Key Findings

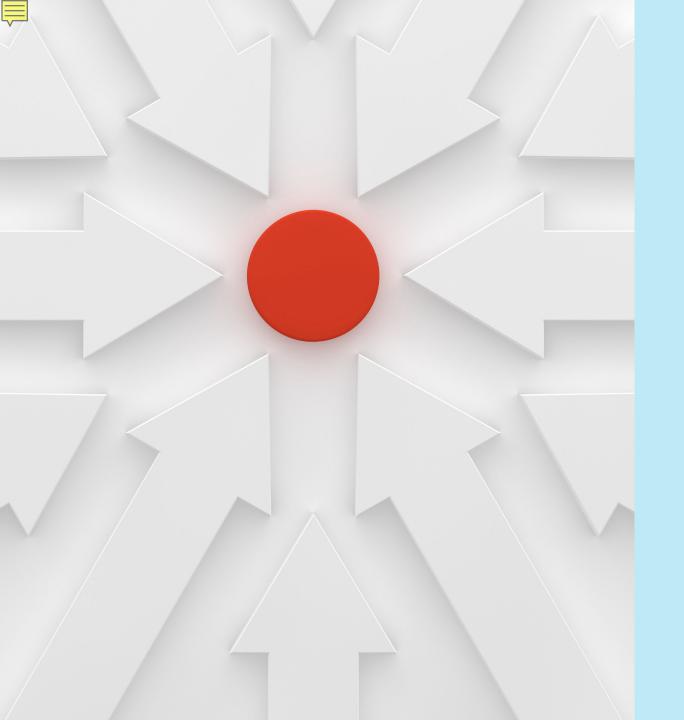## LabCoP Phase 2 Endline Evaluation

BIXAL   29 Nov 2023

Agenda

- Methodology:
  - Document Review and secondary data analysis
  - Survey – good response (n=92)– and thoughtful content
  - Key Informant Interviews (n = 12) – smaller response
- Presentation of main findings and conclusions

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EQ1: Relevance

To what extent has LabCoP achieved its aim and Phase 2 objectives (as described in the Theory of Action and in the yearly objectives), measured by outputs and intermediate outcomes (**increased access to diagnostics, improved patient outcomes, increased laboratory functionality**)? What were additional unintended outputs or outcomes?

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Learning Platform and Community of Practice

"one other change …is how we've been able to push further the relationship between the lab and the clinic. Before there was a big disconnect between the two. So although the two are supposed to work in collaboration, but it was actually almost impossible for the clinic team to engage with the lab team. But this time around, I think it's clear that we have a very good working relationship between the clinic and the lab." Malawi KII.
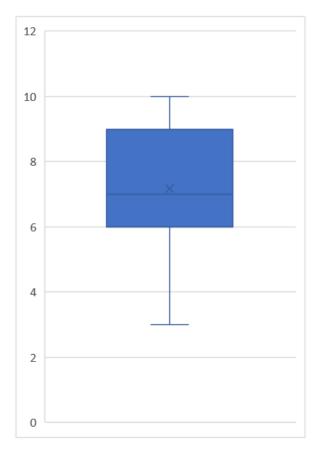
Platform to share experiences

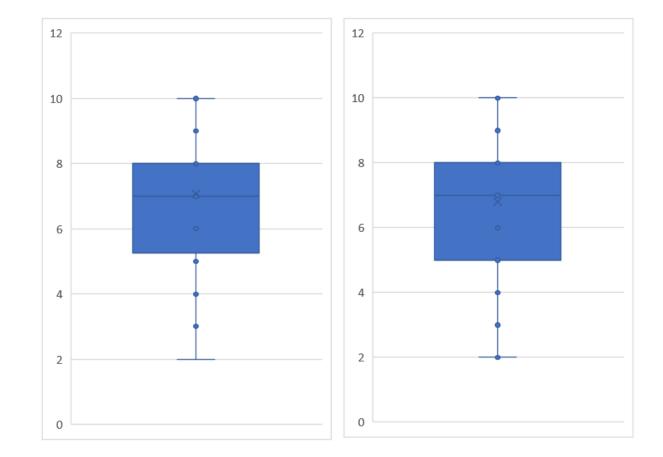Broader scope towards laboratory systems strengthening

Bringing country stakeholders together

Resource center

Survey rating of success in reaching aims & objectives

Respondents opinion on LabCoP reaching its aims and objectives.
Average = 7.17/10
Median = 7

Respondents opinion on contribution of LabCoP towards country VL testing implementation and scale-up.
Average = 7.08/10
Median = 7

Respondents opinion on contribution of LabCoP towards country laboratory systems strenghtening
Average = 6.80/10
Median = 7

Laboratory and technical aspect of LabCoP

Legend: strongly agree ■ | agree ■ | no opinion ■ | disagree ■ | strongly disagree ■

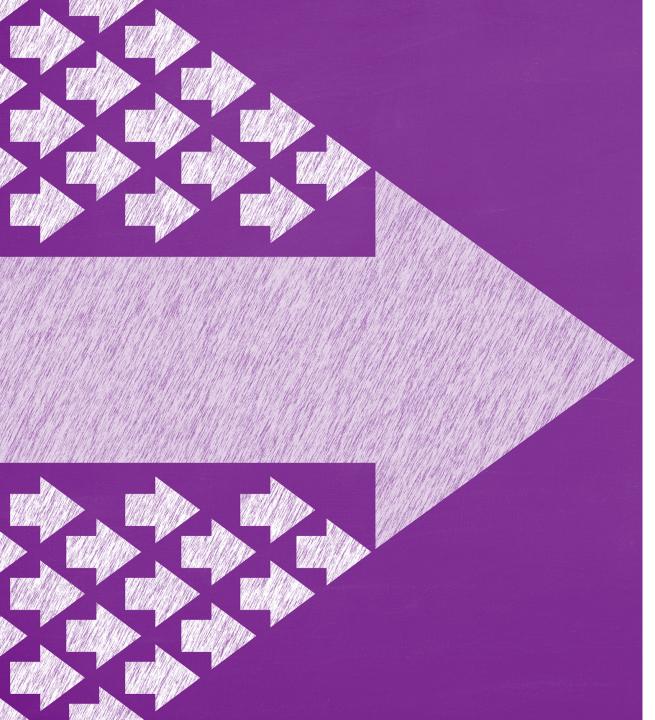| Statement	strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
Results from the country assessments (VL self-assessment, integration readiness assessment) provide useful insights in prioritizing laboratory systems that require strengthening	37	36	6		
I have obtained new information and learned new approaches and solutions on laboratory services and systems during LabCoP activities	31	38	7	2	
The country assessments (VL self-assessment, integration readiness assessment) and workplan activities informed our major laboratory priorities for inclusion in PEPFAR COP and Global Fund funding requests.	31	31	13	3	
I often use the LabCoP resource center to get the latest information on laboratory systems	22	37	11	7	
LabCoP was able to adapt to the specific needs of my country in terms of Laboratory strengthening and VL implementation and scale-up	24	35	17	2	
I feel that my country, in the past 2 years, has improved M&E systems that monitor the national VL testing cascade	23	34	20	1	
LabCoP participation improved clinical outcomes in my country (e.g., more clients with suppressed viral load, fewer clients on second line regimens, increased access to testing, improved quality of life)	19	36	19	4	

Viral Load Self Assessments (10 countries)

Type	Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	difference Baseline - Year 3
Waste Management and Biosafety	2.21	2.95	2.95	3.05	0.84
Sample transportation	2.73	3.20	3.00	3.17	0.43
Demand creation for VL testing	3.28	3.33	3.38	3.56	0.29
Leadership and management	3.55	3.45	3.55	3.80	0.25
Results Utilization	3.17	3.37	3.42	3.42	0.25
Specimen collection and processing	3.23	3.50	3.50	3.33	0.10
VL Testing	3.30	3.28	3.48	3.30	0.00
Supply Chain Mgt and Equipment	3.00	3.05	2.80	2.80	-0.20
Grand Total	3.10	3.28	3.28	3.30	0.19

- Figure 1: Average VL self-assessment scores per sub-domain for LabCoP countries with 4 data points, between 2019 and 2022. (DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe)

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EQ 1: Conclusions

1. LabCoP has established itself as a valuable learning network and resource centre for VL testing and more broadly speaking for laboratory systems strengthening.

2. Different data sources (VL assessment results, survey, KII) suggest that LabCoP has contributed to an increase in the proportion of eligible clients who receive a Viral Load test and to strengthening of laboratory systems in the domains of waste management, sample transportation and Viral Load demand creation.

3. At country level, LabCoPs **unique value add is bringing together all laboratory stakeholders around the laboratory assessments and the country action plans**, that are informing country donor requests.

4. There is a lack of evidence to measure the effects the learning network has on improving clinical outcomes: there are too many other contributing factors and stakeholders who influence that outcome.

EQ2: Effectiveness

What was the effectiveness of the different LabCoP activities and learning approaches in achieving the learning network's aim and objectives?
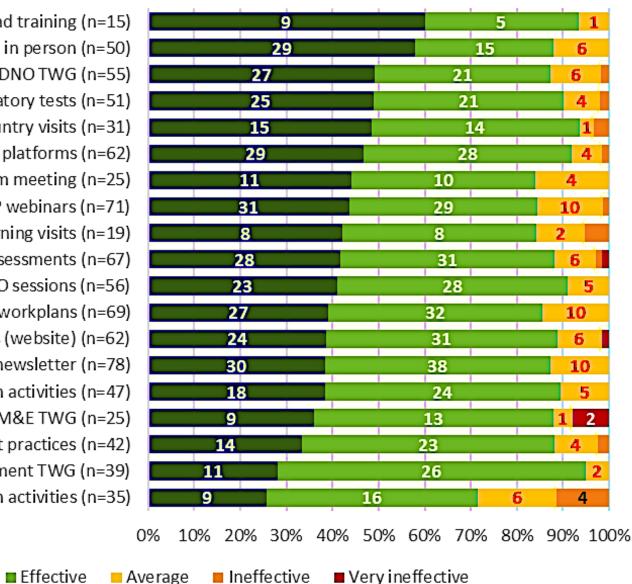
- What was the added value of the activities for the country teams and laboratory technical working groups (see evaluation framework: immediate value, potential value, applied value and realized value)

- How has LabCoP contributed to the capacity of countries' laboratory technical working groups?

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Complementary Learning Activities

Activity	Value
Receiving and reading the LabCoP newsletter	85%, 78
LabCoP webinars	78%, 71
developing country specific action plans/workplans	78%, 69
country level laboratory systems assessments	75%, 67
Accessing or using online resources (website)	68%, 63
WhatsApp discussion platforms	68%, 62
DNO TWG	65%, 57
ECHO sessions	63%, 57
Integration of laboratory tests	62%, 56
annual meeting attended in person	58%, 52
Demand creation activities	56%, 50
Waste management TWG	52%, 47
accessed or used a cookbook of best practices	46%, 42
Small grants for workplan activities	40%, 36
LabCoP country visits	34%, 31
M&E TWG	31%, 28
Laboratory Directors' forum meeting	27%, 25
South 2 South learning visits	21%, 19
LabNet Lead training	17%, 15

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Perceived Effectiveness of Different Learning Activities

Activity	Very effective	Effective	Average	Ineffective	Very ineffective
LabNet Lead training (n=15)	9	5	1		
annual meeting attended in person (n=50)	29	15	6		
DNO TWG (n=55)	27	21	6		
Integration of laboratory tests (n=51)	25	21	4		
LabCoP country visits (n=31)	15	14	1		
WhatsApp discussion platforms (n=62)	29	28	4		
Laboratory Directors' forum meeting (n=25)	11	10	4		
LabCoP webinars (n=71)	31	29	10		
South 2 South learning visits (n=19)	8	8	2		
country level laboratory systems assessments (n=67)	28	31	6		
ECHO sessions (n=56)	23	28	5		
developing country specific action plans/workplans (n=69)	27	32	10		
Accessing or using online resources (website) (n=62)	24	31	6		
Receiving and reading the LabCoP newsletter (n=78)	30	38	10		
Demand creation activities (n=47)	18	24	5		
M&E TWG (n=25)	9	13	1		2
accessed or used a cookbook of best practices (n=42)	14	23	4		
Waste management TWG (n=39)	11	26	2		
Small grants for workplan activities (n=35)	9	16	6	4	

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Very effective ■ Effective ■ Average ■ Ineffective ■ Very ineffective

Online Learning Activities & Resource Center

- Valuable content on a broad range of laboratory strengthening topics.

- New technical information and updates are especially appreciated.

- Competing priorities and activities.

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LabNet Lead Training

- Participants from Zimbabwe and Malawi appreciated and valued the training

- Demand from other countries to receive the training.

- Heavy investment in resources and staff time

- Not a usual COP learning activity

- Evaluation of impact is important

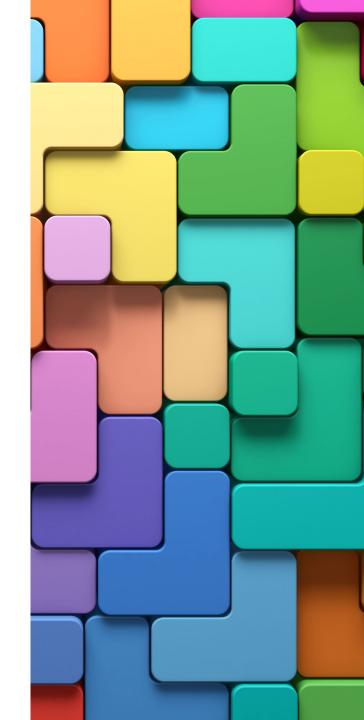- Collaboration with other organizations?

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South to South Learning Visits

- Often requested by respondents.
- Provide opportunity for deep learning and exchange
- Expensive.
- More general: request for more individual country activities: smaller meetings.
- Example of Link and Learn Sessions from SSLN (HIV prevention) network

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Support to Country Teams and Country Level Activities

- Country level activities (assessments and work planning) are unique LabCoP value adds

- Strengthened country teams and TWG

- Request for additional support for these activities:

  - Active facilitation by LabCoP staff

  - Follow-up of implementation

  - More regular reviews

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In-Person Meetings

- Respondents consistently reported these as important—perceived as more effective learning strategy as compared to webinars.
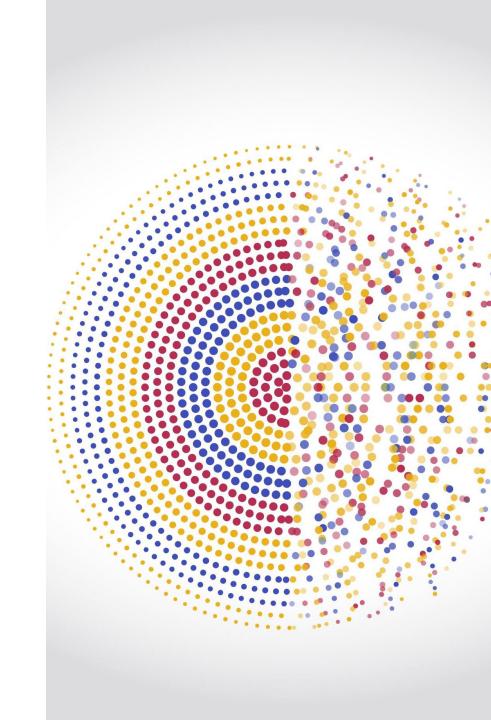
- Building trust and rapport

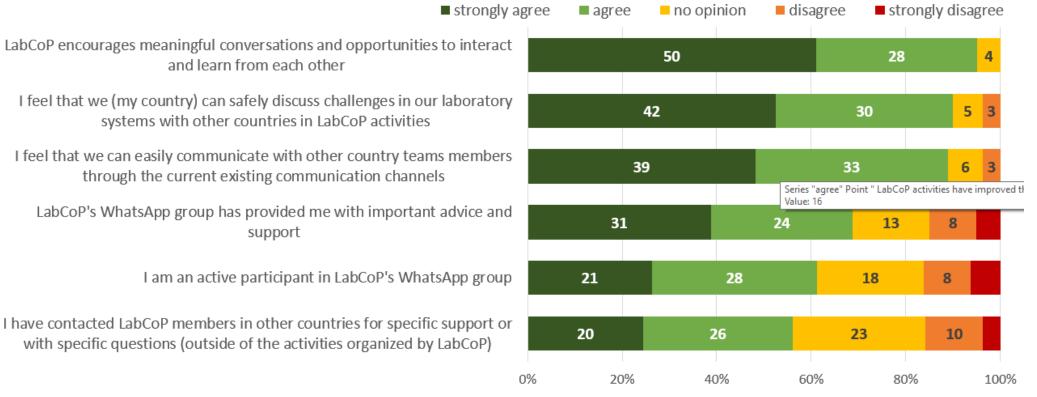- Deeper encounters and learning.

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Financial Support for Implementation of Country Workplans

- Remains a challenge for some countries, especially for diseases outside the scope of PEPFAR and The Global Fund

- Many West-African countries mention supply chain challenges and stock-outs.

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Communication and Learning

- Very positive and supportive learning culture.

- All respondents agreed that they are comfortable sharing challenges and appreciate LabCoP's open culture.

LabCoP communications - all respondents, October 2023

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EQ 2: Conclusions

1. LabCoP offers a broad range of learning activities that complement each other. Most of the activities are perceived as being effective.

2. The online activities (webinars, echo sessions), are effective in reaching a large audience and in providing country teams with updated technical information and best practices.

3. Respondents have a clear preference for in-person activities, important to build rapport and trust, and that there is more opportunity for deep learning and meaningful country exchange.

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EQ 2: Conclusions Continued

4. Respondents appreciate smaller country to country learning activities like S2S country visits, and in-country meetings (self assessments, workplans). They indicate that in-country activities have strengthened the country teams and laboratory technical working groups. Using the SSLN link and learn approach might be a good approach to cost-effectively increase this type of activities.

5. The LabNet lead training is perceived as being very effective, but it is a resource- and time-consuming activity. It would be wise to evaluate the effectiveness of the training on country level laboratory systems, and to collaborate with other partners in offering this type of learning activity.
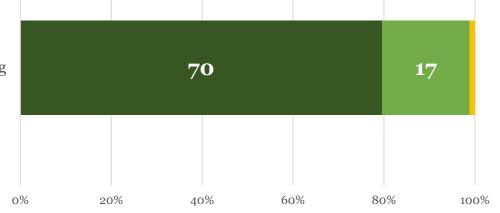
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EQ4: Future

- **What are the views of LabCoP participants and stakeholders on the future directions of the learning network after the end of phase 2?**

- **How valuable is the learning network for stakeholders and participants?**

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It is important to continue LabCoP

It is important for the LabCoP member countries to continue participating in LabCoP or a similar learning network after the end of the project

70   **17**

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

- LabCoP has become an important actor for laboratory systems strengthening
- Country level activities are becoming internalized by country teams and TWG – these might continue even without donor funding

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Future Directions

- Focus on Laboratory Systems Strengthening
- Additional focus on West-Africa and Francophone countries.
- Continued focus on M&E activities (broadly speaking)
    - Laboratory information management systems (LIMS) (including specimen tracking, client follow-up systems, …),
    - Integration of LMIS and Electronic Medical Records (EMR)
    - Laboratory mapping (GIS)
    - community monitoring systems (community based VL monitoring methods)
    - Improved follow-up of LabCoP country workplans and results
    - Continuous evaluation of LabCoP activities
    - Data analysis for decision making
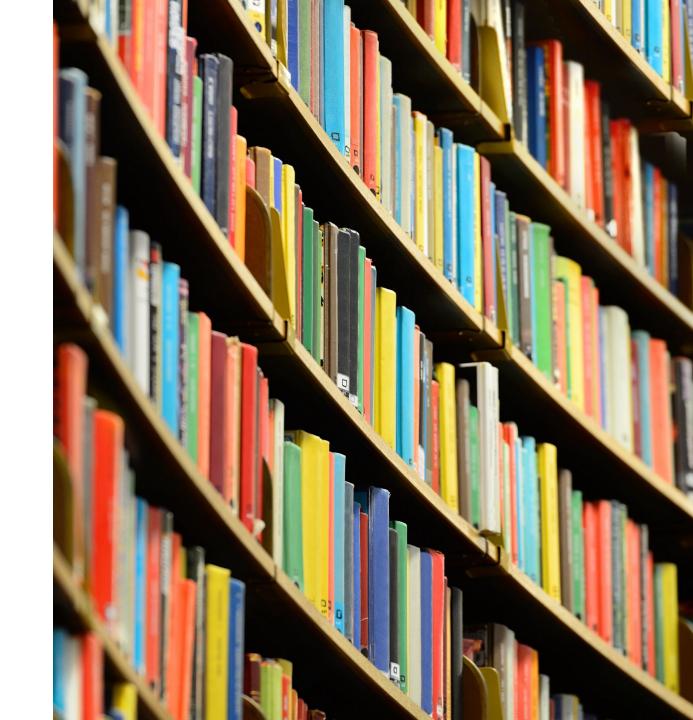   - Operational research activities

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Future Directions cont.

- Expressed need/demand for more formal training activities like LabNet Lead. Or more broadly professional development.

- More active involvement of civil society and community organizations in LabCoP activities/decision making.

- LabCoP Learning approaches

  - Continue with current range of (complementary) learning activities.

  - More country-to-country learning opportunities

  - Bigger focus on capacity strengthening of country teams

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Topics for Learning

- Diagnostic Network Optimization

- Viral Load Results and clinical implications/clinical management

- Supply Chain Management

- Diagnostic integration

- Waste management

- Virological failure and Drug Resistance

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EQ 4: Conclusions

1. All respondents feel that LabCoP is a valuable learning network that supports laboratory systems strengthening and that should continue to provide support to cross country learning and country level implementation.

2. Country level learning activities like the laboratory assessments and the work planning are starting to be internalised by the country teams and Technical Working Groups. But there is still additional support and capacity building required.

3. LabCoP should focus on laboratory systems strengthening broadly.

4. A continued focus on broad M&E activities and support both at LabCoP level (better documentation of progress and implementation, more continuous evaluation of learning activities (e.g. LabNet Lead training effectiveness), as well as at country level (Laboratory Information Management Systems broadly speaking.

5. Diagnostic Network Optimization, test result management and clinical use of test results, supply chain management and waste management are the most requested topics for future learning activities.

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