

AMDD PROJECT WORKSHOP MARRAKECH 2001

Documentation: Why, What, Who, and How

Nadia Hijab
AMDD Communications Consultant

This note addresses four questions:

- What do we want to accomplish with documentation?
- What information do we need to communicate?
- Who needs to get the information?
- How should the information be communicated?

These four questions need to be answered because, too often, effort is put into documentation without a clear idea of the purpose of the material.

1. WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH WITH DOCUMENTATION?

Perhaps the most important question we need to answer is: what do we want to accomplish? Our objectives may be local and focused on the project. Or we may have national and international objectives. For example,

- a. We may want district health/medical officers to make emergency drugs available to health centers, or to help stop rapid rotation of medical staff. Our objective is to reach the people who can influence the success of our projects.
- b. We believe that international donors and the international medical community do not realize how bad the situation is - and, yet, how much we can achieve with limited resources. Our objective is to get governments and donors involved and give more time and money to preventing maternal death and disability.
- c. We may have tried an intervention in one of our projects that was especially successful (or that failed). For example, we may have established weekly medical meetings at the facility, or introduced a new management system. Our objective is to let development practitioners in the country know, so that they can copy our example (or avoid it).

In other words, if we can clearly identify our objective, then we will be able to produce the right material for the right audience. This will get us away from wasting time and money on brochures that do not advance local, national or international objectives.

2. WHAT INFORMATION DO WE NEED TO COMMUNICATE?

Having decided on our objective, it then becomes relatively simple to identify what we need to document as we go along.

If our objective is to convince the district health/medical officer to show interest in and support of our project, or to take action (make emergency drugs available), or recommend changes in policy (rapid rotation of medical staff), then we need evidence on how these factors are leading to death and disability.

If our objective is to get governments and international donors involved, then we need evidence that shows that women do not have access to life saving care, and what can be done about it.

Now, for most AMDD projects, some of this information is already available in the Needs Assessments that have been conducted. These Needs Assessments are a gold mine of information about conditions in the health facilities. How will project teams use the information available in the Needs Assessments to change the situation on the ground, or mobilize national and international support?

Meanwhile, if our objective is to inform development practitioners about an intervention that we have successfully introduced (or failed to introduce), then we need to document the reasons why this intervention succeeded (or failed).

3. WHO NEEDS TO GET THIS INFORMATION?

Since we have clearly defined our objective, it becomes much easier to define our audience, and to address the message to that audience. Already, several different audiences are suggested from the discussion above, including:

- Provincial or national medical authorities
- National government
- International governments and donors
- The national and international medical community , public and private
- National and international obstetrics and midwifery societies
- AMDD staff and partners (implementing organizations, technical partners, others)
- The broader development community
- The media

Depending on our objective, we would communicate specific information to one or more of these groups.

4. HOW SHOULD THE INFORMATION BE COMMUNICATED?

To reach their different audiences, project teams will want to consider different ways of communication, including:

- One-on-one meetings with medical staff, managers, donors, and others
- Large group discussions with medical staff, the community, and others,
- Invitations to local and national media to visit projects.
- Production of project reports, brochures, or videos for different audiences
- Publication in national and international journals
- Participation in national and international conferences

Project teams will of course have several outlets through their own parent organizations (eg. CARE, UNICEF, UNFPA, RPMM, and so on). In addition, project teams can also make use of the tools that the AMDD Programme will be establishing. AMDD communication tools will include:

- **The AMDD Website**, which will contain public information on the programme and its approach, as well as information provided by the individual projects. The site address is www.amdd.hs.columbia.edu and it will be operational by mid-March 2001.
- **The AMDD Newsletter**, which will come out three times a year and report on programme progress to AMDD partners and the broader development community
- **The new Special Section in the International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics**
- **Papers, reports, and other documentation** presented in international fora, published in journals and magazines, or issued by the programme itself (as, for example, the book *Safe Motherhood Programs: Options and Issues* was published by the Columbia-based Prevention of Maternal Mortality Program in 1993).
- **Press kits** and other materials for the media
- **Video presentations and slide shows**

The attached sheet - the Documentation Workgroup Assignment 2001 - is intended for use in the documentation workgroup session on Wednesday 21 March. If, in addition to guidance from their own organizations, project teams would like advice or information, or would like to share news about their projects through the AMDD channels, please contact me at nadia.hijab@verizon.net

ASSIGNMENT

Documentation Workgroup Assignment

In country team discussions, please complete this sheet. Focus first on objectives you can achieve by communicating some findings from your Needs Assessments.

AMDD Project Team/Country _____

Over the next 12 months:

What do you want to accomplish with documentation? (Local and/or National and/or International Objectives)	Objective a
	Objective b
	Objective c
What is the information you need to communicate?	Objective a
	Objective b
	Objective c
Who needs to hear this information?	Objective a
	Objective b
	Objective c
How should the information be communicated?	Objective a
	Objective b
	Objective c