

# USAID LEARN's Approaches to Help Participants Internalize Data

There is a [growing body of evidence](#) suggesting that people struggle to actually use data and evidence to inform their decisions. While there are a number of reasons for this, one of the main reasons is that teams and organizations often fail to internalize the data and evidence they have. If people don't interpret or reflect upon their data, they are much less likely to use it to inform their decisions. Through our experience, we know that facilitating fun and engaging group reflection is one way to enable teams to interpret their data, build team cohesion, and take collective action.

Below is a matrix of three interactive approaches to data internationalization that you can apply in your work. The three approaches are relevant to both qualitative and quantitative data and have been used by USAID LEARN to internalize and apply what we've learned from our data. There are any number of approaches that can be used but these are some of the most easy to understand if you're new to facilitation or helping others internalize data.

Our ability to manage adaptively hinges on our ability to interpret and apply data and evidence. Therefore it is important to match the facilitation exercise to the type of data you have and the purpose of your session in order to facilitate meaningful participation. Questions to consider before using the Data Internalization Matrix:

1. What type of data do you have?
2. How should the data be presented so it's engaging?
3. How much time do you have with the participants?
4. What do you need the participants to do? Do they need to make decisions, take action, simply understand for general awareness, etc? What are your intended outcomes for sharing the data?

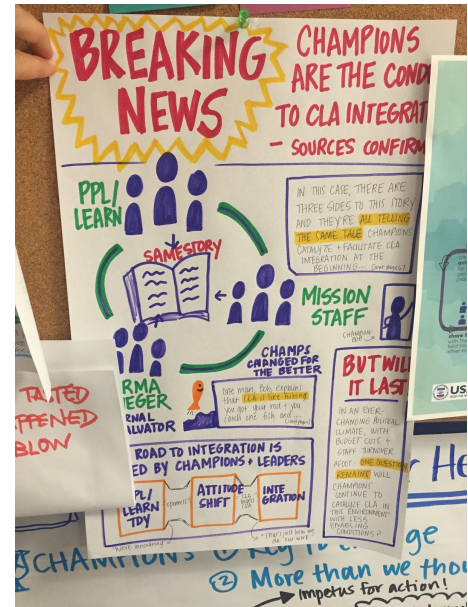
### Headlines

**Description:** Participants internalize data by developing the front page of a newspaper that highlights their key takeaways from the data.

**Type of data:**  
Both qualitative and quantitative

**Sample facilitation plan:**

- Sharing of information/data - timing will depend on the amount of data that need to be shared
- Individual Reflection - ask each individual to take about 10 minutes to:
  - Review the data (powerpoint handouts or data placemats)
  - Develop the cover of a newspaper by reflecting on these questions: What's the lead story here? What are our key takeaways that need to be reinforced?
- Group work
  - Divide room up into 4-5 groups (depending on the number of people attending)
  - Ask each group to take about 20 minutes to design one group newspaper cover on a piece of flipchart paper by synthesizing and identifying common themes across the individual work that was done
- Gallery walk
  - Have each team post their flip charts on the wall and ask people to walk around and review the headlines. One member from the group can stay behind to explain the headlines. Provide post-it notes for participants to leave comments on each group's flip chart. Make sure people rotate throughout the room. Approximately 10 minutes.
- Group share back for approximately 10-15 minutes
  - Reflect: What's the same? What's different? Are there any contradictions in headlines? Any similarities rise to the top?



**Other facilitation tips:**

- Give participants quiet individual time to digest data and ask clarifying questions before starting the activity. You might consider sharing the data in an earlier session (in a data placemat, PPT, etc.). If you do that, make sure to refresh participants on the data before they do the headlines activity.
- For individual reflection, use 11 x 17 pieces of paper to give participants the space they need to capture key points ("breaking news") from the data.
- This activity is best for larger groups (7+) so multiple perspectives on the data can be shared.
- Encourage participants to have fun and be creative with their headlines, news stories, visualizations of the data etc.
- Give participants the opportunity to share with a partner or in small groups as well as the opportunity to share key points in a large group.
- After the activity, display the headlines somewhere in your office to reinforce the takeaways from the activity.

### Quotables

**Description:** Participants internalize qualitative data by matching quotes to the stakeholder group to gain a deeper understanding of various perspectives.

**Type of Data:** Qualitative

**Sample facilitation plan:**

- The facilitator provides a data placemat with quotes on one side of the paper and stakeholder groups on the other.
- Participants are asked to match the stakeholder group to the quote by drawing a line between them (see image below). This will help participants internalize perspectives.
- Participants can do this individually or in pairs depending on time available and session objectives.
- Provide the answer key for participants to review.
- Small or large group dialogue with prompting reflection questions, such as:
  - Which answers surprised you?
  - What reinforced what you already knew about a stakeholder’s perspective?

**Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid**  
 Quotables Exercise | [Hudson, 2018](#) | USAID LEARN  
 Directions: Match the quote with the person who said it. Answer key is on the back.

**Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid**  
 Answer Key | [Hudson, 2018](#) | USAID LEARN

The placemats show five quotes on the left and five stakeholder groups on the right. Lines in the answer key connect the quotes to the correct stakeholder groups:

- Quote: "There is a responsibility for foreigners to quiet their voice. Calm down and visit and get to know the people. Don't run in with your own agenda." → Local citizen in country where aid is being delivered
- Quote: "I would propose (to my work team) that, although we conduct participatory monitoring and evaluation for all our projects, now more than ever I have realized that numbers are irrelevant because you can't read people's feelings through them. Sometimes, in order to really understand the other person's feelings and perceptions, it's important just to listen to them." → NGO staff member in the United States
- Quote: "Our international friends said they would serve, but they didn't, so there is a distance between them and my people. People now realize they are not here to help. No one is listening to us and we want to express our views." → Aid provider
- Quote: "For four days I was a student, and all the people were my teachers." → Researcher on the Listening Project
- Quote: "We are in a failing business if we are looking to understand and document only things that are projected and immediately observable. We are missing the larger picture of development." → Local religious leader in country where aid is being delivered

**Other tips:**

- When pulling together the quotes, choose those that can be generally anonymized. When labeling different perspectives, be as specific as possible (for example: use “local leaders” rather than “beneficiary.”)
- Begin the session with the data placemats flipped upside down so that you have everyone’s attention while you are giving instructions.
- Give participants quiet individual time to read through the quotes and match them with the correct perspective.
- Have them share their responses with a partner or in small groups before looking at the answer key.
- Give the partners and small groups guiding questions to talk through as they share their responses.
- Have everyone reveal the correct response at the same time. Get the groups reactions and compare the reality to what participants thought were the correct answers.
- This activity works best when there are multiple, often conflicting perspectives to take into account. Debrief about the activity and how perspective matching can be a useful data internalization practice.

### Mad Libs

**Description:** Participants internalize data by selecting the numbers they believe would accurately complete the sentence.

**Type of data:** Quantitative

**Sample facilitation plan:**

- **Set-up:**
  - On flip charts, facilitator writes out key data points with blank spaces where numbers can be filled in by participants.
  - All participants receive a stack of post-its or index cards with possible answers.
- **Individual or pair reflection and sharing answers**
  - Facilitator instructs participants to use their post-its or index cards to fill in the blanks on the flip charts. Not all post-its or index cards will be used. Participants can work alone or in pairs.
- **Group reveal**
  - Once participants place all their post-its or cards, facilitator goes to each flipchart moving with the group of participants and reveals the correct answer to the mad lib.
  - Facilitator notes where there are major discrepancies in what participants guessed vs. the actual answers or similarities. The facilitator asks reflective questions during the debrief, such as: what accounts for these discrepancies? Do the correct answers surprise you? Why or why not?

**Other facilitation tips:**

- This activity is better experienced standing up and moving around the room—have flipcharts hanging with the MadLibs. Make sure to write in large print for people to stand back and read the flipcharts.
- Provide each participant a deck of options to fill in the MadLibs (you can include options that won't get used), but don't provide too many because people will need time to consider options. Use stick post-its or provide index cards and tape.
- Once everyone posts their responses, review each flipchart one by one. Reveal the correct response. Get reactions and compare the correct answer to what people thought was the correct answer.
- You can have people work in pairs and debate their selections before placing them.
- This exercise works best when the data is surprising or is not aligned with what people would commonly expect. It provides an "ah-ha" moment that makes them question what they know.
- If you don't have enough preparation time, you can also do this exercise on paper similar to this example (possible answers are on the left and MadLibs or fill in the blanks on the right; participants use numbers on the left to fill in the blank on the right):

### WHO CARES? IMPORTANCE OF GENDER IN DEVELOPMENT

Mad Libs Exercise | Humentum 2018 | USAID LEARN

Instructions: Select numbers from the table below to fill in blanks in the text. Answer key is on the back.

3,000	37,000	90	80	100-150 million	20
200 million	30-40	1 billion	10 trillion	10	5
95	50	13	25	3	36

**Reality:**

1. The estimated annual value of women's unpaid work is \_\_\_\_\_% of global GDP.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ girls under age 18 are married off every day.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ girls and women in 30 countries have been subjected to female genital mutilation / cutting.
4. \_\_\_\_\_% of working women are in vulnerable employment situations, often unprotected by labor laws.
5. In developing economies, women are \_\_\_\_\_% less likely than men to have an account at a formal financial institution.

**What is Possible:**

1. When \_\_\_\_\_% more girls go to school, a country's GDP increases by an average of \_\_\_\_%.
2. Girls and women spend \_\_\_\_\_% of their earned income on their families, while men spend only \_\_\_\_\_%.
3. Eliminating barriers to employment for girls and women could raise labor productivity by \_\_\_\_\_% in some countries.
4. Closing the gender gap in agriculture could lift \_\_\_\_\_ people out of hunger.



