A PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION QUALITY CASE STUDY

# The Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER) Project

The rise of the humanitarian "data revolution"[1] over the last decade has led to the increased use of data in humanitarian and development work. Data play an important role in organizational response to both immediate and protracted crises, as actors can use data to respond to needs more quickly, effectively, and transparently. However, using data in crisis, emergency, or low-resource contexts is vastly different from using data in environments where supporting infrastructure and resources (including expertise, time, and budget) already exist. We see a disconnect between international expectations around data use and the constraints in the field that influence operational, coordinative, and ethical practices.

All stages of the data process (design, planning/start-up, implementation, and learning—see data process stages in the IRC MEAL Framework from the MEAL Handbook) face constraints in these contexts with processes often: (1) fragmented, incoherent, and disconnected from larger coordination systems, (2) hindered by insufficient technological and infrastructural resources, (3) limited in capacity and resources, leading to less ethically attuned data practices and less secure data storage, (4) rendered inaccurate by quick data collection, leading to a lower quality of data and strategic response, (5) hampered by under-investment in training and education that would allow practitioners to meaningfully engage in using data for decision-making in these contexts, and (6) inefficient in their use of resources and data collection, repeatedly collecting the same data in response to overlapping donor requests.[2]

How can we channel the power of data to improve our work in challenging humanitarian and development contexts? This case study presents the work of a project that was successful in gathering and using data for program improvement in a challenging context: the Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER) project in Sierra Leone. It explores the compromises and strategies the EAGER project needed to make; some required tradeoffs with standard "best practices" for data use, which often do not take into consideration the constraints of humanitarian and development contexts.

# Description of the Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient Project

The EAGER project was a four-year education and empowerment project designed for out-of-school (OOS) adolescent girls who missed out on formal learning opportunities. Through a cycle of two successive cohorts of girls, EAGER worked directly with 27,322 OOS adolescent girls across Sierra Leone. The project set out to reach some of the most marginalized girls, which meant working in remote areas where literacy levels are generally lower and gathering data is challenging. How did EAGER create feedback mechanisms for learning and timely program improvement within this context? This case study explores the way EAGER was able to (1) develop an organizational and consultative structure that allowed for data flow and responsiveness for improving program implementation quality and (2) adapt tools and processes to fit the context and varying capacities of the team.

Through a consortium of four partners—the International Rescue Committee, Concern Worldwide, Restless Development, and BBC Media Action—operating in 10 districts of Sierra Leone, EAGER staff and community-based volunteers worked together to deliver functional literacy, numeracy, financial literacy, and life skills sessions. Participants attended a 30-week Learning Program in female-only Safe and Learning Spaces. By the end of the Learning Program, every girl had set her own learning, household, community, and financial goals, captured in an Empowerment Plan. After graduating from EAGER, each EAGER graduate received a conditional cash transfer to pursue their financial goals and practice the skills they gained through the Learning Program.

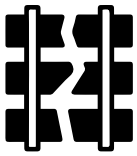
The project's external evaluations and project-led research were triangulated and supported by ongoing, girl-centered, client-responsive monitoring systems that aimed at generating evidence that could be used for tracking progress, quality improvement decision making, and holding the project accountable to the voices of EAGER participants. The project deliberately designed and planned tiered feedback mechanisms not just for monitoring and reporting, but also for learning and course correction. The project team believed that gathering data only for the purposes of reporting to donors would not allow for the deep learning and adaptation that could be facilitated by collecting data that were aligned with project goals and a clear Theory of Change (ToC). For EAGER, data collection, through both regular/recurring routine processes and tailored/ad hoc exercises, was built into the project design, operating mechanisms, and strategies in an integral way so that it could be used at a specific point in time to support program review, learning, and adaptions. Adapting program implementation as new information and data became available and ensuring that this was purposefully planned from the design phase was key in enhancing program quality and client accountability. At every stage in the EAGER program, data have played a key role in informing decisions and the direction of the program. This process presented a set of challenges, including:

## CHALLENGES IN THE DATA PROCESS

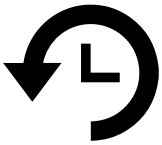
**Overwhelmed staff, due to having to respond quickly to data**

**Occasional low motivation to collect data, as day-to-day work made any programmatic problems already evident to staff, sometimes making data collection seem redundant**

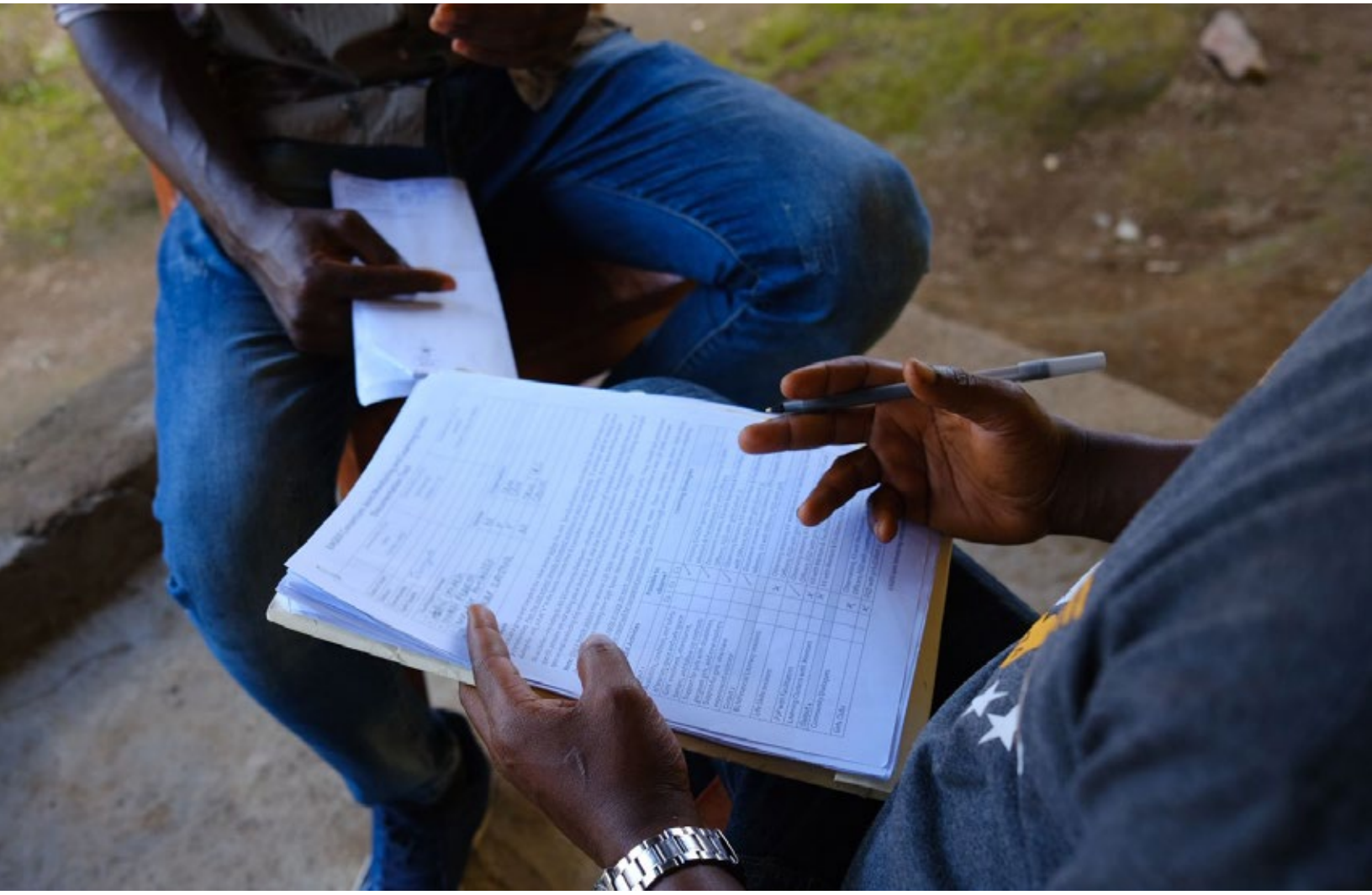
**Limited time and budget to build the capacity of the staff to review and use data for decision making**



**Insufficient infrastructural capacities to use advanced and real-time data software, at all levels of the program**



**Delayed deadlines as a result of suspension and changes in data feedback mechanisms due to COVID-19**



EAGER was able to effectively address each of these challenges and create effective feedback mechanisms, and thus use data for program improvement. This case study tells the story of how EAGER accomplished this and provides links to the tools the team used that helped them achieve success. We specifically seek to answer the following: What strategies did EAGER develop to promote continuous quality program improvement in a low-capacity context?

In summary, this case study elaborates on three main components that helped EAGER design and implement tiered feedback mechanisms for learning and adaptation, and ultimately increase its ability to use data for program improvement: (1) the alignment of data tools and processes with a clear Theory of Change; (2) the development of an organizational and consultative structure to encourage the flow of data for improving program implementation quality (PIQ) and related decisions; and (3) the adaptation of tools and processes to fit the context and capacities of the team. Also included in the case study is a note on another key component of a responsive program—budget. Finally, the conclusion of the study lays out recommendations for similar future projects.

The results of this case study are based on key informant interviews and an extensive review of program documents. In-depth interviews were carried out with EAGER staff who were integral to the data and M&E processes.[3]

# The Alignment of Data Tools and Processes with a Clear Theory of Change

The EAGER team worked carefully to develop a Theory of Change (ToC) with clear assumptions and a delineation of related program activities. An accompanying Log Frame aligns each output from the ToC with indicators, assumptions, and means of verification. By aligning tools to the ToC, the team was able to get further clarification and have ongoing check-ins on the expectations and goals of the program. As one of many examples, the team developed a tool to measure girls' learning in functional literacy and numeracy (see p. 56-64) to help provide data on activities under the Learning output.

Over the course of the project, the program staff grew in confidence, monitoring and overseeing other staff according to the ToC, because they were solely in charge of collecting the data as will be discussed further in the following section. With a clear ToC guiding the project, the staff were able to be strategic in using data and making decisions that were clearly aligned with the ToC. This ensured an alignment of all micro and macro data-based decisions with the ToC, keeping the project on course and using resources of time, people, and money efficiently. If the tools had not been carefully aligned with the ToC, the team would not have been able to use data aligned with the ToC, which would have prevented the team from focusing on the overarching goals of the project.

In addition to developing a clear ToC that guides tool development, it is helpful during the design phase to prepare for seamless learning and adaptation by outlining where shifts may occur in the ToC based on data findings. For example, the EAGER team noted that some program activities were adjusted based on data that showed a misalignment of activities with overarching program goals. This included making a substantive change to the design of the transition component of the program, shifting from a competition, where only some girls benefit from specific forms of support, to broader and more inclusive empowerment activities. Preparing budgets, resources, and infrastructure accordingly allows space for the feasibility of this learning and adaptation. This may include advocating for flexible budgets related to these identified pieces of the ToC.

# The Development of an Organizational and Consultative Structure to Encourage the Flow of Data for PIQ and Related Decisions

Corsortium and project leadership were carried out by a Consortium Coordination Unit (CCU). The CCU was made up of six people, each with a different specialization. The purpose of the CCU was to set up systems and resources across the four different partners about how to reach standardized project targets as a consortium. In other words, the CCU was involved in overall strategy and consensus-building among partners, still allowing for partners' autonomy to figure out how they were going to achieve consortium commitments at the ground level based on specific local realities. The project outlined who was collecting what data (i.e., MEAL Officers, Life Skills Officers, and Basic Literacy and Numeracy Officers). The CCU worked alongside partners to establish responsive and effective feedback loops at the field-level that were harmonized with the overall strategic outcomes of the consortium yet accomodated to partner-specific implementation processes. An **overall structured guide** along with separate guides for each phase of the project provided guidance to partners. Tools and accompanying toolkits were created at the CCU level so that partners could provide feedback on the feasibility of the tools (such as language, cultural appropriateness, user-friendliness, and effectiveness).

### OVERALL STRUCTURED GUIDE


EAGER Cohort 2
Monitoring Tools Guide

V6. March 2022

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**What Is It?:** This tool is an overall structured guide to help EAGER Consortium Partner staff in monitoring the different aspects of their project operations. The tool has been continuously adapted as the project evolved in response to changes, including to monitoring systems. Each tool that is used for monitoring purposes is included in this document with guidance on use, frequency of data collection, and reporting. Sample filled tools were added to ease learning from staff.

**Suggestion for Use:** This tool can be used as an example of the overall organization of monitoring tools and/or to find examples of specific tools.

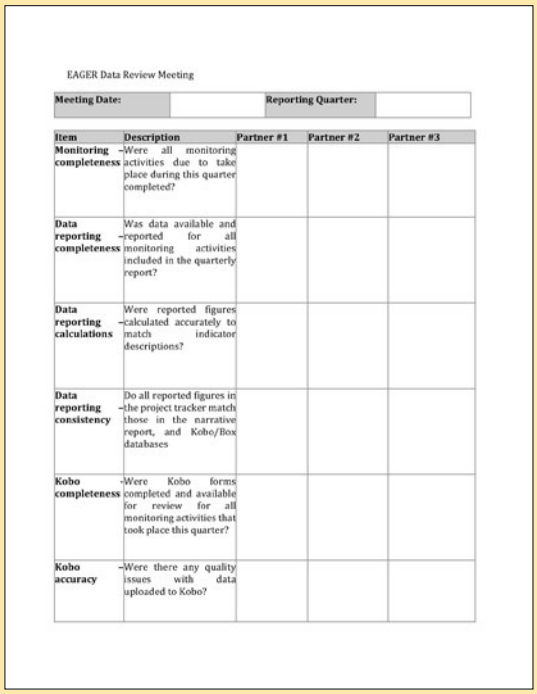
**Possible Starting Points:**

**Page 2:** See the summary of tools and reporting schedule. Take a look through the tools templates based on what is of interest. You can also see a list of the Tools in the "Monitoring Tools" section of the Table of Contents with accompanying page numbers.

**Pages 15-16:** Take a look at the way the guide clearly describes the tools (p. 15), includes clear guidance on tools and people involved (p. 15), and offers guidance on disaggregating data and calculating indicators (p. 16).

While quarterly the CCU looks at data to inform overall strategy (see **example data review meeting structure guide**), at the district level, the expectation is that the field staff make quick decisions to improve program implementation. This enables consortium partners to continuously adapt and make progress toward targets. The structure is designed so that the district level does not need to bring issues to the CCU level prior to taking corrective action. The CCU conducts regular monitoring and learning visits to check on monitoring, data, and program activities and promote learning across the consortium (see a **CCU Monitoring and Learning Visits: Documentation Tool**).

### EXAMPLE DATA REVIEW MEETING STRUCTURE GUIDE



EAGER Data Review Meeting

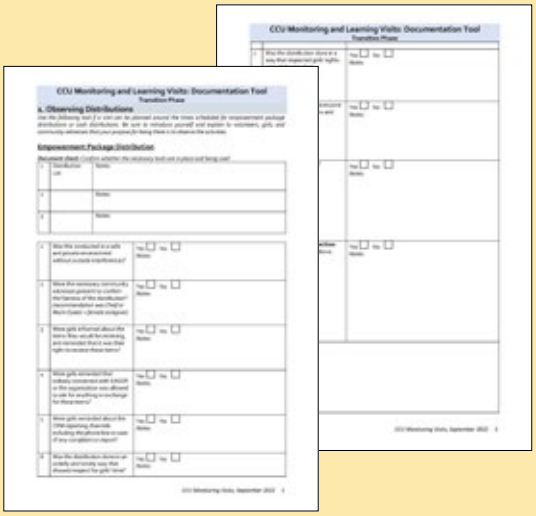
| Meeting Date: | | Reporting Quarter: | |
|---|---|---|---|

| Item | Description | Partner #1 | Partner #2 | Partner #3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monitoring completeness | -Were all monitoring activities due to take place during this quarter completed? | | | |
| Data reporting completeness | -Was data available and reported for all monitoring activities included in the quarterly report? | | | |
| Data reporting calculations | -Were reported figures calculated accurately to match indicator descriptions? | | | |
| Data reporting consistency | -Do all reported figures in the project tracker match those in the narrative report, and Kobo/Box databases | | | |
| Kobo completeness | -Were Kobo forms completed and available for review for all monitoring activities that took place this quarter? | | | |
| Kobo accuracy | -Were there any quality issues with data uploaded to Kobo? | | | |

**What Is It?:** This tool is a template used to guide EAGER data review meetings with partners.

**Suggestion for Use:** This template can be adjusted for specific program purposes, and offers place to note the topics and questions asked regarding data use and processes.

### CCU MONITORING AND LEARNING VISITS: DOCUMENTATION TOOL



**What Is It?:** This tool is a template used to guide CCU monitoring and learning visits.

**Suggestion for Use:** This template can be adjusted for specific program purposes to guide monitoring and learning visits from higher levels of the program. There is a focus on understanding best practices, challenges, and related actions for various aspects of the program. This monitoring tool had various iterations based on needs and specific phases of the project that determined what to prioritize. Some of the monitoring visits were joint with consortium partners who joined the CCU to allow for cross-learning.

The EAGER program was particularly unique because project staff also collected data. Staff collecting Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) data and technical program staff were all recognized generally as "program staff" and managed by the same line management and District Supervisors. The advantage to having implementation staff collect data was that once they recognized an issue through their data collection activities, they could quickly encourage quality program improvement adjustments based on the data collected—such as providing enumerated feedback to a Facilitator based on a session observation that they conducted.


Monitoring participants' foundational skills, quality of teaching and mentoring practices via session observations, and assessment of infrastructure and safe spaces were all conducted by program staff that are in charge of program implementation. District Supervisors had to sign off on the data (via a paper form) before the M&E Office and Data Clerk input into an automated system; this ensured that a programs focal point had seen the data before it was submitted to the next level. This created an accountability mechanism whereby District Supervisors engaged with the data at a very early stage and could thus respond quickly.

By incorporating program staff into data collection, MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning) costs were kept low. Very clear feedback loops were put into place alongside the ability for staff to be highly responsive to the data collected, as they were involved in data collection. Additionally, visits to communities were maximized by having program staff engage in data collection and program implementation in simultaneous visits.

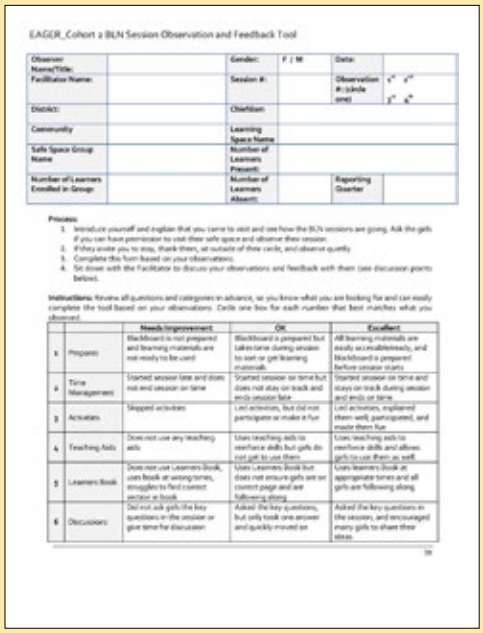
One challenge to this structure is that the modifications can become overwhelming to staff when they are made so quickly.

> **"I'm sure if you spoke to other program staff on this project, they would almost say it's too responsive because we've been able to make so many changes and so many improvements in a short space of time."**
>
> **—MEAL AND RESEARCH COORDINATOR**

Although many of the quick changes were made at the district level, there were a few instances where data issues were escalated to the CCU level, slowing down data responsiveness. One example is when the team was initially tracking girls with disabilities. The team had an Access to Learning fund, and so they had the flexibility to find a resource or tool that would remove barriers to girls participating in the program. However, the teams did not know how to move forward with distributing the funds because they did not have the medical expertise to distinguish between different types of disabilities and the necessary supports needed. As a result, the issue was escalated to the CCU and delayed the application of the funds.

Another challenge to having program staff collect data involved the frustration they felt when they were already aware of the extant problems based on their implementation work; they still had to take the time to officially collect data such as through a survey, which was sometimes perceived as duplicative. However, this challenge was overcome because staff could quickly see the successes and challenges of their implementation during data collection. For example, in gathering data via a session observation and coaching tool (see p. 38-47) to assess the quality of learning sessions, the staff could immediately recognize and communicate specific aspects that would apply to the project instructional team for improving program implementation quality.

## SESSION OBSERVATION AND COACHING TOOL


EAGER_Cohort 2 BLN Session Observation and Feedback Tool

**What Is It?:** This tool is within the overall structured guide mentioned above. It serves as a template and guide for conducting observations on sessions and using the data to immediately provide effective feedback.

**Suggestion for Use:** This tool can be adjusted for specific program purposes, but serves as a good example of how to facilitate conversations around program improvement and as a guide for immediately using data to provide feedback for improving program implementation.

**Relevant Page Numbers**

**Pages 38-47:** Includes the template and an example of a filled-out template.

# The Adaptation of Tools and Processes to Fit the Context and Capacities of the Team

### PAPER FORMS VS. KOBO TO GATHER DATA

The EAGER team used a hybrid of tablet and paper-based forms of data collection, according to context limitations. The paper option allowed for data collection without resources of electricity and connectivity and involved multiple review steps, making it more likely that the District Supervisor would see the data than if the data went directly to the central team through a digital platform. Another advantage of the paper trail was that it reinforced accountability and feedback loops. Inputting data directly to the data collection platform, Kobo, via a tablet, tended to be more efficient, with the data going directly to the MEAL manager but skipping the District Supervisor's sign-off on the data, which allowed on the ground stakeholders to make more rapid data informed program improvement decisions.

This flexible data collection approach allowed the project to be more agile and to use methods fit for purpose, not only with data collection tools but data processing as well. Using paper forms at the District Level matched capacity of teams and enabled them to quickly see and use the evidence for program improvement without extensive additional capacity and infrastructural investment that would support a more advanced system. This was also shown through the use of Excel for data analysis rather than SPSS, as teams already had the capacity to use Excel and therefore had fewer barriers to engaging with the data and supporting their own internal feedback loops for improving the program.

The team noted that lack of "real-time data" at the CCU level did not impact the effectiveness of feedback loops at the district level. The role of the CCU MEAL was to ensure that M&E processes were functioning and were standardized across partners. This involved striking a balance between more advanced MEAL processes and ensuring that processes met the capacity levels of staff across the program. Therefore, the quarterly data managed at the CCU level were not intended to feed into immediate feedback loops but rather medium and long-term strategic feedback loops.

The team noted that with resources (time and budget) to fully develop staff and infrastructural capacities including regular maintenance, data collection would have been enhanced if every partner had access to tablets to facilitate better control of data collection quality due to *skip logic* and other constraints built into the form. They also believed data analysis would have been improved if the district-level staff had had the full capacity to manage data checks and data cleaning, to quickly analyze and act on the data for program improvement. Without the time and budget to fully develop these capacities, paper forms encouraged the immediate use of data at the district level. A data clerk's subsequent input of data into Kobo was an effective course of action that worked within the constraints of the program (given its time, budget, and staff capacity), while also prioritizing agility in using data for program improvement. Although Kobo was not consistently used to collect the data on-site, its use later down the data line increased efficiency in data handling by facilitating an initial stage of data cleaning and feedback if an item did not fit into the tool based on Kobo's built-in skip logic and constraint mechanisms. The set item lists on Kobo also decreased manual input error while allowing the comparison of datasets with standardized names at the CCU level.

## TOOLS

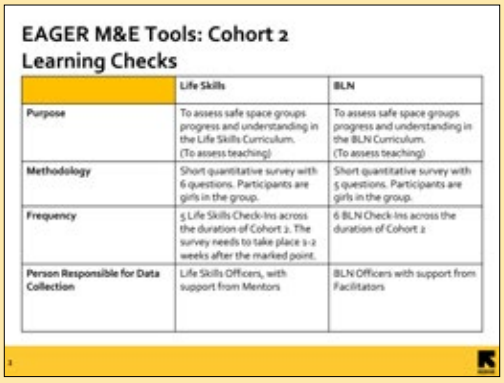
Tools for data collection changed and adapted with each iteration based on feedback from the field teams and the data collected. The team found that simple and user-friendly tools that were tailored, learner-centered, and contextually appropriate were the most effective in gathering relevant data. Likert scales or lists with pre-identified common/likely responses helped to reduce the number of open-text responses, allowing for quicker data analysis. Tools were also calibrated to suit both users' and respondents' skill levels and known abilities (based on evaluation data and subsequent evaluation and research assessments). Culture was considered as a key factor as well, with attention paid to norms that may affect how well the users administered the tool and how freely and genuinely respondents could provide input. The CCU increased the number of trainings for tools over the course of the project to ensure data collectors had sufficient capacity. Additionally, the bi-weekly M&E meetings with partners were designed to discuss any issues or concerns while reviewing upcoming M&E requirements and tools. Through regular communication, the team was able to ensure standardization and streamlining of tools and processes across partners. In turn, this contributed to quality and regular feedback loops.

Specific questions were built into evaluations and project monitoring tools to further understand needs and test assumptions of the ToC for the purposes of reducing implementation barriers and maximizing impact. For example, baseline findings that many girls were experiencing psychosocial impairments, particularly anxiety and depression, strongly informed adaptations to the program design. Based on these data, the team more heavily incorporated stress management skills into the program to strengthen girls' resilience in the face of challenges. In June 2020, an ad hoc survey with girls and Mentors discovered that COVID-19 had exacerbated anxiety. This strengthened the decision to to adapt program design by building a series of stress management practices into the curriculum and strengthening Mentors' skills to provide psychological first aid as a safe person for the girls. Similarly, findings that many girls demonstrated emotional dysregulation further shaped adaptations to the Life Skills curriculum and other supportive approaches across the project, including the development of a buddy system to encourage friendships and support girls' consistent attendance in sessions. The EAGER case provides an example of aligning multiple partners' data collection around a ToC and using data from participants to inform changes to the ToC and project activities.

## TRAINING

The program used Training of Trainers and Step-Down Training (with an accompanying Step-Down Training Supplementary Guide) to train staff. One M&E focal point was designated for the training in each district. With this training structure, all feedback on tools, question phrasing, and methodology was immediately considered and adjusted as participants were able to discuss what worked and what did not work in collecting data. For this reason, face-to-face training was more valuable than email feedback on tools. The training was considered a guidance but did not seek to override the autonomy of each partner.

### TRAINING PRESENTATIONS AND GUIDE



EAGER M&E Tools: Cohort 2
Learning Checks

| | Life Skills | BLN |
|---|---|---|
| Purpose | To assess safe space groups progress and understanding in the Life Skills Curriculum. (To assess teaching) | To assess safe space groups progress and understanding in the BLN Curriculum. (To assess teaching) |
| Methodology | Short quantitative survey with 6 questions. Participants are girls in the group. | Short quantitative survey with 5 questions. Participants are girls in the group. |
| Frequency | 5 Life Skills Check-Ins across the duration of Cohort 2. The survey needs to take place 1-2 weeks after the marked point. | 6 BLN Check-Ins across the duration of Cohort 2 |
| Person Responsible for Data Collection | Life Skills Officers, with support from Mentors | BLN Officers with support from Facilitators |

**What Is It?:** These presentations were used to train staff in using monitoring tools. The presentations include the Training Presentations and Guide and the subsequent Step-Down Training presentation with an accompanying guide.

**Suggestion for Use:** These presentations can be used to guide the development of trainings for monitoring tools that are program-relevant, particularly for training of the trainers and step-down trainings.

**Possible Starting Point:** Scan through the PowerPoints to understand the full layout of the training. Then take a closer look at word choice and the level of detail of instructions that can guide development of similar training presentations.

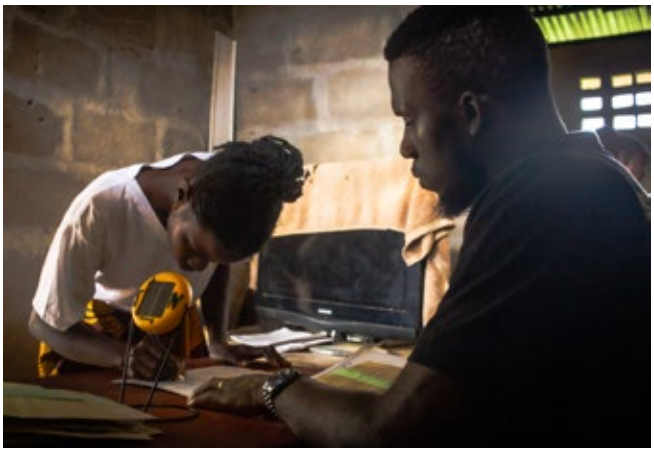
## USE OF DATA IN TRANSITION FROM COHORT 1 TO COHORT 2

The information collected following Cohort 1 played a vital role in the adaption and implementation of Cohort 2. Evidence was intentionally generated, not only to track progress and document results but also to adapt program design—meaning that tools and resources were tailored to this intent. Observation and coaching sessions were adapted to provide more specific and detailed feedback to program volunteers, while also making it easier and more efficient for program staff to deliver feedback. The deliberate creation of feedback mechanisms to get the voices of girls, Mentors, and community members systematically and at strategic timepoints enabled the project to consistently ensure accountability to clients' feedback. For example, to create impactful and responsive radio shows as part of the programming, focus groups and listening sessions were conducted within communities, and feedback was used to guide the ongoing creation of EAGER's girl-centered radio programming.


Though the team worked as efficiently as possible, the tight timeline between the endline evaluation of Cohort 1 and the start of Cohort 2 was not sufficient to make all changes indicated by the endline data. The program experienced delays between data collection for the midline, and the subequent endline evaluation due to COVID-19, and consequently, deadlines were postponed. The final report for the Endline Evaluation for Cohort 1 was moved to April 2022; yet, because the training for the Cohort 2 transition was set to begin in March the same year, the EAGER team requested that high priority findings from the endline results be presented to them by February. The intention was to make the necessary data-driven adjustments to the staff training for Cohort 2, set to begin in March. If there had been sufficient time, the endline data would have been triangulated with the monitoring data; however, the team would have needed the results by December 2021 to ensure the commensurate adjustments by March 2022. In addition to these challenges, almost tripling of beneficiaries in Cohort 2 placed additional pressure on the team. Though they were unable to make all the adaptations they had anticipated, despite the challenges, the team were able to use data to make important changes. This is likely due to the key strength of the program, which helped to insulate its timeline against the effects of the rise of COVID-19. Rich monitoring data—both quantitative and contextual data—were regularly collected, and thus the results from the endline data were not entirely surprising. These monitoring data were incorporated into curriculum and training development.[4]

# Further Considerations: Budget

The EAGER team noted the need for more financial support on M&E, considering the scale and complexity of the project in terms of context and capacity. Approximately 9% of the total budget was allocated to MEAL, and because the budget did not include a flexible portion, EAGER carried out program adaptions through four budget revisions. If, at project onset, a flexible budget had been allocated for learning and adaptation, EAGER could have had a more agile and efficient course correction process and spent less time in communication with the donor about budget revisions.



# Conclusion and Recommendations

The EAGER project is a four-year project that worked directly with 27,322 out-of-school adolescent girls across 10 districts of Sierra Leone. Despite limited resources and difficult infrastructural contexts, the EAGER team was successful at developing tiered feedback mechanisms to respond quickly to data and improve program quality. By developing an organizational structure that allows data to flow fluidly and transparently across levels, the program successfully encouraged agility in responsiveness to data at all stages and levels of the program. By recognizing and working within the constraints of the context and capacity of the team, EAGER was able to effectively direct resources to support the use of data for improving program implementation quality.

The following recommendations are divided into phases from the IRC MEAL Framework. They are based on lessons learned from the EAGER project related to designing and building tiered feedback mechanisms for learning and adaptation. As such, these recommendations can guide programs that are seeking to develop program structures to encourage the flow of data for PIQ and successfully adapt tools and processes within a low-capacity context.

### PHASE 1: DESIGN

- Advocate for flexible use of funds that allows for time and opportunities to deliberately generate learning and program quality improvements. As much as possible, prepare the budget in a way that the program can make agile changes based on the data. This may include designating a portion of the budget for learning and adaptation.
- Develop a Theory of Change with clear assumptions and delineation of related program activities, a theory that can be tested through project data. Outline where shifts may occur in project activities and milestones, depending on data findings to prepare budgets and other resources accordingly and having structures in place to improve program implementation quality seamlessly.

## PHASE 2: PLANNING AND START-UP

- Deliberately design and plan tiered feedback mechanisms for learning and program adaption and not just for monitoring and reporting. Build data collection, operating mechanisms, and learning strategies into the project design. Adapt program implementation as new information and data become available and ensure this is planned for from the design phase.
- Consider the existing capacity of people and infrastructure (e.g., internet) when developing MEAL processes. Factor this into project design and budgeting by carefully considering contextual realities—such as literacy and skills levels—and logistical barriers. Balance providing additional training and infrastructural investment with accommodating staff at their current capacity; use a hybrid of agile methods that will allow staff at all levels to use the data quickly for program improvement responsiveness.

- Make tools simple and user-friendly, tailored and learner-centered, and contextually appropriate. Eliminate vague or complicated questions that can be misinterpreted. Using Likert scales or lists with pre-identified common/likely responses can reduce the number of open-text responses. Design and adapt based on cultural considerations and on feedback, considering both those who administer the tools and those to whom the tools will be administered. Factor time into the tool creation timeline for this feedback from partners during tool training.
- Ensure regular communication, rigorous standardization of tools and processes, and the streamlining of many tools. This will support quality and rigorous feedback loops and the ability to quickly address challenges and confusion with the tools.
- Carefully consider staffing and related structure to allow for responsiveness to data for improving program implementation quality. Empower staff that are involved in data collection and program implementation decision-making processes at all levels to respond quickly to data findings while also keeping costs down.
- Carefully align tools with the ToC. Use tools to measure each aspect of the ToC so that data collected through them can lead to improvement of program implementation quality.
- Develop multiple points of data collection and evaluations for improving program implementation quality. Triangulate the data; this will allow for a deeper understanding of the data and help the team prepare for unforeseen circumstances where a source of data may be delayed.

### PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTATION

- Request feedback from users/data collectors regularly during implementation. Use feedback to adapt tools as soon as issues are noted to ensure data collected is accurate and informative.
- Prioritize face-to-face training that allows for immediate feedback on tools, question-phrasing, and methodology. Training the Trainers and Step-Down Training can be effective ways to train and increase face-to-face training time.
- Automatize data analysis and harmonization across partners to the extent feasible for the context. Approach real-time trend analysis and standardization of data input to enhance the ability to act on high-quality data quickly.

### PHASE 4: LEARNING AND CLOSE

- Deliberately, systematically, and at strategic time points, create feedback mechanisms to learn from clients, those involved in the project (such as Mentors and Facilitators), and community members. This supports accountability to clients' feedback and the effective use of data for PIQ.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A special thanks to the EAGER team for ongoing involvement throughout the case study development.



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## END NOTES

1 Meier, P. Digital Humanitarians: How Big Data Is Changing the Face of Humanitarian Response. CRC Press, 2015.

2 Squire, V. "Data and Displacement: Assessing the Practical and Ethical Implications of Data-Driven Humanitarianism for Internally Displaced Persons in Camp-Like Settings." Final Project Report, www.warwick.ac.uk/datadisplacement, 2022.

3 These included the Senior Team Leader, MEAL and Research Coordinator, and Education Technical Specialist.

4 It is important to emphasize that this challenge was not a program design issue because the original timeline would have worked had COVID-19 not made adjustments necessary. Originally, the program also planned for three cohorts, and data could have been used to make further adjustments to Cohort 3. However, due to COVID delays, the beneficiary count was tripled for Cohort 2 in order to meet client targets before the end date of the project.