CEPPS Inclusion Data Collection Guidelines

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I. Purpose

Democracy and inclusion are indivisible. Increased participation in political processes by historically marginalized groups can result in concrete democratic gains, including greater responsiveness to citizens' needs, economic progress, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, more sustainable peace and security, and more resilient democracies. When historically marginalized groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex+ (LGBTQI+) individuals, Indigenous Peoples, and ethnic and religious minorities, have equitable opportunities to meaningfully participate in civic and political life, democracy flourishes.

CEPPS has adopted an inclusive MEL (IMEL) approach aimed at collecting reliable data that provide insight into how our work affects members of marginalized groups' political engagement, aligning programs to respond to members of marginalized groups' needs and priorities, and building members of marginalized groups' access, agency, and leadership. This guide is intended for MEL and program staff to provide guidance on and address common challenges associated with collecting inclusion data in DRG programs

Central to CEPPS's IMEL approach is a commitment to do no harm, through analyzing the context in which CEPPS is operating, understanding the nature of interactions between the program intervention and the program context, and taking affirmative steps to both avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts within programming. Similarly, CEPPS's IMEL approach is guided by trauma-informed approaches, which recognize that engagement in some aspect of a program may cause participants or partners to revisit potentially difficult memories from their past, triggering distress, suffering, and potential retraumatization. Trauma-informed approaches seek to create safe spaces, prioritize participants' safety, aim to remove as many triggers for retraumatization as possible, and provide appropriate support, as necessary.

II. What is Inclusion Data

For the purposes of this guidance, inclusion data is broadly understood as any data generated through the implementation of a program that aims to understand the extent to which marginalized groups are participating in program activities, tracks results (both expected within monitoring plans and unanticipated results) that pertain to marginalized groups, or helps to understand the needs and priorities of marginalized groups. The term can also be understood as encompassing inclusive data collection methods and practices that are accessible and participatory. Common types of inclusion data include:

- Performance indicators which specifically assess the extent to which desired outputs and outcomes for marginalized groups are being achieved
- Disaggregation of other performance indicator data that provides demographic information such as age, disability, gender, minority ethnic or linguistic group affiliation, sexual orientation or gender identity, or any other identity that is marginalized within an operating context
- Qualitative information about a marginalized group's experience, as commonly found in gender assessments, needs assessments, or program evaluations

III. Building a Commitment to Inclusion within Program MEL

Challenge: Effectively collecting inclusion data requires identifying what is feasible, appropriate, and useful to collect, in collaboration with local partners, from the outset of a program. Without this intentional effort, it is easy to make promises to USAID that are not realistic or worth pursuing. Moreover, if we lack a shared understanding with local partners on what inclusion data should be collected and how to go about collecting it – particularly in cases where partners are responsible for collecting data about the program – the quality of the data may suffer and it may be challenging to follow through on MEL plan requirements.

Tips for Enhancing Inclusivity and Ensuring Do No Harm Principles

- **Budget for reasonable accommodations** in all programming, including additional staff or experts, such as sign language interpreters, and any staff time necessary for such accommodation.

- **Plan for the staff time necessary** to build trusting relationships and work in a participatory manner with local partners.

- **Organize inclusion training for staff and/or local partners** at program outset, including a discussion of inclusive monitoring, evaluation, and learning. Tie the training specifically to the inclusion-related requirements of the award and the specific marginalized groups your program will focus on and collect data about.

- **Be clear about which marginalized groups your program will focus** on and track through indicator disaggregates, and ensure the team is ready and able to collect this data.
  - Teams should finalize these marginalized group categories during the development of the AMELP and Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP). Additional guidance on this process may be found in the "Mainstreaming Inclusion in the Monitoring Plan" section of this guidance document.

- **Conduct a MEL kickoff meeting with local partners** at program inception, before the PMP is finalized, to discuss what inclusion-related results are feasible, appropriate, and useful to collect. This should include a discussion on appropriate methods for collecting this data, weighing the benefits and drawbacks of particular data collection methods, for example, based on contextual knowledge and the type of data we seek to collect.
  - Example: In some instances, participants may be unwilling to provide personally identifiable information via a survey, including demographic information that may be sensitive. They may be more willing to share this information verbally with a trusted local partner in an interview or face-to-face conversations.

- **Integrate inclusion-related requirements into subaward milestones** in consultation with the partner receiving the subaward.
  - Avoid setting requirements without first consulting with the partner to ensure that they are realistic and relevant, and the partner understands why such information is being requested.

- **Conduct Collaboration, Learning and Adaptation (CLA) sessions**, where appropriate, both internally and with local partners to reflect on effectiveness of inclusion approaches, including those tied to your MEL plan.

IV. Mainstreaming Inclusion in the Monitoring Plan

Opportunities exist to integrate inclusion considerations across all sections of an Activity MEL Plan (AMELP). This guidance focuses specifically on the "Monitoring" aspect of the AMELP, due to the guide's focus on data collection. Key components of the Monitoring portion of the AMELP where inclusion should be integrated include Context Monitoring, the project's PMP/Performance Indicator Reference Sheets, and Complexity-Aware Monitoring (CAM) approaches. Each program may have context-specific approaches to inclusion, but the AMELP should identify which specific marginalized groups and inclusion goals the program will focus on.

Once teams identify relevant marginalized groups and intended goals for these communities, teams should identify relevant inclusion-focused indicators to track through the award. To do so, teams should look at their Results Framework and identify priority results that relate to inclusion. This should inform the selection of indicators. When selecting multiple inclusion-focused indicators, aim to include a balance of output- and outcome-level indicators. It is also valuable to identify inclusion-related disaggregates for more general indicators that are not explicitly inclusion-focused.

Teams should also apply any inclusion considerations within their complexity aware monitoring (CAM) efforts. CAM may be particularly well suited to collecting outcomes regarding inclusion as it allows for a nuanced and contextually informed understanding of outcomes, including unanticipated outcomes and outcomes specific to a particular demographic group. Teams can refer to external resources such as USAID's Discussion Note: Complexity-Aware Monitoring guidance. Teams are also encouraged to apply relevant inclusion considerations within their CLA (Collaboration, Learning, and Adaptation) and evaluations sections within the AMELP.

V. Ethical Considerations for Collecting Inclusion Data

Challenge: Collecting data on inclusion-related issues can be a complicated and sensitive endeavor. Missing the mark can have profound consequences, such as sensitive data about someone's sexual orientation being leaked to government authorities in a country where being LGBTQI+ is a crime. Similarly, asking questions in an insensitive manner may lead to participants mistrusting implementers and therefore being unwilling to provide candid feedback. Above all, "doing no harm" should be our primary consideration when determining how to collect inclusion data and what inclusion-related data to collect. More information about do no harm approaches can be found in CDA Collaborative's Do No Harm: A Brief Introduction by CDA.

Tips for Enhancing Inclusivity and Ensuring Do No Harm Principles
- **Leverage inclusion data to inform program** design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation to better ensure program decision-making that is targeted and responsive to the needs, priorities, and lived realities of members of marginalized groups.

- When deciding whether to collect certain types of data, **determine if collecting the data will provide more value to the program and participants than harm**. Only collect data that will inform program decision-making to strengthen inclusive democracy and development.
  - Example: If collecting gender-disaggregated data for an indicator tracking improved knowledge on a training topic, make sure to analyze the data (broken down by gender), assess whether trainees of different genders are benefitting equitably, and adjust the training approach moving forward if they are not.

- As noted in the previous section**, partner with local organizations and/or leaders representing marginalized groups** to help identify what data to collect, which methods to use, what types of questions to ask, relevant terminology to use, and any other inclusion considerations to keep in mind.

- **Engage in trust-building activities with strategic partners representing members of marginalized communities before data collection.** Leverage trusted partners to collect data and/or conduct trust-building icebreakers before leading interviews on sensitive topics.

- **Thoughtfully solicit informed consent.** Determine whether reading an informed consent statement aloud or having individuals sign a statement is more appropriate in each context. Plan to provide informed consent information in accessible formats, such as by providing digital copies of the statement in advance. Use a dynamic informed consent process: if someone seems uncomfortable part way through an interview, for instance, remind them that they can skip the question or end the interview early. Make sure it is clear who will have access to the information someone shares and why that information is being collected, and how it will be transmitted and stored.

- **Develop a plan for data transmission, access, and storage.** Data security around inclusion data should be handled like other personally identifiable information (PII). Names and other identifying information should not be stored on resources such as DevResults or SharePoint sites. Further, teams should make an intentional decision at program start – and reflect this decision in the "data management" portion of their AMELP – around who will have access to PII and inclusion-related data; access should be limited to individuals who will use this data (such as MEL leads and program staff who may use the data to inform programmatic decision-making). Additionally, encrypt email when sharing personally identifiable information and keep any hard copies securely locked. Teams should review their individual organization's data security policies for more guidance on this topic.

- **Close the feedback loop.** Plan to share key findings and takeaways with participants and partners from a given data collection exercise. Data collection practices should not be extractive; they should be collaborative and can even be empowering to the populations we engage.

VI. Qualitative Data Collection (Key Informant Interviews and Focus Groups)

Challenge: Challenges may arise when collecting qualitative data with members of marginalized groups due to the need for intentional sampling, additional time and budget to ensure all participants are accommodated, and the need for sensitivity to local context, including an understanding of how particular populations are marginalized and any history of conflict and trauma that may affect participants' ability to comfortably engage in data collection.

Tips for Enhancing Inclusivity and Ensuring Do No Harm Principles

- **Center the value of an individual's experiences and establish respect for the knowledge and expertise of participants.** Engage with members of marginalized groups when developing interview and focus group guides to ensure you are covering priority topics and that the language being used is contextually appropriate and easily understood. For focus groups and group interviews, consider working with members of marginalized groups to select participants and guide the direction of the conversation.

- The best way to ensure that the views of diverse members of marginalized groups are captured is to first **determine which groups and how many individuals need to be represented in your sample** and intentionally recruit these individuals. Partnering with trusted local organizations working with these groups or employing snowball sampling are good approaches to ensure representation in your sample. It is important to consider intersectionality and diversity within marginalized communities when sampling as the views of, for example, women with disabilities will differ from men with disabilities.

- **Ensure that focus groups, group interviews, and key informant interviews are designed with the participants in mind and are scheduled at a convenient time and in a location that is safe and accessible.** Consult with members of marginalized groups before selecting a time and location and when considering accommodations. For example, parents may require childcare to participate, people with disabilities may need sign language interpretation or physical accommodations, ethnic minorities may require local language facilitation or the interview to be held in certain locations, or participants may need safe transport to and from the event. Ask participants what accommodations will enable their participation, rather than assuming. Local partners that work with marginalized groups should also be consulted on existing challenges and specific accommodations that should be considered.

- **For focus groups and group interviews, ensure that the group's composition is conducive to free and open participation of all members.** This may include dividing groups by age, ethnicity, or gender, for example. Studies show that "focus group data collection is most effective when participants share similar social identities and experiences and are in a comfortable

environment." ⒪ Ensure that participants are informed in advance of who will be attending. This includes other participants, staff members, and any interpreters.

- **Apply trauma-informed principles when asking about experiences of marginalization** and reflect, normalize, and empathize if participants disclose traumatic events or express emotions. Consider in advance how you can offer a safe space that allows someone who has brought up difficult experiences the opportunity to share their story. Creating a safe space may entail providing onsite psychosocial support or referrals for local psychosocial support. Ensure that participants understand from the outset that this support is available, if needed. If a participant reveals a traumatic experience, refrain from either pushing for details or continuing with the line of questioning. Take time to acknowledge the information shared and to ask whether the participant would like to pause the interview. Be sure that all participants understand that they may opt out of further discussion, while also creating a safe space for the participant to continue sharing should they choose. While data collection goals are important, they do not take precedent over do no harm and trauma-informed principles. For more information, see: IRI's [Trauma-Informed Data Collection Guide](#) and [Encompass's Trauma Informed Approaches to Data Collection.](#)

VII. Participant Registration

Challenge: CEPPS works in country contexts where people may feel uncomfortable expressing certain identities or personal information (e.g., age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc.), may have context- or community-specific-language to describe various identities, or may be unsure of how to respond to some demographic-related questions.

Tips for Increasing Inclusivity and Ensuring Do No Harm Principles

- **Instead of using traditional sign-in sheets, teams may consider using alternative, less public-facing ways of collecting information about participants.** For example, participants can be asked to:
    - Put marbles in jars to indicate the groups they are part of (note: this may limit your ability to capture one person's multiple identities)
    - Fill out individual paper registration forms and give them to organizers/put them in "ballot boxes"
    - Fill out an electronic registration form ahead of the event
    - Fill out an electronic registration form on their phones that can be accessed via link or by scanning a QR code
    - Share information about themselves directly with the event organizers via electronic means or orally

If cross-disaggregations are required, for example urban youth or young women, ensure that these options are available for selection for participant registration.

When collecting data on potentially sensitive demographic information, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or disability, the following information may be useful in guiding this process:

Gender and sex[1] - USAID requires disaggregating indicator data by biological sex (male/female and, for some indicators, also neither/not available) for individual-level indicators (indicators that count persons). Where feasible and relevant, program teams should strive to collect the data both on biological sex and gender. When asking about gender identity, response options should generally not be restricted to only "man" and "woman." Options such as "transgender," "non-binary," and/or "something else: fill in the blank" (or similar) should be included. Terminology and concepts related to gender diversity are highly contingent on local language, history, religion, economic status, age, ethnicity, and other cultural influences and therefore terms like cis- or transgender may not resonate with the target population. Collaborating with local partners who represent gender diverse communities and/or who have the trust of leaders within those communities can help inform data collection and optimize the quality of gender-related data.

Sexual Orientation - Collecting data on sexual orientation must always be informed by local laws and norms and guided by the strictest do no harm principles. If it is safe and relevant to collect data on sexual orientation, data collection methods and materials should be guided by local partners who represent lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or queer communities and/or who have the trust of leaders within those communities. This will help ensure that data collection considers the unique ways in which local populations define themselves and reflects concepts and terminology that are culturally appropriate and inclusive. Identities, behaviors, and expressions and the terms used to describe LGBTQI+ populations vary from culture to culture and are based on language, history, religion, economic class, age, ethnicity, and other cultural influences; to minimize harm and improve data quality, data collection materials must reflect this local context. Ensuring privacy and data security is paramount, as is making explicit to participants the reasons for collecting such information. Additionally, creative and more anonymous ways to collect data on sexual orientation, as outlined in the participant registration section, are helpful in lowering any perceived risk among participants in self-identifying their sexual orientation.

Age - When collecting data about age, consider using age ranges (e.g., Age: select the relevant range from 15-19; 20-24; 25-29; 30-34, 35 and above) instead of asking participants to indicate their exact age. Note that the required age ranges may vary for different indicators, including USG F-indicators. When designing the data collection tool, make sure to use the age ranges defined in the relevant indicator's PIRS. This is also applicable for how teams may use age ranges to help define Youth and Non-Youth. Specifically, teams should refer to the program's PIRS to see which age ranges may fall into Youth and Non-Youth categories. In some contexts, asking individuals to report their exact age (e.g. Age: fill in the blank) is a more effective manner of collecting this data, however, the use of this approach should be limited in sensitive contexts where such personally identifiable data could be detrimental or where other sensitive demographic information could be associated with one's more precise age.

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[1] Sex is the classification of people as male, female, or intersex. Sex is assigned at birth based on a combination of bodily characteristics and chromosomes. Gender identity is one's internal sense of being a man, woman, both or something else – how individuals perceive and identify themselves. In many cultures, this is conflated with sex, though they are two distinct terms. One's gender identity may align with one's sex assigned at birth, or it can differ.

Disability - When collecting data about disability status, it is useful to offer alternatives to simple 'yes' or 'no' statements. Individuals who are marginalized or encounter barriers to engaging in political life may not necessarily self-identify as having a disability because of social context, language differences, or personal reasons. Instead, it is recommended to ask a series of short questions on functioning and the associated degree of difficulty. For example, ask participants if they have difficulty seeing, even with glasses, and follow up by asking about what level of difficulty they have in doing so (none, some, a lot, cannot do it at all). For coding purposes, a person may be considered to have a disability if they answer affirmatively to one or more of the functioning questions and self-assess as having a lot of difficulty or not being able to function at all in that realm. For additional guidance on questions sets on functioning, see The Washington Group on Disability Statistics.The Washington Group on Disability Statistics.

VIII. Additional Resources

- CEPPS LGBTQI+ Program Guidance
- CEPPS Online Violence Against Women Diagnostic Toolkit
- Short Question Set on Functioning (The Washington Group on Disability Statistics)
- Trauma-Informed Approaches to Data Collection (Encompass)
- Do No Harm: A Brief Introduction by CDA (CDA Collaborative)