



MicroResearch Virtual Train the Trainer Report

Malawi



MicroResearch Train the Trainer Virtual workshop with participants from Mangochi, Malawi

December 8, 10, and 11, 2020



Background

In response to the impact of COVID-19 on the ability to carry out in-person workshops and in order to familiarize future coaches, teachers, and organizers at new sites, a virtual MR Train-the-Trainers (TtT) workshop was developed and piloted in December, 2020.

The purpose of this virtual workshop for Malawi was to familiarize future coaches, teachers, and workshop organizers with the MicroResearch program and workshop structure. While an orientation for coaches and teachers is typically offered immediately before and during an on-site workshop, the TtT workshop provided that information on a virtual platform. The TtT workshop also assessed the quality of two-way internet communication at the host site.

MicroResearch Train-the-trainer (TtT) Workshop

Given the importance of coaches and co-teachers in a traditional MicroResearch workshop, the TtT sessions allowed us to illustrate the role co-teachers play. To accomplish these goals, we employed a 3-day compressed version of the traditional 10-day workshop. The Hub MicroResearch site in Mbarara Uganda played an important role in coordinating and informing the Malawi site on issues that may arise from an African perspective.

The host organizer in Malawi, Towela Maleta, had experience with the MicroResearch program as an organizer of a workshop in Blantyre in 2016. She will also coordinate the virtual MicroResearch Training workshop in January 2021. Participants will comprise members of Mangochi District Management and implementation teams. The program is funded by Forgarty NIH and implemented by College of Medicine. The aim of the TtT workshop was to train and recruit coaches and co-teachers at this site who were not familiar with MicroResearch.

MicroResearch TtT Workshop Facilitators

Bob Bortolussi and Noni MacDonald led the virtual presentations with help from:

- Canadian teachers: Beth Cummings, Linda Dodds, and Audrey Steenbeek
- Ugandan Hub Organizer: Teddy Kyomuhangi
- Malawian Organizer: Towela Maleta

Objectives

The objectives for this MR Train the Trainer Workshop were to:

1. To familiarize future coaches, teachers, and organizers with the MicroResearch program, including workshop organization, the roles of the volunteers, and the educational materials.
2. To troubleshoot issues with the virtual setting, such as IT and connectivity issues.
3. To meet future coaches at the Mangochi site and meet those who would co-teach certain modules at a traditional MR workshop.
4. To understand any additional infrastructure support needs to organize virtual workshops.

Preparation before Workshop

Prior to the workshop:

- Canadian TtT organizers developed teaching material for TtT sessions,
- Canadian TtT organizer recruited Canadian and African co-teachers
- Malawi organizer recruited training participants from the Manochi site
- Malawi organizer developed a schedule for training sessions
- Malawi participants were instructed to register with the MicroResearch Curriculum and download and review workshop materials, including power point presentations.
- Malawi organizer provided local venue site in Manochi for meetings and attempted to provide better internet access to participants

Participants and Pre-assessment

Ten (10) Malawi participants were recruited for the TtT workshop in Mangochi, Malawi (Appendix 1). The timing, time commitment, pre-requisites etc. were discussed. Four of the 10 completed a pre-workshop assessment (Appendix 2). None had participated in a MicroResearch workshop in the past, but all were considering becoming a coach and/or co-teacher. All of the respondents had an interest in community-focused research and a hope to acquire skills to enhance this possibility.

Program Overview

The TtT program was divided into three sessions to accommodate the scheduling needs of participants in Malawi. The focus of the workshop was to allow participants to become familiar with MicroResearch and the roles they might play as a coach or co-teacher in a 2-week full training workshop for community-based research.

Part I (December 8) The first session was designed to introduce principles of MicroResearch and what's been found important for success. Discussions centered on what is needed for a good team and what we hope for from the coaches. Teddy Kyomangi and Beth Cummings provided insights for this and a helpful document on goals for a MR coach.

Part II (December 10) Provided an overview of the Building Blocks that researchers need for success, skill in methods and also on how to prepare and complete research in an ethical and successful manner. Linda Dodds and Audrey Steenbeek joined for this session, helping to explain the Qualitative and Quantitative tools.

Part III (December 11) This session focused on how research is communicated successfully to communities, policy makers, scientists, etc. At the end of this session we took a screen shot of participants and received final comments. Evaluation submissions were welcomed and participants offered a certificate for participating and providing feedbacks.

Participants were not required to complete any assignments during the workshop.

Workshop Evaluation

An assessment of the workshop was obtained using structured evaluation forms submitted with 7 of 10 participants completing the form. The scores and summary of comments from the workshop evaluation are presented in Appendix 3.

Key points to note:

- Many comments were on the poor quality of internet access to the curriculum and quality of the Zoom call.
- The lecture material and presenters were rated highly.
- Several commented on poor quality of internet access and hence limitation for two-way communication suggesting small assignments to encourage active participation.
- Participants valued the goal of developing quality community-focused research.
- The 3-day time frame worked well for the participants

From a student TtT participant: *“The workshop has opened my eyes as an upcoming researcher. More knowledge has been gained greatly and because I am a student, this has been timely.”*

From a senior TtT participant: *“Good project for capacity building in primary health care where there is usually a gap in research.”*

Recommendations:

Administration:

1. Site coordinator must ensure open, clear and frank communication exists between the host site(s), MR Hub site and MicroResearch in Canada.
2. Emails and phone messages should have a response within 24 hr.
3. Planning meeting schedules should be adhered to.
4. Following the TtT workshop planning details for a 2-week workshop should be developed, including:
 - Develop best timing for full workshop
 - Delegating teaching, coaching and judging responsibilities.

Quality of IT Support and Technology:

1. Provide set of standards for equipment (e.g. MiFi) and bandwidth requirements for participant access. Ask local organizer to test compliance and quality for the tutorial with MR Hub IT specialist a week prior.
2. Before each session, should establish login 15-30 minutes before each session.
3. Need good IT primer document for technical challenges problem solving (e.g. FAQ) and clear process if unanticipated problems develop.
4. If more than one participant are in a common room, each person should use a headset so audio will not echo.

5. To ensure adequate internet connection is maintained during a power outage, secure access to a generator for electrical back-up, or that one or more fully charged laptops are available for each group/team before each session.

Improve Virtual Interaction:

1. Introductions: as each person introduces themselves, write name and role in the chat.
2. Learn to use breakout session with a small group. Practice to ensure people are familiar with this. Having participants in a few rooms in groups, or alone in an office or home is preferred to minimize internet issues around sound/sound feedback etc.
3. Familiarize participants with chat option on Zoom option.

Internet Use

1. Local site organizers should ensure participants have adequate connectivity, laptop computers, headsets and video cameras. Smart phones are not adequate due to their limitations in sharing screens, etc.
2. Ensure everyone has skills to access literature searching: Hinari, PubMed etc. A medical librarian should be invited to Session I to help plan searches and explain access if possible .

Program Logistics

1. Criteria for participation should be established to become coach or co-teacher.
2. Pre-Registration time should be extended and become a requirement to ensure participants have good internet access and minimize last minute drop outs.
3. Local sites should set a list of confirmed and standby attendees to fill in the drop outs. They should rank potential participants in the order of who to prioritize.
4. Site coordinator should pretest each participants' audio and Zoom connections.
5. Establish login 15-30 minutes before each session.
6. The pre- and post-workshop evaluation should ensure participant's anonymity. E.g. use an online survey tool (e.g. Google Forms or Select Survey). Strategies of how to ensure all participants complete the evaluation are needed.
7. Include a photo consent disclaimer on first slide of PowerPoint for screenshots taken of the Zoom group.

Respectfully submitted



Robert Bortolussi
MicroResearch
Dalhousie University