Sightsavers spot checks – a summary

Spot checks were first introduced for Sightsavers' projects in 2013. Sightsavers designed the process and has established a clear methodology:

1. Process and methodology

Aim of the spot check
The aims of the spot check are:
1. To determine if the data submitted from the partners has been accurately and completely translated to the OS spread sheet for that project.
2. To understand the process used by Country Offices (COs) / Area Offices (AOs) to collect and collate partners' returns.

Process
Step 1: Checking AOs/COs submissions each year
Sightsavers' programme systems team (PST) checks if the data submitted to AOs/COs by the partners had been accurately and completely translated to the organisation's annual output statistics spread sheet for that project. AOs/COs are requested to send their partners' submissions to the PST who will re-aggregate the data and compare the result with the output statistics submission. The focus is on:
- Accuracy: no mistakes were made by the person transferring the data between spread sheets.
- Completeness: no data was left out by the person transferring the data between spread sheets.

Step 2: Understanding AOs/COs data collection and collation process
Using a questionnaire, the PST gathers information about the process used by AOs/COs to collect and collate partners' returns. This information is used to provide AOs/COs with some suggestions and support on how to improve data collection and collation. The PST asks for information on:
- Data collection process: method used by AOs/COs to collect data from their partners.
Data collation process: method used by AOs/COs to add up partners' returns in order to determine quarterly and annual totals.

Preliminary steps
- A section explaining the spot check is included in the output statistics guidance which is sent to all AOs/COs. In addition, the PST calls every AO/CO to ensure that the process is understood.
- Each AO/CO receives notification a week in advance as to which projects will be spot checked. Each AO/CO has to expect that at least one of their projects will be reviewed and as a result has to ensure that all project files are up-to-date, complete and ready to be spot checked.
- To prepare for a spot check guidance asks AOs/COs to organise all their partners' submissions for each project, by quarter, into one folder.

To facilitate the process the PST developed the following tools:

- **Master project list** which includes all the projects being spot checked, the relevant indicators and comments box in order for the PST to track the progress.
- **A spot-check report** for each project which allows the PST to compare the partners data provided by AOs/COs as part of the spot check with the year's OS submission (step 1).
- **A questionnaire** to understand AOs/COs data collection and collation process and to ascertain global trends (step 2).

Project selection

Each year we run one spot check per AO/CO, in addition to regional programmes. Per project, two indicators are selected for audit - these are the indicators that produced the largest returns in the previous year for the chosen project. Projects are either:

- Pre-emptively selected if the project is considered to be 'high risk'.
- Randomly chosen by means of a random number generator.

Methodology

Following the submissions by AOs/COs of their partner returns and the questionnaire:

- All the AOs/COs submissions of partner returns are reviewed and quarterly data from partners is re-aggregated by the PST and compared to the year's output statistics submissions.
- When an AO/CO submission is incomplete or not in order (as specified in the guidance), an email is sent to the AO/CO, copying the relevant Regional Director (RD), asking them to resubmit in accordance with the guidance.
- If the re-aggregated data using partner returns by the PST matches with the AO/CO's output statistics submission then the spot check is complete and the questionnaire is entered into Survey Monkey.
- In case of inaccuracy, the PST follows up with the relevant AO/CO, asking them to double check their submission or provide an explanation of how the data was aggregated at AO/CO level (for example indicator mapping).
  - ➢ If the error is confirmed, AOs/COs are asked to resubmit their output statistics submission.
  - ➢ If the explanation is satisfactory, it is recorded in the spot-check report and the spot check is complete.

If the queries have not been addressed after two business days, the PST liaises with the AOs/COs by email or phone call.

Please see alongside this methodology document an example of a 2014 Sightsavers spot check from the Onchocerciasis elimination programme in the DRC.