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MODULE

ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

The Responsive Dialogues approach is unique in that there is a central focus on establishing relationships for sustainable change. This includes identifying, engaging with, and building relationships throughout the course of the project, between stakeholders and the core implementation team, but more importantly, between stakeholders and the relevant community, so as to foster change and sustainability as an outcome of the Responsive Dialogues process.

This module provides guidance on the following:

- Which stakeholders to engage?
- What roles do stakeholders play?
- How to engage and build relationships with stakeholders?
- How to manage stakeholder challenges?
- How to monitor stakeholder engagement?

Which stakeholders to engage?

Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or organisations that have a vested interest or stake in Responsive Dialogues, the specific AMR issue/topic, the community being targeted, or the outcomes of the process. They may be directly or indirectly affected by the decisions made in the Responsive Dialogues process, for example:

- Their stake in the process might be related to the development or redevelopment of AMR policies, plans, and other efforts already underway in the country and/or local area.
- They might have an interest in advancing human, animal, and environmental health in the country and/or local area.
- They might have some other direct or indirect concern around, for example, finances, moral, legal, personal, or community-based matters.

> Responsive Dialogues are developed through the establishment of relationships for sustainable change. They include equitable interaction, collaboration, and partnerships between the public and different stakeholders.

Stakeholders could be drawn from specific geographical areas, systems, institutions, interest-based groups, or identity communities. They may be, for example, members of the public, government ministries and departments, from across the One Health sector, the private sector, from local and/or international funders, non-profits, healthcare facilities, or universities.

This inclusive definition means that *anyone*, including citizens and members of a specific community who hold an interest in the topic and approach, may be considered a stakeholder. However, recognising the diverse range of stakeholders acknowledges the potential for conflicts between local and broader interests, as local communities often bear the immediate and personal consequences of decisions made in the long-term interest. (See below for suggestions on managing stakeholder challenges.)

What roles do stakeholders play?

Stakeholders will be involved in the process in different ways, depending on the specific focus of the Responsive Dialogues and the stakeholder's role. Some will be involved in advisory roles, some in setting up or contributing directly to the Conversation Events, and others will have important roles in sustaining the Responsive Dialogues initiative and taking AMR solutions to policy level. The table below lists some stakeholders and describes the variety of roles and contributions they could make to the process.

Stakeholders and their possible contributions to Responsive Dialogues

Stakeholder	Role
Government/policy-makers/decision-makers	Provide insights on shared and department-specific goals and priorities, for example, from the National Action Plan (NAP) for AMR
Academics/researchers	Provide insights on evidence needed to drive existing or new local AMR research
NGOs, international networks, and organisations	Provide input for programme structure from previous experience, facilitation of Conversation Events, and access to funding
Private sector	Provide insights on existing trends and strategies
Civil society organisations (CSOs)	Provide input on public engagement and priorities
Public engagement experts	Provide input on public engagement and perspectives for programme structure
Community leaders	Help with community mobilisation, entering a community, awareness raising, and community acceptance
Donors/funders	Provide funding and expertise

Which stakeholders are key?

Some stakeholders will play key roles in the Responsive Dialogues process, others supporting or local roles. Consider the following:

- **Some stakeholders are decision-makers.** They include, for example, policy-makers, funders, and researchers. They have influence and the capacity to take the outcomes of the Responsive Dialogues forward.
- **There might be different levels of stakeholders at national and local level.**

Important questions to bear in mind in your engagement with each include, for example: Will you engage them together or separately? What can each contribute to the process? What will be most effective to help achieve the project objectives? Who will be critical to driving the solutions forward?

- **Some stakeholders are experts.** You may engage them for specific purposes at different times, for example, to give input into AMR.
- **Some stakeholders are from the wider community.** They can assist with community engagement, entry, and to take the outcomes of the Responsive Dialogues forward.

At the beginning of the Responsive Dialogues process, map out who the stakeholders are and categorise the different groups in a way that serves the purposes of your Responsive Dialogues project. This will guide you with the level of engagement you can expect to have with each stakeholder at different stages of the process, including with longer-term outcomes.

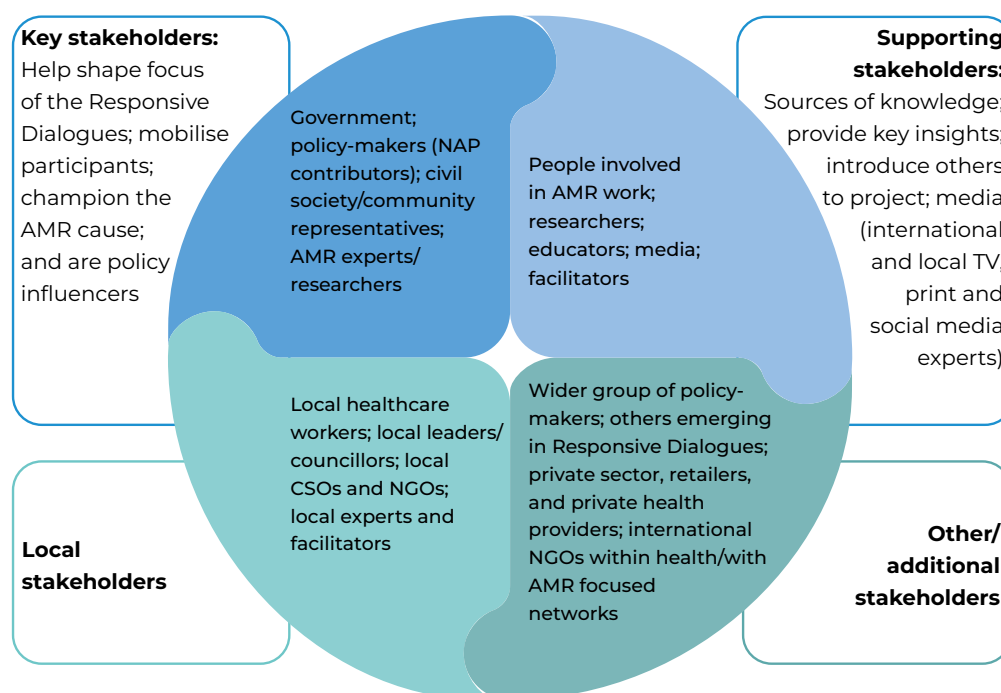## *Guidance on stakeholder mapping and engagement*

Questions to assist with the stakeholder mapping task and to prepare to engage with different stakeholders:

- What are the different types and categories of stakeholders in our context?
- Which sectors do they come from?
- What role do they play in the AMR ecosystem?
- What is the purpose of this stakeholder in our Responsive Dialogues process? What role could they play?
- What type or scale of influence does each stakeholder have?
- Are they important for our short-term, intermediate-term, and/or longer-term project objectives?
- How can each stakeholder help move the process forward?
- How can each stakeholder help foster sustainability and change?
- Should this stakeholder be engaged throughout the process, or at different stages? For example, at various points in the Conversation Events you might consider bringing in decision-makers to experience local realities first-hand. However, this has enormous implications for power dynamics and would need to be carefully managed. See *Cross-cutting themes* and Module 6 for more information on addressing facilitation challenges.

Categorise stakeholders into the different roles and ways in which they will be involved in your Responsive Dialogues project. See the example that follows.

Example of stakeholder mapping

Key stakeholders: Help shape focus of the Responsive Dialogues; mobilise participants; champion the AMR cause; and are policy influencers

Government; policy-makers (NAP contributors); civil society/community representatives; AMR experts/ researchers

People involved in AMR work; researchers; educators; media; facilitators

Supporting stakeholders: Sources of knowledge; provide key insights; introduce others to project; media (international and local TV, print and social media experts)

Local healthcare workers; local leaders/ councillors; local CSOs and NGOs; local experts and facilitators

Wider group of policy-makers; others emerging in Responsive Dialogues; private sector, retailers, and private health providers; international NGOs within health/with AMR focused networks

Local stakeholders

Other/ additional stakeholders

How to engage and build relationships with stakeholders?

Remember the importance of establishing relationships with stakeholders throughout the course of the Responsive Dialogues process. This relationship-building process should not only be between the core implementation team and the different stakeholder groups, but importantly also among stakeholders themselves, and between stakeholders and the communities you engage. It is through these relationships that change and sustainability are fostered as an outcome of the Responsive Dialogues process.

The methods you use to build up relationships with different stakeholders will depend upon the stakeholders and your familiarity with them. For example:

Tap into your own networks. This can have a snowballing effect – where you ask these stakeholders if there are any other individuals or organisations to include in the Responsive Dialogues.

Your first point of contact will probably be by email, phone, or at an in-person meeting. Include information about the project, about Responsive Dialogues, and a request for their involvement.

Following up by arranging a time when you can share more details with stakeholders and get their commitment to be involved. This could be through one-on-one meetings, existing meetings, for example, AMR committees, district, or regional health meetings, or through a specific stakeholder meeting.

Tips for gaining stakeholder buy-in

- Engage stakeholders **early**.
- Provide a **clear introduction** to Responsive Dialogues.
- Find a **'hook'** that matches the stakeholder's interests.
- Explain how Responsive Dialogues will help **address** this interest.
- Speak their **language**.
- Make your **expectations** clear.
- Organise a **Stakeholder Workshop** to mobilise stakeholders, inform them about the project, and engage them in the focus and goals of Responsive Dialogues.

See Section 6 for practical information on *Organising and Running a Stakeholder Workshop.*

Small group of stakeholders discussing and prioritising AMR issues and messages, Malawi.

Photo: John Mankhomwa.

The table below outlines the advantages and disadvantages of the various ways in which stakeholders could be engaged. It's important to take these into consideration as you move forward with your plans.

Advantages and disadvantages of various ways to engage stakeholders

	One-on-one meeting	**Existing meeting, for example, AMR committee**	**Responsive Dialogues stakeholder meeting**
Advantages	Fairly easy to set up	Several key stakeholders may be in attendance; may assist with regular information sharing and longer-term sustainability	Focused on the specific project; time to explain details; brings various stakeholders together
Disadvantages	Individual meetings are time consuming	Other items on agenda, so time may be short to engage with stakeholders	Logistically difficult to arrange suitable venue and time; costly

Examples from Responsive Dialogues projects

In the **Malawi** project, the stakeholder engagement was broad and involved policy-makers from the ministries of health, agriculture and environment, scientists working on AMR, medical professionals, veterinary officers, NGO representatives, private sector stakeholders, including drugstore owners, media, visual artists, and local leaders (village chiefs). This broad group took part in the initial workshop that focused on project design, and the dissemination workshop towards the end of the project.

Stakeholders that formed part of the Conversation Events included local leaders, medical professionals, drugstore owners, and veterinary officers. Local leaders were key in negotiating the implementation of solutions in the community. Health professionals and drugstore owners provided information about antibiotic prescribing and usage practices.

In the **Zambia** project, stakeholders were initially identified through the NAP for AMR, and this was followed up with meetings with those whose current work aligned with the goal of the Responsive Dialogues project, that of Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) in women. In addition, health facility staff, particularly the nurse-in-charge, community members, and volunteers helped to map out key stakeholders in the community.

Generally, stakeholders who were engaged in the Responsive Dialogues process were enthusiastic about assisting their communities and played a crucial role in getting their buy-in.

Building relationships with stakeholders

"Stakeholders engaged at this stage may also go on to provide critical input throughout the Responsive Dialogues, for instance, formulating or delivering evidence or messages, or as participants in the events" (Wellcome, 2021).

Keep all stakeholders, and most especially the key stakeholders, regularly informed about the Responsive Dialogues. Apart from maintaining enthusiasm and commitment to the project, this also builds buy-in to take outcomes and outputs forward.

Building relationships with stakeholders is an ongoing process throughout the course of the Responsive Dialogues project, because it can foster change and sustainability, amongst other things.

Tips for building stakeholder relationships

- Set up an **email list** of key stakeholders and use this to regularly inform them about progress (allocate this responsibility to a member of the core implementation team).
- Get a **slot at existing regular meetings**, for example, of an AMR committee or community health committee, to present updates on the Responsive Dialogues.
- Identify ways to **piggy-back meetings** with groups of stakeholders at other events in the country, for example, AMR meetings and conferences, and district/regional health meetings.
- Follow up **individually** with key stakeholders that you haven't been able to engage, and with alternative and new stakeholders.
- Plan follow-up feedback **Stakeholder Workshop/s**.
- Plan a final **Stakeholder Dissemination Workshop** to take place after the Conversation Events. See Module 11 for more details.

Example from a Responsive Dialogues project

In the **Zambia** project, stakeholders played a significant role throughout the project. For example, stakeholder engagement in the groundwork phase included:

- Individual consultations with approximately 28 AMR stakeholders
- Running two Stakeholder Workshops
- Engaging with a wide range of stakeholders from human health and from different sectors in the Responsive Dialogues process.

A follow-up Stakeholder Workshop was held after the wrap up of all Conversation Events. A final dissemination Stakeholder Workshop was held after a major two-day AMR Conference that took place in Lusaka, knowing that many of the stakeholders would be there.

Example of stakeholder engagements throughout the course of the Responsive Dialogues project

When	Example engagements
During groundwork	Individual consultations with stakeholders
	Stakeholder Workshops (as many as necessary to identify and engage stakeholders)
Conversation Events	Engage a wide range of stakeholders from different sectors throughout the course of the Conversation Events
	Invite some key stakeholders to co-creation stage
	Build up contact and the relationship between stakeholders and the relevant community to foster sustainability of solutions
	Regularly report back to key stakeholders on Conversation Events and progress of the project
Post-Conversation Events	Follow-up Stakeholder Workshops after the wrap up of all Conversation Events
	Final dissemination Stakeholder Workshop

How to manage stakeholder challenges?

As you engage with stakeholders you may experience several challenges. It is helpful to be aware of potential areas in advance so you can plan how to navigate them in the best way possible. See *Cross-cutting themes* and Module 6 for more on managing power dynamics.

Some key challenges you may encounter include:

- Stakeholders capturing or diverting the Responsive Dialogues agenda to their own interests
- Power dynamics especially between hierarchies, for example, national-level experts and community leaders; as well as cultural, gender-related, social, and age-related structural ranks
- Conflicting evidence from different stakeholders
- Availability of stakeholders to participate in workshops or other activities
- Payments for stakeholders to take part in activities like workshops or providing input in other ways.

Tips for managing power dynamics

- **Take time to prepare** for Stakeholder Workshops.
- Develop a **design and agenda** and review these. A well-designed and prepared workshop can minimise power dynamics.
- Put **strategies** in place to minimise dominant negative impact on a workshop, for example, break into small groups or pairs to encourage participation by all.
- **Brief dominant stakeholders** beforehand about the importance of hearing every voice in the room. See Modules 6 and 7 for more about briefing experts and stakeholders.
- Ensure that stakeholders are clear about and agree to the **workshop purposes and outcomes**.
- Engage stakeholders in setting **ground rules** which include respect for different points of view, without judgement or critique.
- Take on a more **facilitative role** by encouraging the input of quieter people, summarising comments, and posing questions to deepen input.
- Use written **brainstorming**, make decisions using different types of **voting**, and **record ideas** using flipcharts.

How to monitor stakeholder engagement?

Document and record each step and process you use in the stakeholder engagement process, from the pre-engagement stage, to the engagement stage, to the post-engagement stage! You can, for example, use an Excel sheet to keep track of who has been contacted, by whom, and their responses and follow up actions. This will assist with ongoing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and help to measure and track progress.

Spend time regularly reflecting on how the stakeholder engagement is progressing, and to ask if there are other things you can do to maximise their involvement to meet the objectives of the Responsive Dialogues. This will form part of your M&E process.

Example questions to stimulate reflection

Identifying and selecting stakeholders
- Have we successfully identified all the key stakeholders we want to involve in the Responsive Dialogues? Who is missing?
- Do we need to follow up again with some stakeholders or identify alternatives?
- Have any other stakeholders emerged that we should invite to participate in the Responsive Dialogues process?

Mobilising and involving stakeholders
- Have all identified stakeholders responded to our invitation to participate in the Responsive Dialogues?
- Did they attend Stakeholder Workshops/other events we organised?
- Which stakeholders do we need to reach out to again and what is the best way to inform them about Responsive Dialogues?

Working together
- Which stakeholders have we successfully involved in the Responsive Dialogues process so far?
- Which other stakeholders can we reach out to, to leverage their expertise in the Responsive Dialogues process?

Informing and motivating stakeholders
- How are we communicating with our stakeholders? Which ways are effective (emails, meetings, workshops, WhatsApp groups)? Frequency (how often)?
- What are the improvements we could make with our communication strategy?
- How are stakeholders engaging in taking solutions to policy level?

Checklist of guidance in this module

Tick completed activities/tasks and those that still need completion.

Activities	Yes	To do
A range of stakeholders who are key to the success and sustainability of Responsive Dialogues are identified		
The role each could play in the project and process is determined		
Ways to engage stakeholders and build relationships are explored		
Managing challenges with stakeholder engagement is planned		
Ongoing monitoring of stakeholder engagement is planned and implemented		