

## **MERG Indicator Working Group –**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **Introduction**

The UNAIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (MERG) is an independent global body of experts that leads thinking and provides advice in matters related to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the global AIDS response. One of the MERG's key functions is to harmonize M&E approaches, including work related to indicators. At the first MERG meeting of the re-established MERG in Glion 20-21, November 2012, the MERG created a standing Indicator Working Group (WG). The MERG Indicator WG will be supported in matters of specific interest by an expanded membership, assembled on a temporary basis to conduct specific activities. This larger group constitutes an indicator-specific MERG Network, as cited below.

#### **Purpose/Rationale**

Under the auspices of the MERG, the MERG Indicator Working Group will coordinate and make technical recommendations on indicator development, revisions, and review. The purpose of the group is to:

- Increase the quality of data through the development of clear, collectable, meaningful indicators
- Provide support to countries to ensure appropriate data are available for understanding the epidemic and the response, while also reducing the burden imposed by donors and partners on countries through the alignment of indicators
- Improve the use of data by ensuring that data are easily available and used by countries and other partners

#### **Goal**

To improve the availability, quality, and use of data related to the HIV epidemic through rationalized indicator development in priority areas while ensuring that indicators are based on common quality standards, reducing unnecessary reporting burdens and supporting better and more strategic use of collected data.

#### **Structure and Membership**

The Indicator WG is a standing working group which is a constituent of the MERG Network, and reports directly to the MERG. The working group will have a membership of around 15

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to ensure that it is a compact body, but this may vary depending on current workplans and workload.

### **Co-chairs**

- There are two co-chairs of the Indicator Working Group, with at least one co-chair representing national NACs or MoHs and at least one of the two co-chairs also being a member of the MERG.
- The co-chairs are appointed by the MERG for a period of one year that can be renewed.

*Roles and responsibilities include:*

- Preparation and chairing of Indicator WG meetings and conference calls
- Preparation of annual work plan in collaboration with the Indicator WG secretariat

### **Members**

Members should meet the following criteria:

- Expertise and experience in relevant field for Indicator work related to monitoring and evaluation of the AIDS epidemic.
- Appropriate level of professional seniority and standing.

The members should ideally meet the following criteria:

- Balanced representation of constituencies, including balanced stakeholder, professional, geographic, and gender representation
- Representation of key organizations/institutions relevant for the Indicator WG

Partners who wish to become members and who meet the criteria can request membership status. The Indicator WG co-chairs can approve temporary member status; final decisions are taken by the MERG.

The MERG and/or the Indicator WG's co-chairs may actively approach and encourage individuals/organizations to join the Indicator WG.

Applications for membership should be sent to the Indicator WG secretariat ([MERGindicatorWG@unaids.org](mailto:MERGindicatorWG@unaids.org)) who forward them to the group's co-chairs and who are responsible for the approval of temporary memberships, until the MERG takes the final decision.

Roles and responsibilities of members include:

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- Participation in Indicator WG meetings and conference calls (or determine an alternate if participation not possible).
- Active participation in the implementation of the Indicator WG's work plan.
- There is no remuneration for participating.

A member will maintain membership for a two-year period (renewable at the end of the term) or until:

- S/he resigns
- S/he is unable to perform the agreed upon responsibilities as defined above and agreed upon tasks

### *Observers*

Other experts in specific fields may be invited to participate in Indicator WGs meetings, depending on the agenda and the focus of activities being conducted. Observers have no voting power. These observers do not become members of the "MERG network".

### **Secretariat**

The UNAIDS Secretariat is the secretariat of the Indicator Working Group.

The Secretariat will prepare and convene Indicator WG meetings and support the co-chairs in preparing workplans and recruitment and selection of group members. The Secretariat may coordinate the work of different work streams, and any other specific activities that arise. Further the Secretariat can propose financial resources to fund those tasks.

### **Meetings**

The Indicator Working group will convene at least one face-to-face meeting annually to report on progress on planned activities, discuss future priority areas, and plan strategically to agree on the coming workplan. Meetings should be set up to make it possible to participate by distance as much as possible. Teleconferences/webinars and meetings to discuss specific issues will be called as appropriate. Other communication between meetings will be through conference calls/webinars at regular intervals as decided by the group.

### **Decision making**

Decision-making will be by consensus whenever possible. In the circumstance that consensus cannot be reached, decisions will be by vote and require a simple majority of Indicator WG members. Voting, when necessary, shall take place at face-to-face meetings.

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In exceptional circumstances, it can take place in a meeting by teleconference or by e-mail providing that due notice has been given.

New or revised indicators should be assessed using the Indicator Standards and in consultation with the MERG.

### **Oversight**

The MERG provides the group with overall guidance including on priority areas. The Indicator WG will report on progress to the MERG on a regular basis, and be prepared for updates at the biannual MERG meetings.