriate levels.

APPROACHES TO CONDUCTING A DATA QUALITY ASSESSMENT

i-TEC support to any data quality assessment for a client entails reviewing their list of selected indicators to understand their respective data chains and then determine the needs of the client. The latter is conducted through having a management meeting to first understand the broader programmatic needs.

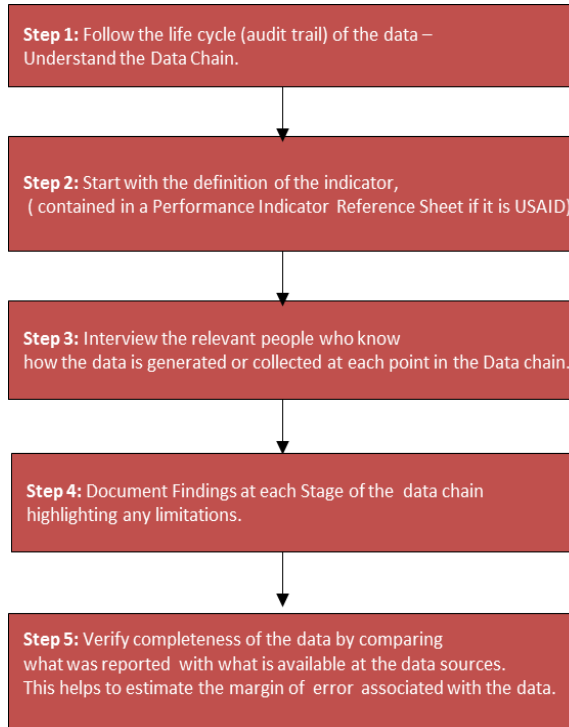
The actual conduct of a Data Quality Assessment (DQA) is based on a two-tier approach. The first-tier is held at the Implementers' Head Office, which is followed by a visit to the field offices as a second-tier along the respective data chains. i-TEC uses a combination of two approaches, namely; A) Data Verification; and B) A Systems Approach. Either approach requires the participation of the client.

A) DATA VERIFICATION – AN AUDIT APPROACH

Verification of data – the reviewer follows a specific datum to its source, confirming that it has supporting documentation and is accurate.

Recommended Action: Select a sample of indicators to spot check in this way during site visits and through project monitoring.

STEPS FOR DATA VERIFICATION – AUDIT APPROACH



B) THE SYSTEMS APPROACH

Using a Systems Approach – the reviewer examines the data in light of the five data quality standards.

Recommended Action: Review the systems and approaches being used for collecting data and whether they are likely to produce data of an acceptable quality over time, this is mainly applicable to USAID (ADS 203.3.11).

This approach entails assessing a broader set of issues that are likely to ensure data quality over time (as opposed to simply whether a specific number is accurate or not). Taking a holistic systems approach examines the following:

- Indicators with precise definitions
- Rationale for selecting the indicators (the thinking behind the indicator choice)
- Data sources and methodology for data collection
- Existence of baselines and targets
- Data limitations and how limitations will be addressed
- Existence of critical assumptions
- Individuals responsible for different aspects of M&E
- Data collection tools
- Data collection, maintenance, processing procedures and controls
- Review performance data

- Data reporting mechanisms
- Verify performance data against data quality standards; Validity, Reliability, Precision, Integrity and Timeliness
- Triangulate; supplement with data from multiple sources
- Report the data limitations within the Data Quality Assessment Tool.

Note: *The entire systems approach uses a standardized tool called the Data Quality Assessment and Documentation Tool in the case of USAID .*

PLANNING FOR THE DQA

- Develop a Data Quality Assessment work plan
- Review and compare old DQA Reports with current ones and review previous recommendations if available
- If data quality limitations were identified in past DQAs, review whether actions were taken to address them as per the recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CLIENT AFTER DQA FINDINGS

- If data will be included in the annual report, disclose the DQA findings in the “data quality limitations” section of the Annual report.
- Document the DQA findings and the limitations in the Performance Indicator Reference Sheet, DQA document, worksheet/template or memo.
- Retain supporting documentation in files

Note: For Health related DQAs, i-TEC uses a data verification and system assessment sheet across Health Service Delivery points.

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