

## In-depth interview topic guide (South Africa)

### Context of policy issue

1. Tell me more about the need to update the PMTCT guidelines. Where did that request come from? Was it a priority for the department? If so, why?
2. What was the question that you were trying to answer with the help of the buddy? How did this question change over time?
3. Who was involved in the development of the PMTCT policy at provincial level? Can you describe how the HAST group is structured?
4. What was your role in the PMTCT policy development?
5. What is the current status of the guidelines? Have they been adopted and signed? How will they be implemented?
6. Compared with other policy processes, did you find that there was more or less of a role for research evidence? Why? What were some of the barriers to using research evidence during this policy process? What were some of the facilitators?

### Use of buddy

1. Why did you decide to involve the buddy at the stage of creating guidelines?
  - a. Probe: Issue characteristics (uncertainty, etc.)
  - b. Probe: Context
  - c. Probe: Convenience/project pull
2. What technical inputs did the buddy give?
3. Which of these were adopted?
4. Were there research based evidence from any other sources besides the buddy?
  - a. Probe: Existing WHO guidelines and how to adapt these to the local context.
5. Which information sources were used for creating the guidelines besides the above two?
6. Did you ask anyone else for research evidence or other technical inputs during the adherence policy process? [If so, record names]
7. Did anyone request evidence or technical inputs from you during this policy process? [If so, record names]
8. Were you satisfied with the buddy you were matched with? In your opinion, what criteria should be considered by programs like Policy BUDDIES when matching policy-makers and researchers?
  - a. Probe: Trust, content expertise, availability, timeliness.

### Use of evidence

1. [If the respondent participated in the situation analysis]: I'd like you to reflect on some of the barriers to using evidence that you articulated during the first set of interviews that you participated in for Policy BUDDIES, prior to participating in the intervention. Can you recall what these barriers might have been? Have these changed at all? Why or why not?
2. Can you provide an example of when, since the start of the programme, you searched for research evidence on a particular topic? Please describe the process. What were some of the

challenges you faced doing so? The successes? *[Probe: influence of programme on perceived barriers and successes of finding evidence]*

3. Can you provide an example of when, since the start of the programme, you read research evidence related to a policy issue that you were working on? Can you summarize the findings of that evidence in the context of your policy issue? *[Probe: influence of programme on perceived barriers and successes of reading and interpreting evidence]*
4. Can you provide an example of when, since the start of the programme, you discussed research evidence with a colleague related to a policy issues you were working on? Do you find yourself discussing evidence more or less than before the start of the programme?
5. Can you provide an example of when, since the start of the programme, you explicitly referred to evidence in a document you wrote or a presentation you gave on the policy issue you were working on? Do you find yourself making explicit references to evidence more or less often than before the start of the programme?
  - a. Probe: Symbolic/political use
6. Can you provide other examples of how evidence changed your thinking on a policy issue?
  - a. Probe: Conceptual use
7. What are some of the barriers to using evidence that still remain? Do you have any suggestions on how to address these?

#### Overview of the intervention and its implementation

1. I'd like to begin by asking you to summarize your engagement with your buddy. How often did you meet, and for how long? What was discussed during these meetings?
2. How did you typically communicate? Was it scheduled or ad-hoc?
3. Can you describe the features of the Policy BUDDIES programme that you found most helpful? Why?
4. Can you describe the features of this intervention that were least helpful? Why?

# Structured Reflection tool for buddies

## Written structured reflection on buddying by buddies

As part of the Policy BUDDIES project evaluation, we want people that have been buddies to give us some idea of how it has gone, what has happened, and what you have learnt from this.

“Structured reflection” encourages the writer to step back from their immediate experience and make sense of it in new ways, enabling critical reflection of the overall experience. Please provide approximately two pages of structured reflection. Please could you consider the points below to guide your responses, but also feel free to add anything else that you think is important in reflecting on your experience as a buddy.

- Who have you buddied? What positions do they hold?
- What topics/questions have you covered?
- How did the question come about? Why was it in the policy maker’s mind?
- Did the question emerge during development of a new policy? Or during implementation of an existing policy?
- How often were you in touch with the policymaker(s)? Tell us about this. Was it mainly by email, phone, or face to face?
- When did you start working with them (month and year), and when did you end?
- How did you provide the information about the systematic review(s)?
- Did you give the policy makers the reviews or did you summarise them?
- Did anyone critically appraise the information?
- Do you think the review(s) were adequate? How could the reviews have been better?
- Did you receive feedback from the policymakers about the evidence and your inputs? What happened with evidence responses submitted?
- Do you think the exercise was worthwhile? What do you think it achieved?
- As a buddy, what kind of support did you need?
- Did you engage with other buddies? Tell us about this.
- What have you learnt in the process of being a buddy?
- What went well about the Policy BUDDIES project?
- What did not go so well about the Policy BUDDIES project?
- How could a project with these aims be done better in the future?

# Focus Group Discussion topic guide (South Africa)

## Welcome

**9:30-9:35**

*Interviewer: Good morning! Thank you for taking time this morning to critically engage in a discussion around Policy BUDDIES and evidence-informed health policy. This is a safe space, everyone's ideas are welcome and appreciated.*

- *Sign consent form*

## Overview of the intervention

**9:35-10:00**

*Interviewer: Now I'd like for us to talk about the Policy BUDDIES intervention broadly.*

- What have been the major successes of the project?
  - Probe: Process; relationships; activities and tools; outcomes in terms of capacity building and evidence use
  - Which features of the intervention do you think the policy-makers found most helpful?
- What have been the major challenges you faced as buddies? Challenges of the project?
  - Probe: time commitment, logistics, working with the right/wrong people, characteristics of the policy issues, characteristics of the evidence
  - How could these challenges be overcome?
  - Which features of the intervention do you think the policy-makers found least helpful?

*[By end, Interviewer to write down one success and one challenge for the group activity]*

**Break-out: Root cause analysis activity (Supplies needed: Markers, printed out colour guide, notecards blank and with identified parts, string, thumbtacks)**

**10:00-10:15**

*Interviewer: Let's analyse the root causes of one of the successes and one of the challenges you identified. "Root cause analysis" is a method that helps us brainstorm and identify the root causes of outputs or outcomes we observe in programmes. Here is an example [show example]*

*Now let's develop root cause analysis diagrams in two small groups. The first group will brainstorm and analyse the causes of the positive outcome we observed (INSERT SUCCESS) and the second will brainstorm and analyse the causes of the challenge we identified (INSERT CHALLENGE)*

*Please spend 15 minutes discussing as a group, and we will reconvene to present and discuss each diagram.*

**10:15-10:30**

*Discussion for the RCA diagrams:*

- Which of these could be addressed by the project? Should they? How would you address them?

- During the course of the intervention, which course corrections did you make? What would you change next time?
- What would be the biggest success/impact? How would you get there?

### **Barriers and facilitators to evidence-informed policy**

#### **10:30-10:45**

- After observing your policy-makers' experiences in real-world policy processes, what would you say are the barriers to policy-makers using evidence? To evidence being used at the organizational level?
  - Probe: timeliness and relevance; capacity to find it; no demand/incentives to use it; features of the policy issue; features of the policy/political context
  - Were these barriers addressed by the intervention? How would you address them?
- After observing your policy-makers' experiences in real-world policy processes, what would you say are the facilitators to using evidence in policy? To using evidence at the organizational level?
  - Probe: access to evidence; knowing how to find and use it; incentives to use it; relationships with others; features of the issue; features of context.
- Were these opportunities leveraged? How could they be more so?

*[Note: Situation analysis identified barriers as time and capacity; role of other ideas/opinions; trust & shared understanding]*

*Map out policy process. Discuss availability of, and uses of evidence at each stage. Which stages are easier or more difficult? Where do you think the policy-makers have the most questions? Where do you have the most expertise/experience?*

**Network activity** (Supplies needed: Chart paper with title "People who exchanged research evidence for Policy BUDDIES," string in 2 colours, notecards with names of all policy makers/researchers)

#### **10:45-11:00**

*Interviewer: In this next section we will begin to discuss the scalability and sustainability of the intervention. To start, I'd like to do an activity to help us visualize who has been touched by Policy BUDDIES, and whether this network has evolved over time. You can see up here on the paper that we have each of the buddies and their policy-makers. They are connected or linked if they exchanged evidence. Now, let's add other exchange links to these people, and let's also add new people. Please come up either with string (for a new link) or with a note card (to add a new person).*

### **Views on scaling up the intervention**

#### **11:00-11:15**

1. In your opinion, how sustainable is Policy BUDDIES?
  - a. Do you think you will continue your relationship and mentoring of your buddy?
  - b. What motivated you to participate in BUDDIES?
  - c. Do you think the model could involve fewer researchers, or less time commitment?
  - d. Could it exist or continue without external funding?
2. Is the intervention transferable to other contexts? What would need to be changed, removed or added?