Applying Qualitative Methods to Evaluation on a Large Scale

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PEPFAR Evaluation

Congressionally mandated
Conducted by U.S. Institute of Medicine

10-Year time period evaluated (2003-2013)
authorized 2003; re-authorized 2008

Evaluation: 4-year global mixed methods study in two phases:
  Planning
  Implementation
  primary qualitative data collection
  ~ 400 in-depth interviews
  ~ 65 site visit observations
Qualitative Design Strategies

- Systematic approach, iterative process
- Flexible, emergent design
- Triangulation (data sources, data types, investigators)

- Qualitative training, mentoring
- On-going reflection, reflexivity
- Saturation; prolonged engagement in the field
- Accuracy of data collection
- Framing evaluation & interview questions qualitatively
- Interview guides, end of interview summaries with in-depth qualitative interviews
- Audit trail
- Participant review of data findings
- On-going data analysis
Dr. Robert Black
Johns Hopkins
Chair
COMMITTEE of International experts
20 members

Dr. Bridget Kelly & Ms. Kimberly Scott
U.S. Institute of Medicine
Study Co-Directors

IOM STUDY TEAM
7-10 staff

Consultants: 3
Statisticians (2)
Qualitative (1)
Qualitative Evaluation Approach
Knowledge Acquisition and Skills Development

- IOM Team
- Committee members
- Training
- Role Modeling
- Mentoring

**Formal**
- Workshops (1 week workshop with staff)
- Informational presentations at committee meetings
- First day in-country: re-orientation to process and tools

**Informal**
- Role modeling, mentoring, ongoing discussion
Resource provided to each IOM team member as part of training.
TEAM Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of Qualitative Inquiry:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gain insight, understanding, meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discover context and complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore “Why?”, “What,” and “How?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Thick” description</td>
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“Naturalistic inquiry” – non-manipulative, non-controlled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existence of multiple views of reality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value of individual perspective and experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>“<em>Human as instrument</em>” (Lincoln &amp; Guba, 1985):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluator as instrument of discovery-- listen, learn, ask for more.</td>
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**TEAM Training:**

Role? Rapport builder, facilitator, collaborator in eliciting the participants story in the participants voice.

Evaluators can’t get the real story if they are preoccupied with their own version.

Openness is the ideal stance, open-ended the ideal kind of question.
Everything is Data

but nothing is data unless it is documented

(with consent)
Qualitative Approach: Leadership, Advocacy, Mentoring

Bridget Kelly, MD, PhD, and Kimberly Scott, MSPH
Co-Directors, Institute of Medicine PEPFAR Evaluation
Evaluation Question: Qualitative

Qualitative Interview Questions
Development of Qualitative Evaluation & Interview Questions

Statement of Task

Overarching Evaluation Question

Key Evaluation Areas & Questions (10)

Key Country Visit Interview Questions (25)
Overarching Qualitative Evaluation Question

What is PEPFAR’s contribution to the global HIV/AIDS response?
Key Evaluation Areas

PEPFAR Operations
1. Knowledge Management
2. Resource Flow

PEPFAR Implementation
3. Access and Coverage
4. Programmatic Context

PEPFAR Effects
5. Progress Toward Targets
6. Measurable Health Impact
7. Health Systems Strengthening
8. Perceived Effects

PEPFAR Transition to Sustainability
9. Country ownership
10. Sustainability
PEPFAR Operations

1. Knowledge Management

   How is knowledge and information managed [in order] to…
   • monitor the activities and effects of the program?
   • guide policies, resource priorities, and programmatic management?
PEPFAR Operations

1. **Knowledge Management**
   How is knowledge and information managed [in order] to monitor the activities and effects of the program?

   *Please tell me about the data you collect related to HIV/AIDS programs.*

   * How do you manage the data you collect?
     - data storage
     - data capture and entry
     - data analysis
     - data quality assessment

   * How do you use the data you collect?
<table>
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<tr>
<th>EVALUATION TOPICS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>County Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainability: Future of national response</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity Building: needs, role of PEPFAR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Systems: PEPFAR effects, achieving strength, integration of services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Priority Setting: Choices, alignment of partner country priorities with PEPFAR HQ, USG team, nation, implementing partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service Needs: Vulnerable Populations, Views of HIV (Stigma), needs determination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting PEPFAR targets and goals: how understood, how set and communicated, progress/challenges.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources: flow, strategic use</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Information: Data collection, management, use, support for national SI systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
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<td>Country Ownership: Meaning, measure</td>
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Purposeful Sampling
Country Visit Selection \((n=13)\)

**Criteria-based purposeful selection**
(Patton, 2002)

Consensus achieved during all-team committee meeting

**Considerations:**
- Country income level
- Type of HIV epidemic
- HIV prevalence
- Funding status (initial, later)
- Population size
- PEPFAR funding
  - per person living with HIV
  - per capita
- Contribution of PEPFAR to national response relative to Global Fund
- Delegation team safety
Purposeful Sampling

Countries Visited

Interviewees within Countries
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US Country Mission leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEPFAR Mission Team members &amp; technical staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEPFAR country coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner country &amp; US-based HIV/AIDS efforts</td>
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<tr>
<td>civil society</td>
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<tr>
<td>others</td>
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INTERVIEWEE Roles Across Countries
Interviewee purposeful sampling

- Direct experience
- Willingness to participate voluntarily
- Interviewee role
- Protocol

Average 29 interviews per country
Total: ~ 400 interviews
In-depth interview questions tailored to
Country visited
Special focus of visit
Interviewee role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Q KM1</th>
<th>Q SP3</th>
<th>Q DR1</th>
<th>Q DR2</th>
<th>Q RR1</th>
<th>Q DX 1</th>
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Country Visit “Tool Kit”

**Daily Agenda**
- AM briefing
- Interview assignments
- Interviewee or site visit info

**Data**
- Interview field notes
- Digital recordings
- Post-Interview debriefing
- Daily/2-day debriefing
- End-of-week synthesis

**Interview Guides**
- Drawn from evaluation questions
- Tailored to interviewee

**Informed Consent Script**

**Guide to Evaluation Topics**

**Interview Team Roles & Responsibilities**
Country Visit Evaluation Team

Study Co-Director(s)
IOM staff
Committee member(s)
Consultant
COMMITTEE of International EXPERTS (n=20)

IOM Study Co-Directors (n=2)

IOM STUDY TEAM 7-10 staff

Consultants (n=3)

COUNTRY VISIT
Leader (study co-director)
Team logistics (one staff member)
Data management (one staff member)
Data collection and debriefing/synthesis (everyone)
Prolonged Time in the Field

Country Visit

~1 week committee members

2 weeks: IOM country visit leader & staff

Duration of country visits:
Nov. 2010 to Feb. 2012
Each visit ~12-14 days
Total: ~180 days
Country Visit Data Collection: Typical Day

7AM: Team Breakfast

7:30AM: Morning Team Briefing
   Team Assignments, Logistics
   Agenda, Interview Guide
   Equipment distribution

Two interview teams of 2-3 members each

8:00AM Travel to Interviews

12N: Team Lunch

1PM: Travel to Interviews

3:30PM: Return to hotel- Interview Team Debriefings

5PM: Dinner

6PM: Evening Team Debriefing
Reflection - REFLEXIVITY

Debriefings
Exit synthesises
## Audit Trail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda Log</th>
<th>Activity Log</th>
<th>Analysis &amp; Interpretation Notes</th>
<th>Data Analysis Codebook</th>
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Typical Interview
Group or individual
Participant’s site
Audio-recorded with permission
Field notes with permission
Clear team roles
End of interview summary with feedback
Duration: ~60 to 90 minutes
INTERVIEW GUIDE

4-7 open-ended questions + prompts probes

Header: Country number, Interview number

Designed strategically
Used flexibly
Order of questions
Actual words used

Designated Facilitator:
Lead

Co-Facilitator:
Supportive role
Summarizes key points at end
Typical Interview
Group or individual
Participant’s site
Verbal consent; Audio-recorded with permission
Field notes with permission
Clear team roles
End of interview summary with feedback
Duration: ~60 to 90 minutes

Typical Interview Team
Facilitator
Co-facilitator
Recorder
**Facilitator:** Rapport building, facilitate conversation using interview guide.

**Co-Facilitator:** Timekeeper, cue facilitator, ask follow-up questions, *end-of interview summary*.

**Recorder** (when 3rd person present): Monitor recording, note-taking, observation notes

Pre-determined roles: Interview Team
On-going Iterative Data Analysis

- Debrief post-interview
- Debrief daily or every 2-days

End-of-interview Key Messages

Synthesis In Country
- End Week 1
- End Week 2

Debriefing In Country

Periodic Debriefing, Discussion Across Countries
Beginning Data Analysis

End of interview debriefing by interview team
Facilitated by interview facilitator
Note-taking by co-facilitator

Every one- to two-day team debriefing

End of week 1 synthesis
End of week 2 synthesis

Synthesis of the Week 2 syntheses for 8 countries
Workgroups

Knowledge Management
Prevention
Treatment
Care and Support
Children and Adolescents
Gender
Health Systems

Chair: committee member
Staff: liaison
Membership: committee members, staff member, 0-1 consultants
Purpose: Data analysis and interpretation

Other: finance, qualitative methods, quantitative methods
Data Analysis: All Team Effort

- Codebook based on evaluation areas
- Interview field notes (transcribed)
  - Round robin review: interview team
  - Audio-recording consult
- Finalized field notes entered N-Vivo as they became available

- Macro-coded interview field notes
- Reviewed data within each code
- Micro-coded data within Macro code
- Identified patterns, themes in data
- Written findings for review by team

Process appears linear. It is actually iterative. The figure here is simplified.
Ethics

- Verbal informed consent using pre-prepared script
- Assurance anonymity and confidentiality
- Numerically identified country and interview
- Analyzed data cross-country
- When in country: No revelation of who participated or what said
- Secured field notes and other data
Strengths of Qualitative Strategies Used

Leadership
Logistics
Commitment to qualitative approach
Systematic approach, including tool kit development
Engagement in qualitative process, including reflexivity
Data analysis & reporting facilitated by: debriefings, syntheses, N-Vivo, workgroups focused on evaluation topic
Personal attributes: flexibility, patience, stamina, adherence to approach
Challenge: Team Fatigue

• Jet lag and sleep challenges in country.
• Long days working with data collection, data coding, analysis, transcription of field notes, engaging in debriefings.
• Stress related to “getting behind.”
Challenge: Team Fatigue

- Jet lag and sleep challenges in country.
- Long days working with data collection, data coding, analysis, transcription of field notes, engaging in debriefings.
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Solution:

- When saturation recognized, reduced total number of interviews
- Built more individual time into weekly agenda
- Identified efficiencies in qualitative processes
Challenge: Synthesis Process

- Initial process in first pilot: categories that emerged from data (field and debriefing notes)
- Emergent category process inefficient in terms of the purposes of the evaluation.
Challenge: Synthesis Process

• Initial process in first pilot: categories that emerged from data (field and debriefing notes)
• emergent category process inefficient in terms of the purposes of the evaluation.

Solution:

• Strategic efficiency: Changed process to one driven by categories based on preexisting evaluation questions.
• Added evaluation categories in a column in the interview notes and debriefing formats
• Included an “other” category to accommodate emergent data
Challenge: Valuing qualitative assumptions and processes

• Disengagement or frustration with the qualitative process, including debriefings, open-ended interview questions, reflexivity efforts.
• Team member challenges: Posing close-ended questions, offering response choices, pursuing numerical data, posing questions inconsistent with the interview purpose or guide, pursing own agenda.
Challenge: Valuing qualitative assumptions and processes

- Team members’ disengagement or frustration with the qualitative process, including debriefings, open-ended interview questions, reflexivity efforts.
- Posing close-ended questions, offering response choices, pursuing numerical data, posing questions inconsistent with the interview purpose or guide, pursuing own agenda.

Solution:
- Reinforced capability of co-facilitator to gently redirect the interview by posing a key question on the guide.
- Advocated patience with the process of using/valuing an unfamiliar research approach.
- Actively supported the qualitative approach and process.
- Continuous training.
Challenge: Interview Transcription

- Individuals in many countries were English speaking but difficult to understand dialects posed challenges and may have contributed to transcription inaccuracies.
- Transcription turn-around process slower than anticipated.

Solution:
- **Field notes used as data source.**
- Field notes complete and accurate (round robin review process).
- Transcribed field notes reviewed and edited by interview team.
- Field notes enabled a timely source of data for on-going analysis.
- Efficiency and quality—what was said that was relevant—risk of interpretation addressed (what was said vs what was heard)
- Research vs evaluation.
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Thank you