



# MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1

### Who are the primary audiences for these FAQs?

This document provides essential information for all stakeholders involved in the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators—for example, U.S. Government (USG) Mission staff, PEPFAR implementing partner staff, and the organizations responsible for designing and conducting MER surveys.

2

### What is the purpose of the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators?

As part of its new Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (MER) guidance, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) launched a set of outcome indicators for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) programs in 2014. These outcome indicators are designated as “essential survey indicators,” which means that PEPFAR considers them critical to tracking progress within PEPFAR-funded projects and has therefore made them a reporting requirement.

The purpose of collecting the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators is to obtain a snapshot of project outcomes at a point in time and to assess changes in outcomes among OVC project beneficiaries over time (over a two-year period). The survey is not designed to assess outcomes among children in the general population.

These outcome data will support improved, evidence-informed strategic portfolio development, programming, and resource allocation decisions at country and headquarters levels. These data will provide evidence to the U.S. Congress on the key outcomes of OVC programming. Additionally, results from the MER OVC Essential Indicator Surveys will be triangulated with data from OVC project evaluation findings, routine monitoring, household vulnerability assessments, and case management, thus strengthening the evidence base for USG-funded OVC programs. Conducting the MER OVC Essential Indicator Surveys supports the purposes of USAID's evaluation policy for accountability and promoting learning to generate greater positive change. Likewise, the MER

OVC Essential Survey Indicators' technical guidance helps Missions and implementing partners meet USAID's evaluation policy requirements by encouraging the use of external data collectors for objectivity—unbiased measurement and reporting—and use of the best methods to generate high-quality data and credible evidence.

### **3 How will USG Missions use data from the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators? What types of decisions will be made based on MER OVC Essential Survey Indicator data?**

Outcome data will be used in combination with input/output data at USG Mission level to support program planning, targeting, resource allocation, and implementation. For example, if the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicator data show that only a small percentage of beneficiary children appear to be progressing across education indicators, the USG Mission may decide to focus more of its resources on education-related interventions. Likewise, if a project has invested significantly in education-related interventions yet cannot report a positive change over time in the percentage of beneficiary children progressing in school, the project may consider revising its intervention strategy for education.

### **4 How will the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC) use the data from the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators? What types of decisions will be made based on the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicator data?**

OGAC will synthesize data to tell our story to Congress on how our OVC programs are making a difference to children globally. For example, this Essential Survey Indicator data will be able to demonstrate improvements in child well-being, and identify in which outcome areas our programs are making gains or are struggling.

### **5 Is collection of the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators required for all projects that have budgets over USD \$1 million per annum?**

Countries are expected to report on the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators for OVC projects with an annual budget of at least USD \$1 million. It is important to note however, that **countries with total HKID funding (a PEPFAR budget code for funding to programs supporting OVC affected by HIV and AIDS) of less than USD\$1 million per year are not required to complete a MER OVC Essential Survey to monitor outcomes for any of their projects.** However, the USG Mission may still be interested in collecting this information, and if they do collect the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators the data should be reported in DATIM (the Data for Accountability, Transparency, and Impact platform).

### **6 How should countries select PEPFAR-funded OVC projects for an OVC Essential Indicator Survey?**

USG Missions should determine the most appropriate projects from which to collect data. First, USG Missions should consider agency representation—e.g., USAID, the Department of Defense (DOD), Peace Corps, Health and Human Services (HHS)/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HHS/Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), State Department/Bureau of African Affairs, and the State Dept./Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)—based on the current portfolio in the country, focusing on those agencies with the largest OVC portfolios or those managing types of OVC projects of particular interest to the Mission. Second, considerations may include project size, scope, and funding level; the availability of up to date project registers; the timeline of the project; and the budget available for the survey. It is important to note that it is not necessary to collect the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators from all OVC projects in a country; it is more important to make strategic decisions about which projects to survey, based on the considerations outlined above.

## 7

### **Who is responsible for designing, collecting, and reporting the MER Essential Survey Indicators?**

Ultimately, USG Missions are responsible for the collection of the MER Essential Survey Indicators. USG Missions should directly—or through the OVC implementing partner(s)—procure services from an organization that has appropriate skills and capacity to conduct a study to collect the indicators. This organization is required to be external to project service delivery in order to reduce bias and potentially improve data quality. Ideally one organization should be selected to collect the MER Essential Survey Indicators for all projects selected within a country, to ensure that a consistent approach is applied across projects.

The organization that designs the survey and collects the MER Essential Indicators is responsible for writing the MER Essential survey report and for preparing the final indicator data for reporting and submitting to the USG Mission. The OVC implementing partner is responsible for entering the MER indicator data into DATIM. In the event that the implementing partner does not have access to the MER Essential Survey Indicator section in DATIM, the USG Mission may enter the data.

## 8

### **What should USG Missions look for in an organization to collect the MER indicators? What skills are needed?**

Missions should look for organizations that are able to:

- Communicate effectively and manage priorities and expectations from multiple stakeholders.
- Understand the differences between different survey design options, discuss options with the project being surveyed and the USG Mission, and lead a decision-making process on survey design. Organizations should be able to explain measurement principles such as accuracy and precision to a lay audience.
- Work with project staff to develop the sampling frame and calculate the sample size.
- Write a study protocol.
- Verify sampling lists.
- Submit the study protocol for ethical review, as required, and obtain any other approvals specific to the country or region.
- Recruit and contract data collectors; manage staff and consultants.
- Train data collectors in ethical and safe survey techniques.
- Understand how to ensure child protection during field work and train data collectors on this.
- Obtain approvals and support from survey communities prior to field work and maintain communication throughout field work with the project being surveyed and the communities.
- Plan field work, and determine which data collectors are going where, when.
- Manage survey logistics, including procuring vehicles and other services.
- Ensure data quality during field work. Quickly identify and implement solutions to challenges encountered in field work, staying in budget and on time.
- Understand and be able to implement processes for recruiting participants and documenting informed consent.
- Maintain participant confidentiality during and after field work.
- Design a database capable of supporting data analysis and enter questionnaire data.
- Analyze data, applying weights and statistical tests, as appropriate.

- Produce tabulations and reports.
- Interpret the findings.
- Write a study report that thoroughly and accurately presents the methodology and findings.
- Manage a tight budget.
- Manage a tight schedule.

**9**

### **Do study protocols need to be reviewed by USG prior to submission to the institutional review board (IRB)?**

Yes, all study protocols should be submitted to both the USG Mission and the PEPFAR OVC Technical Working Group for review prior to submission to the IRB. Protocols can be submitted to the OVC TWG via e-mail to Christine Fu, senior research and evaluation advisor, at [chfu@usaid.gov](mailto:chfu@usaid.gov). The protocols will be reviewed to ensure that the most up-to-date MER guidance is being adhered to. Please plan for a two-week turn-around time for the reviews. Likewise, if the MER Essential Survey Indicators are being collected within an evaluation, the study protocol should also be submitted for review.

**10**

### **Is ethical approval required for the collection of the OVC Essential Survey Indicators?**

Under U.S. regulations (45 CFR 46), outcomes monitoring for the purposes of project management is not considered research and therefore does not require ethical review. However, as these surveys involve vulnerable child and adolescent populations and outside parties will be privy to private and confidential project information which identifies individuals and their households, it is important to determine and adhere to local country requirements for ethics review. If the host country requires full ethics review then it is strongly recommended that ethics review be conducted in the United States as well.

**11**

### **What is the difference between outcomes monitoring and evaluation?**

Both outcomes monitoring and evaluation can assess changes in indicators over time, typically by conducting sample surveys to estimate changes within a larger population. The difference between outcomes monitoring and evaluation is that outcomes monitoring measures change in the indicator, while evaluation aims to attribute observed changes to projects or interventions, usually by comparing project beneficiaries to similar people who did not receive the project or intervention.

**12**

### **On average, how much does it cost to procure a MER OVC Essential Indicator Survey?**

The average cost for a central mechanism to conduct outcomes monitoring at one point in time for a project with a limited geographic scope is approximately USD \$325,000. If two projects are selected the average cost is approximately USD \$625,000 for data collection at one point in time, due to economies of scale. However, costs will vary by country, the geographic scope of the project, and by the final sample size.

**13**

### **Do all nine Essential Survey Indicators need to be collected?**

Yes, for every OVC project selected, all nine of the Essential Survey Indicators must be collected even if the project is not implementing interventions that are directly linked to a given outcome indicator. This will allow for a holistic picture of the well-being of project beneficiaries across projects and across countries. The study protocol should include a conceptual

framework explaining how specific interventions of the project are theorized to lead to the nine MER outcomes, be they direct or indirect links. If the OVC project doesn't have such a framework, the implementing partner should work with the study team and the USG Mission to develop one during the study design phase. This framework should then be used to help interpret survey results.

**14**

### **Have any changes been made to the survey tool template?**

Yes, we recommend two additions. Because different beneficiaries may be offered or receive different interventions even within the same project, we suggest that investigators ask each respondent which specific OVC interventions, (e.g., HIV testing and counseling; early childhood education; household economic strengthening; education support, etc.) the household and/or its members have received. We also suggest that investigators ask when the beneficiary was registered with the project and/or how long the beneficiary has been receiving services from the project.

This information will enable investigators to better understand the role of the project in bringing about any changes to outcomes. For example, if a substantial change in birth registration is detected between Time 1 and Time 2, and we know that a large proportion of the beneficiaries surveyed received support in accessing birth certificates, we can be reasonably confident that the project contributed to at least some of this positive change. If however, we find that few beneficiaries surveyed received support to access birth certificates, then we would be far more cautious in attributing any change to the project, and in this case, investigators might explore what interventions outside the project might have led to this, and perhaps other, changes.

**15**

### **Is it possible to adapt the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators survey questions to better reflect the local context?**

The MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators have been carefully selected to serve as standardized global indicators for PEPFAR OVC projects, and should be administered exactly as written in the template survey tools included in the MEASURE Evaluation guidance document, *Collecting PEPFAR Essential Survey Indicators*. The only adaptation should be in relation to translation as the questions can and should be adjusted to align with local discourse and enhance clarity. It is important that the translation maintains the core meaning of the question rather than translating the question verbatim. Recall periods should not be changed. Any suggested changes and translations should be discussed and agreed with the USG in-country Mission before they are finalized.

**16**

### **Is it possible to add questions to the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators data collection tool?**

Yes. Missions, implementing partners, and the organization designing the study and collecting the MER Essential Survey Indicators, can discuss together and may choose to add questions to the survey in order to obtain additional information. However, it is important that the need for additional information is balanced with the extra time and costs required to collect, analyze, and report it.

**17**

### **When should the MER OVC Essential Indicator Survey be conducted?**

For each selected OVC project, the Essential Survey Indicators should be collected at two points in time, two years apart, during the same time of the year. Ideally, the first MER OVC Essential Indicator Survey should be conducted at the beginning of a project. In determining the exact timing, investigators must balance two needs. First, a sufficient number of beneficiaries should be enrolled prior to conducting the survey so that the data will be as representative of project beneficiaries as possible. Second, it is ideal that beneficiaries have not received more than six months of services prior to the first round of data collection so that the first round is a true "baseline."

## 18

### **What if the project is not new but in its first one to two years of implementation and is scheduled to last another two-and-a-half or more years, should the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators be collected?**

If the project did not already assess similar outcomes to the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators in the baseline assessment, then it is recommended to collect data for the Essential Survey Indicators, since the project will continue for another two-and-a-half years or more. If a project is in its second or third year and is planned to continue for at least another two-and-a-half years, a “Round 1” survey can be conducted now and a second “Round 2” survey should be planned in two years’ time—ideally six months before the end of the project. Changes over time can then be assessed from Round 1 to Round 2.

**We do not recommend collecting MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators from a project that is ending in less than two and a half years.** The MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators are intended to track change over time, over a period of two years. The two-year measurement cycle was chosen because many indicator values are not likely to significantly improve within shorter intervals. Therefore, OGAC only requires USG Missions to report on the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators from projects that will be continuing for at least two-and-a-half years beyond the time of the first survey.

It is understood that USG Missions and projects may choose to obtain information about the current status of beneficiaries at one point of time to enable programmatic decision making, and to aid in project design (particularly of a follow-on project). In these cases it is up to the discretion of the USG Missions whether or not to fund the collection of the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators. If the USG Mission does collect the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators they should always report the data in DATIM and share the MER survey report with the PEPFAR OVC TWG.

## 19

### **Who should be surveyed for Round 1?**

Households sampled should be representative<sup>1</sup> of all registered, active project beneficiaries at the time of the survey for Round 1. An active beneficiary is defined as an individual who receives project services at least quarterly (every three months) as outlined in project guidelines or standards of practice. New beneficiaries who only registered in the last quarter prior to the survey will be counted as active even if they have not yet received services—if it is anticipated that they will receive quarterly contacts in the future.

## 20

### **How should geographic areas, households, and children be chosen for the second round of data collection of the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators?**

We recommend using a cross-sectional study design for both Round 1 and Round 2. The households surveyed for the second round of data collection should be as similar as possible to the households surveyed for the first round to allow comparability of results. We recognize that OVC projects are graduating beneficiaries at different periods of time. The guidance that follows on the Round 2 sampling frame is informed by this diversity. For projects that intend to maintain beneficiary cohorts for at least two years before graduating households, a cross-section of all active beneficiaries at the time of Round 2, should be selected for Round 2.

For projects that graduate beneficiaries in less than two years, a cross-section of all active beneficiaries at the time of Round 1, should be selected for Round 2, whether or not they are still active at the time of Round 2. This means, that the sampling frame for Round 2 will include beneficiary households who were enrolled at the time of Round 1 but have since transitioned, graduated, or exited the project—as well as those beneficiary households that have remained active. Therefore, Round 2 data collection organization will need to budget time and money to find beneficiary households that have since left the project. Maintaining the same sampling frame over a two-year time span requires implementing partners to maintain a high-quality database (including names and contact information) of all their beneficiary households.

<sup>1</sup> Note that there are exceptions when collecting MER indicators within an evaluation – see FAQ #26.

**21****Should we be collecting the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators in PEPFAR transition areas if we believe that the project will not be operating in those areas in two years?**

**We do not recommend collecting the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators in PEPFAR transition areas.** However, there may be exceptions if the USG Mission or project is interested in assessing the beneficiary population at one point in time in order to have data that can be used to confirm the transition decision for specific locales, or for program planning and design for the new partners that may be taking over the project in transition areas. If a project is in the midst of a geographic transition, we suggest limiting the MER OVC Essential Survey data collection to areas that will be served by the project for at least the next two years.

**22****Should we be collecting the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators in projects that are new procurements but follow-ons of previous projects?**

If the new follow-on project is similar to the previous project and a MER survey was conducted on the previous project within the last two years, it is not necessary to conduct a baseline MER survey for the new project. The follow-on project can be considered similar if the new project is being implemented in the same geographic areas; the majority of the beneficiaries are continuing in the project; and the intervention package(s) remain the same.

**23****If a Mission collects the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators from multiple projects within a country is it possible to compare the results across projects?**

**We strongly advise Missions against comparing indicator results across projects.** While Missions may collect the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators from multiple projects in a country, comparisons of indicators between projects may not be meaningful and may, in fact, be misleading. This is because projects can differ significantly from one another. For example, one project may be in its first year of implementation while another may be in its third; therefore, the beneficiaries would have been exposed to the interventions for different lengths of time and may show different outcomes. Likewise, eligibility requirements and therefore target populations for projects may differ and thus beneficiaries may have different levels of vulnerability as measured by the indicators. Furthermore, projects operating in different locations may face different challenges with implementation and in achieving impact. For instance, some locations may be more geographically challenging to reach than others, and different geographic areas may face different barriers to scale-up and success due to cultural values, the political and economic environment, population density, and epidemiology, among other factors. All of these factors should be discussed in the full MER Essential Survey Indicator report to aid in interpretation.

The PEPFAR OVC TWG is currently exploring ways to analyze “impact” of PEPFAR OVC programming at an operating unit and globally.

**24****Is it acceptable to collect and aggregate the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators from all PEPFAR projects operating within a specific geographic region and report estimates for the geographic region rather than for a particular project?**

Given the variation in project implementation, design, duration, contextual factors, and beneficiary vulnerability criteria, we advise against aggregating MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators from all PEPFAR projects operating within a specific geographic region. All MER OVC Essential Survey Indicator data reported into DATIM must be project-specific and reflect the project as a whole. Beneficiaries for different projects may have been targeted differently, may have been enrolled at different times, and may be receiving a different package of interventions; thus, it would not be possible to clearly interpret the findings and use the data to improve upon the individual projects. Narrative MER Essential Indicator Survey Reports should reflect a specific project.

**25****If we see improvements over time in the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators can we attribute the changes to the project?**

Results from the MER OVC Essential Indicator Surveys may not be attributed to a specific project if there is no comparison group, and the use of comparison groups is not recommended for routine MER OVC Essential Survey data collection. The MER OVC Essential Indicator Survey is outcomes monitoring and not an evaluation designed to assess attribution. (See the MEASURE Evaluation *Child, Caregiver & Household Well-being Survey Tools for Orphans & Vulnerable Children Programs Manual* for additional guidance on OVC evaluation and attribution.) However, we can look at the likely contribution of the project to these outcomes through triangulating the MER Essential Survey Indicator data with data from routine monitoring, household vulnerability assessments, evaluations, and case management.

**26****What are some issues to consider if an evaluation study is used to collect the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators?**

Some USG Missions will want to capture the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators through a planned evaluation, rather than implementing a stand-alone MER OVC Essential Indicators Survey. In this case, the USG Mission should understand how different population samples drawn for the purpose of the evaluation and different study designs affect the feasibility of collecting the MER OVC Essential Indicators. There are a few key questions that can help a USG Mission to determine if the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators can be accurately captured through an evaluation.

1. *Does the evaluation study include include a large enough sample of project beneficiaries?*

Many evaluations will compare project beneficiaries with others who share similar characteristics but did not participate in the project. **Only project beneficiaries should be included in reporting for the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators.** Therefore it is important that the recommended minimum sample size of 482 beneficiary households is met within any evaluation design.

2. *Does the evaluation study include all geographic areas where the project operates or is it restricted to a sub-area?*

Project setting/geographic area may affect outcome findings, and some evaluation studies may decide to focus on a specific region or area for a legitimate purpose. However, those outcome findings are not representative of the project as a whole. The results should not be used for MER Essential Survey Indicator reporting.

3. *Does the evaluation or operations research study focus on beneficiaries receiving a specific subset of interventions?*

Most PEPFAR projects include multiple interventions, and the evaluation study may focus on only one of those interventions, for example, community savings and loan groups. If the evaluation study only includes project beneficiaries receiving a particular intervention of interest, data should not be used for MER Essential Survey Indicator reporting because the sample will not be representative of beneficiaries of the project as a whole.

If the evaluation study includes a comparison group consisting of project beneficiaries who receive the complete project intervention package, it might be appropriate to use the data for the MER Essential Indicator Survey reporting provided that (a) both groups operate across the same geographic areas and (b) project records are reliable enough to allow weighting the results to adjust for the proportions of beneficiaries who do and do not participate in the complete intervention package. vulnerability assessments, evaluations, and case management.

**27****If the USG Mission has already procured a project evaluation or baseline assessment and the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators are being collected within the evaluation, must they also conduct a separate study to collect the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators?**

A separate survey is not required if the project evaluation will not be compromised by the inclusion of the MER OVC Essential

Survey indicator questions and the evaluation follows a similar survey methodology and is conducted by an organization external to service delivery.

In fact, it is recommended that the Essential Survey Indicators be incorporated into project baseline assessments (as long as the baseline assessment is being conducted by an organization external to service delivery). If a baseline assessment is not being conducted, then a stand-alone MER OVC Essential Indicator Survey should be conducted.

**28**

### **What type of information should be included in the final MER survey report in addition to the final indicator values?**

The report on the MER Essential Survey Indicators should describe the study design, sampling procedures, and study population. The data should be presented in context. For instance, if a project has undergone significant change between survey years—in scope or scale—or if a project has transitioned or gained a large number of beneficiaries between survey rounds, this information should be included in the report so that it will be considered in the interpretation and presentation of the data. We recommend that the MER outcomes monitoring survey reports include a section on data interpretation that clearly documents programmatic changes and assumptions, particularly if comparing data from two survey rounds. The conceptual framework included in the study protocol should also be included, noting any changes that have been made. The MER survey report should clearly document decisions and assumptions made while designing each survey round. These decisions and assumptions can then inform subsequent rounds. If a country is collecting the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators for more than one project, we recommend producing a separate report for each OVC project.

**29**

### **Who needs to have a copy of the final MER Essential Survey Indicator data and reports?**

The organization designing the survey and collecting the MER Essential Survey Indicator data should provide the study dataset/s in an excel file or csv format to the USG Mission to facilitate subsequent analyses of data. Data will be stored at both the USG Mission and centrally on USAID/Washington's Datahub repository. All datasets must be de-identified—that is, any information that could identify individuals included in the file, such as name and address, must be removed. The organization collecting the MER data should also share the final survey report with the PEPFAR OVC Technical Working Group via e-mail to Christine Fu, USAID's senior research and evaluation advisor, at [chfu@usaid.gov](mailto:chfu@usaid.gov).

**30**

### **How should the data be entered into DATIM?**

For each indicator, numerators and denominators should be entered in DATIM by age-group and sex. We recommend that the implementing partner enter into the narrative section of DATIM information from the MER report on the OVC project interventions, beneficiary population, study design, sampling strategy and sample size, and any other relevant information to help explain the indicator results.

**31**

### **Why do some of the indicators require age disaggregation for children 15–17 years and others 15–18 years?**

For the purposes of the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators data should be collected for children under age 18 years. The indicator reference sheets regarding child outcomes have been corrected to consistently reflect this age range and changes to DATIM are forthcoming.

## Within a project, how many households should be sampled for the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators?

To reliably measure an absolute difference of 15 percent in a given indicator between Round 1 and Round 2 (e.g., from 50 percent to 65 percent), you will need data from 175 children in the age group that corresponds to the given indicator in each Round. (Recall that some indicators are for children ages 0–17 years, others are for children ages 5–17 years and some are only for children ages 0–4 years). In order to determine how many households must be visited you will need to consider the sampling methodology (cluster vs. simple random sample), the non-response rate, and the likelihood that you are going to find a child 0–4 years of age living in the household (as this is the smallest sub-set of children that you will measure).

The table below gives sample sizes for cluster sampling and simple random sampling assuming 80 percent power and 95 percent confidence intervals. In the case of cluster sampling the calculations allow for a design effect of two. The sample sizes assume a non-response rate of 10 percent (some selected households may have moved away or may decline to participate in the survey). The sample sizes also assume that not all beneficiary households will have a child 0–4 years of age.

Therefore, when you conduct your survey you should plan to visit at least 482 beneficiary households if using cluster sampling and 241 beneficiary households if using simple random sampling.

### MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators Sampling Assumptions

	Number of children per indicator assuming 80% power and 95% confidence intervals and 15% change over time	Assumption of design effect of 2	Assumption of non-response rate of 10%	Assumption that each household will have one child 5-17 years of age and 80% of households will have one child 0-4 years of age	Final HH sample size
Simple Random Sampling	175	NA	1.1	1.25	<b>241</b>
Cluster Sampling	175	2	1.1	1.25	<b>482</b>

These assumptions can be modified if the project being surveyed has specific info on design effect, non-response, or proportion of households with a child ages 0–4 years. See footnote below for example calculations with the current assumptions.<sup>2</sup>

These sample sizes will allow investigators to disaggregate the MER Essential Survey Indicators by two age groups: 0–4 years and 5–17 years.

However, if:

- Investigators want to compare subgroups of children (for example, boys vs. girls, or children ages 5–9 years vs. children ages 10–14 years) they will need data from 175 children in each subgroup. This will likely mean that more households will need to be interviewed.
- The selected project provides services to specific children in the households, rather than to all children in the household (for example, the project conducts interventions specific to adolescent girls living with HIV or provides scholarships to some school-age children), you may need a different sampling design. In this case, we recommend that you consult with a sampling expert.

<sup>2</sup> **Example Calculations:** *Simple Random Sampling:*  $175 \times 1.1 \times 1.25 = 241$ ; *Cluster Sampling:*  $175 \times 2 \times 1.1 \times 1.25 = 482$

## 33

### How should we select our sample?

For medium-sized and large projects, we recommend using cluster sampling—that is, selecting small geographic areas from which to interview—which helps keep costs down. We recommend that at least 30 clusters are selected. For example, for a sample size of approximately 482 households, a 33 cluster x 15 household design is recommended. We recommend sampling the primary sampling unit using probability proportionate to size (PPS) and for the secondary sampling unit selecting the same number of households within each cluster. The second stage of sampling compensates for the first, which ensures each household selected has the same probability of selection.

For smaller projects (i.e. covering smaller geographic regions) it might make more sense to apply simple random sampling—that is, selecting households at random from the entire population of beneficiary households, regardless of where they live.

## 34

### Which children in the household should be included in the survey?

The MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators are designed to be collected from beneficiary households. We recommend interviewing the caregiver about all children ages 0–17 years within the household rather than selecting a single index child for each age group. This will be easier to implement in the field and will avoid additional sampling weight considerations during analysis. This is a change from the existing guidance and will be updated in the next published version of the MEASURE Evaluation guidance: *Collecting PEPFAR Essential Survey Indicators*.

## 35

### How can we ensure that the quality of the sampling frame is sufficient to ensure a representative sample of project beneficiaries?

MER OVC Essential Indicator Surveys rely on project records to select beneficiary households to interview. We recommend that OVC projects routinely conduct rapid data quality assessments (RDQAs) such as Community Trace and Verify<sup>3</sup> to confirm that OVC who are reported as having been provided with services actually received the services reported. Deficiencies in record-keeping should be addressed before MER OVC Essential Indicator Surveys are conducted. If a recent assessment has not been conducted, the survey team should plan to conduct a Community Trace and Verify assessment and work with project managers to correct the records prior to developing the sampling frame.

## 36

### Where can I find out more about the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators?

Please go to [www.OVCimpact.org](http://www.OVCimpact.org), a community of practice created to encourage learning and sharing on the implementation of the MEASURE Evaluation OVC survey toolkit and the collection of the MER OVC Essential Survey Indicators.

**If you have further questions** please contact Christine Fu, USAID senior research and evaluation advisor, at: [chfu@usaid.gov](mailto:chfu@usaid.gov)

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