



Improving Care for Children Under Five and Pregnant Women Presenting with Fever in Malawi: Guide to Coaching Quality Improvement Teams

Purpose of this Coaching Guide

Quality improvement (QI) coaching is an important method to provide ongoing support to help teams of health care workers apply QI approaches in their setting. The purpose of this coaching guide is to support district malaria and/or improvement coordinators (coaches) working with teams to improve care for children under five and pregnant women presenting with fever at health facilities.

This guide briefly reviews how to prepare, conduct and follow up on a coaching session. It is written for health workers who have good knowledge and skills in QI methodology, including how to apply QI practically through various methods and tools. Coaches who have not gone through QI training are advised to enrich their knowledge in quality improvement science, methods and tools by using the resources provided in the section “Useful Resources”. In addition, the resource section also provides more comprehensive references for conducting QI coaching.

How to Prepare for the Coaching Session

The coaching session may last up to two hours and can be conducted on-site and/or virtually (e.g., by phone, video conferencing or WhatsApp). While in-person coaching always makes communication easier, coaches can use different technologies for different purposes. For example, coaches can provide support during regular QI team meetings via phone or video calls. Video conferencing where everyone can see the data is useful when coaches are helping teams make time-series graphs and analyze their data. WhatsApp or other text-based methods are great ways of keeping up with what the team is doing and for encouraging them to do small scale tests of change.

To use the coaching time productively, a coach should prepare:

1. **Clear objectives for the session.** Examples of the objectives include: help the team review changes tested, results achieved, challenges faced; identify findings/learning that improvement teams can share with other teams; plan for further test of changes.
2. **A meeting agenda.** Common agenda items may include a review of previous meeting notes, review a team’s progress since the last meeting, plan for further test of changes. Annex 1 provides a template for a coaching meeting. The coach should share the meeting agenda with the improvement team ahead of time to allow the team members to prepare for the session.

How to Conduct the Coaching Session

The primary focus of every coaching session may vary. In general, however, during the coaching session, a coach helps the team to review their progress, note any problems, find solutions, and identify next steps. It is also an opportunity to identify and praise good performance. Below are key points to help facilitate the session. The coach may want to vary the order of the activities, or add additional activities, depending on the needs of the QI team and their progress.

FEBRUARY 2019

This Guide to Coaching Quality Improvement Teams was developed by University Research Co., LLC (URC) and produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) by the USAID Applying Science to Strengthen and Improve Systems (ASSIST) Project, funded by the American people through USAID’s Bureau for Global Health, Office of Health Systems. The project is managed by URC under the terms of Cooperative Agreement Number AID-OAA-A-12-00101. URC’s global partners for USAID ASSIST include: EnCompass LLC; FHI 360; Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health; HEALTHQUAL International; Initiatives Inc.; Institute for Healthcare Improvement; Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs; and WI-HER, LLC. For more information on the work of the USAID ASSIST Project, please visit www.usaidassist.org or write assist-info@urc-chs.com.

Main activity	Key facilitation points
Introduction of the coaching session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the session objectives and revise them as necessary Set ground rules for the meeting such as punctuality and active participation Note whether there is a functional team and if any changes in team composition were made or may be needed
Review of the previous meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review minutes and action points from the previous session
Review of improvement aim(s), indicators and changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the team to present their improvement aim(s) and indicators Ask the team to describe the changes they are testing towards the aim and if the changes yielded expected improvements Ask the team to mention some of the challenges they faced as they were testing/ implementing the changes, including concerns about data collection
Review of improvement results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the team to describe the improvement results they observed Look at the methodology they are using for data collection, and if needed give inputs to simplify the process Review time series charts including annotations and data as needed
Technical support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be prepared to provide support to the team in the use of QI methods and tools. Examples include: development or refinement of improvement aims and indicators; use of flowcharts, cause and effect diagram, tree (driver's diagrams); explanation of PDSAs and change ideas; plotting data on time-series charts and interpreting the charts; data validation; and review of the overall team's performance
Key learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the team to describe what they have learned from the improvement work Ask the team what they would recommend to other teams based on the changes that they tested
Plan for next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the team to explain their next test of changes and how they plan to conduct the test Ensure there is clarity among team members over the next steps Appreciate the work of the QI team Agree with the team on the next communication (e.g., email, phone, etc.) Agree with the team about the next date of the coaching session

Useful Resources:

General resources on improvement:

- Improving Health Care Quality.** Global Health eLearning Center. This course introduces principles, approaches, and methods for improving quality health care. <https://www.globalhealthlearning.org/course/improving-health-care-quality>
- Improving Health Care eLearning Course.** USAID ASSIST Project. This interactive virtual course provides the same curriculum used to orient USAID ASSIST Project headquarters staff and Chief of Parties to improvement. The course is structured to give a broad overview of the science of improvement, going over key principles and methods necessary to understand how improvement projects can be implemented in any setting to make health care better. The course can also be taught as an in-person training using two companion materials, a participant and a facilitator guide. <https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/improving-health-care-elearning-course>

Resources for practicing methods and tools for improvement

- **Tips and Tools for Learning Improvement.** USAID ASSIST Project. This is a set of competency-based materials on: Aims for improvement, improvement teams, flowcharts, developing changes, PDSA cycles, measures for improvement, time-series charts, and variation vs. improvement. Each handout in the series is a self-contained, self-directed lesson with numerous competency-based exercises so that learners can practice the basic steps of improvement. <https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/tips-and-tools-improvement-series>
- **Blog on Improving Data Visualization: No more Excel Data Tables.** USAID ASSIST Project. This blog provides more information on how to format time series charts: <https://www.usaidassist.org/blog/improving-data-visualization-no-more-excel-data-tables>

Resources on QI coaching

- **Coaching for Quality Improvement: Point of Care Quality Improvement.** USAID ASSIST Project. This manual provides an introduction to QI team coaching, oriented towards the initial practical needs of coaches, along with case scenarios to introduce and address common challenges new coaches face. <https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/pocqi-coaching-for-quality-improvement>
- **Coaching as a Tool to Support Quality Improvement Teams.** University Research Co., LLC. The purpose of this document is to describe the role of the coach, the installation and supervision of coaches, and the process of sustaining the culture of quality, based on URC's experience in Benin. <https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/coaching-tool-support-quality-improvement-teams>
- **Maternal and Newborn Health in Ethiopia Partnership Coaching Materials.** USAID ASSIST Project. This document is a compilation of training and tools for coaches as they supported community-level teams in Ethiopia. The materials include job aids on the roles and responsibilities of coaches and improvement teams, coaching visit guides, a format for synthesizing information and an index for assessing the development of teams. <https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/manhep-coaching-materials>
- **PHFS Coaching Guides.** USAID ASSIST Project. These coaching guides were developed by USAID ASSIST Uganda staff to guide coaches in how to support improvement teams at each coaching visit. <https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/phfs-coaching-guides>

Annex 1: Sample Agenda for a QI Coaching Session

Facility Name: _____ [Insert facility name]

Date: _____ [Insert date]

Time: _____ [Insert time]

Coach: _____ [Insert name]

Notetaker: _____ [Insert name]

Timekeeper: _____ [Insert name]

Agenda item	Time
Session objectives	5 min
Review of action points from the previous meeting	5 min
Review/refresh the team's improvement aim(s) and indicators	10 min
Review of team's progress since the last meeting: changes tested, results achieved, challenges faced	25 min
Review of improvement results (including time-series charts, data) and technical support	40 min
Key learnings	10 min
Planning further tests of changes	20 min
Planning next meeting (date & time; identify notetaker and timekeeper)	5 min