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KIKUNDI
ANNUAL
REPORT



FOREWARD

The World Health Organization Roadmap 2021-2030 on Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) aims to achieve important NTD control and elimination milestones by 2030. Accelerating programmatic action, intensifying cross-cutting approaches, and changing operating models and culture to facilitate country ownership have been identified as key target areas for success.

As stewards of NTD programs, African Program Managers have a key role to play in the realization of these targets. Through Kikundi, the first African Community of Practice for NTD Program Managers, Program Managers have a unique opportunity to come together, pool their expertise, and assist one another in the implementation of NTD program innovations. The professional development activities offered through Kikundi have also provided Program Managers a rare opportunity to strengthen their skills in leadership, program management, monitoring and evaluation, and other areas critical to NTD program success.

Since its launch one year ago, Kikundi has been working with a growing number of Program Managers from across the continent in the fight against NTDs. Many programs have created strong working relationships with one another, reflecting new cross-border collaborations and resource sharing. This report describes the progress of Kikundi over the past year and sheds light on the experiences of Program Managers.

We look forward to sharing more Kikundi success stories with the NTD community in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Dr. George Kabona
Kikundi Leadership Council Chair

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ABBREVIATIONS

CoP	Community of practice
COR-NTD	Coalition for Operational Research on NTDs
ESPEN	Expanded Special Project for Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases
MDA	Mass drug administration
MMDP	Morbidity management and disability prevention
NTD	Neglected tropical diseases

PARTNERS





Kikundi connects NTD
Program Managers from
across Africa to lead
countries towards a healthier
future free of NTDs.

ABOUT KIKUNDI

More than one billion people – one-sixth of the world's population – are infected with at least one neglected tropical disease (NTD), a group of communicable diseases that disproportionately affect communities without access to safe water, sanitation, and housing.¹ A primary method for controlling or interrupting transmission of several NTDs is mass drug administration (MDA) campaigns, large public health campaigns that reach billions of people annually.² The success of these programs is due in part to the tireless work of NTD Program Managers who lead complex efforts to plan, implement, evaluate, and supervise MDA and other NTD program activities.

In 2019, during a global NTD meeting, a group of NTD Program Managers met and identified key challenges in their professional work that serve as barriers to program implementation. Specifically, the Program Managers highlighted a lack of collaboration, despite working on similar NTD programming across countries. They envisioned a platform aimed at strengthening their community through peer learning, mentorship, training, and professional development opportunities. Establishing a Community of Practice (CoP), which provides individuals with opportunities for collective and social learning, was identified as a specific strategy to overcome these challenges and support Program Managers in achieving their professional and programmatic goals.

Program Managers are national-level personnel who provide strategic, technical, and operational oversight of their countries' NTD control or elimination programs.

Kikundi is a CoP through which African NTD Program Managers can learn from one another in-person and online and collaborate in the pursuit of reaching national and global NTD benchmarks. The Kikundi online platform provides Program Managers, specifically those who focus on preventive chemotherapy NTDs, access to up-to-date NTD professional development and training resources, group problem-solving forums, direct messaging, and other tools to advance their technical and professional goals. Through these resources, Kikundi fosters collaborative decision-making and network-building to solve common NTD implementation and management challenges.

Kikundi plays a critical role in achieving the 2021-2030 NTD Roadmap by supporting and investing in NTD Program Managers, country ownership, and cross-sector collaboration necessary for effective NTD program delivery.

KIKUNDI MEMBERSHIP

Kikundi is a Kiswahili word meaning *group* and the logo is an adinkra symbol from Ghana signifying *unity* and *community*. The name and logo were developed using a collaborative process during which Program Managers suggested names and voted on nominations. As a pan-African network, the CoP unites NTD leaders from across Africa, reflecting the unity among Program Managers in the fight against NTDs.

The CoP was launched in May 2021. National NTD Coordinators from all African



countries have been invited to join, and Coordinators are welcome to invite other national-level NTD leadership within their Ministries of Health to join the CoP as well. Currently, there are 45 Program Manager members in the CoP, representing 27 African countries. Kikundi membership is currently 71% male and 29% female. About 75% of Kikundi members hold a Masters degree and over 42% hold a doctoral/medical degree. About 79% of Kikundi members have spent more than two years in their current Program Manager positions. Kikundi members are based throughout Africa; 38% of members are based in West Africa, 33% in East Africa, 20% in Southern Africa, 7% in Central Africa, and 2% in North Africa.



Click to watch the Kikundi Introductory Video

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/newsroom/topics/ntds/index.html>,
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6082091/>

² <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/who-wer9638-468-475/>

KIKUNDI MEMBER COUNTRIES



KIKUNDI LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Kikundi is led by a Leadership Council comprised of Program Managers with representation from across the African region, including Anglophone, Lusophone, and Francophone countries. The Council meets quarterly to make key decisions about Kikundi activities, improvements to the CoP platform, and strategic partnership decisions. In addition, a separate Kikundi Advisory Committee is comprised of members from key

African institutions who have expertise in NTDs, CoPs, advocacy, or other pertinent topics. The role of the Advisory Committee is to review user metrics, provide advice, and offer feedback to CoP Leadership. Membership in both the Leadership Council and Advisory Committee are rotating, with biannual elections.



*Dr. Sultani Hadley
Matendechemo, Inaugural
Leadership Council Chair*



*Dr. George Kabona,
Current Leadership
Council Chair*



*Dr. Tuduetso Molefi,
Current Leadership
Council Co-Chair*

KIKUNDI PARTNERS

Kikundi is developed and managed by a Development Team, a partnership between the University of Washington School of Public Health in Seattle, Washington,

USA and The University of Global Health Equity in Butaro, Rwanda. Manta Ray Media provides ongoing support in digital design and web development.



THE KIKUNDI EXPERIENCE



KIKUNDI DIGITAL PLATFORM

The Kikundi platform is a web-based engagement center with numerous interactive features, including a suite of relevant NTD resources and links to partner websites, a calendar of NTD-related events, courses in global health and NTD leadership, as well as a rich communication portal for collaboration and group problem-solving. Prior to the launch of the CoP, the platform underwent a rigorous co-design process with support from the inaugural Leadership Council to ensure that the digital platform fully reflected Program Manager needs and preferences. An Android mobile app was launched in May 2022 to increase the ease of use of the platform in the field. After one year of using Kikundi, 71% of Program Managers identified the resource page as one of their three favorite features of the CoP, 58% identified program updates, and 46% identified discussion forums and the events page.

IN THE FIRST YEAR OF KIKUNDI...

- ▲ 45 Program Managers were onboarded to the Kikundi platform
- ▲ 87 resources were added to the Kikundi resource page
- ▲ Program Managers engaged in 214 forum discussions
- ▲ A total of 128 Program Manager updates were shared from 17 countries

AVERAGE MONTHLY PLATFORM ENGAGEMENT DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF KIKUNDI



Kikundi has supported 22 different Program Managers to enroll in free leadership, project management, economic evaluation, and monitoring and evaluation courses.

STRENGTHENING NTD LEADERSHIP WITH CONTINUED EDUCATION

Kikundi provides Program Managers access to a suite of free online professional development courses offered by the University of Washington. A total of 14 Program Managers completed 10-week online courses in Leadership and Management in Health and Monitoring and Evaluation in Global Health. A total of 21 Program Managers are currently enrolled in Economic Evaluation in Global Health and Project Management in Global Health courses. These courses cover topics that are critical for NTD leaders, including team-building, super-

vision and delegation, financial management, data for decision-making, development of evaluation plans, data analysis, and more. Through these courses, Program Managers have an opportunity to earn a first-of-its-kind Certificate in NTD Leadership. A series of additional professional and technical capacity-building webinars are being developed to meet other professional development needs identified by Program Managers during annual evaluations of the platform.

Quotes from course participants

"[The most helpful thing I learned is] the concept of managing partners. Partners have their own interests, even the planned outcomes they have for themselves - which they need to report on. Trying to understand partners and trying to provide what I need to achieve as a program has helped me mobilize more resources."
– Participant in the Leadership & Management course

"My program has worked on many surveys over the years but we as a government relied on the expertise of the NGOs. This course has given me a lot of knowledge in implementing upcoming TAS, impact assessments, and other monitoring activities." – Participant in the Monitoring and Evaluation course

"[This course] has affected my professional development. I have been a manager for some years and I also have experience of taking seminars on leadership. This course was about standardizing how a leader should be. I have seen differences with human resources, partners, and even the Program Managers I interact with. I feel more like a manager than ever before." – Participant in the Leadership & Management course

"The method for M&E framework I learned is now being used to help develop the NTDs master plan." – Participant in the Monitoring and Evaluation course

STIMULATING COMMUNITY CONVERSATION & ADVOCACY

Kikundi holds quarterly virtual "community conversations" for Program Managers to discuss various topics of importance, with the goal of fostering collaborative learning and assistance. These conversations are led by Program Managers who propose topics and volunteer to lead each session. During the first conversation, Program Managers reflected upon the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their programs and their experiences in implementing activities in the context of the pandemic. The second conversation featured a discussion about the impact of the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office funding cuts on

country NTD program activities, highlighting the effect of the cuts on their activities and discussing opportunities to address the impact. The third conversation included a discussion about the lessons learned during the 2021 Kikundi site visit to Rwanda, during which participating Program Managers shared their experiences and knowledge gained with their colleagues. The fourth conversation was focused on challenges in vector control, during which Program Managers shared experiences and advice on conducting vector surveillance, vector control, and procuring funds to implement vector control activities.



Participants in the 2021 Kikundi site visit in Rwanda discuss best practices in environmental monitoring of snails in schistosomiasis programs.

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH KIKUNDI

Strong partnerships are critical for Kikundi's success. Partners are invited to share new resources directly with Kikundi for broad dissemination to Program Managers, including new NTD tools, grant opportunities, training, or other relevant resources.

Organizations that would like to share new resources with Kikundi membership or collaborate with the CoP can contact hello@kikundi.org. Members of the Program Manager Leadership Council or Development Team will respond, depending upon the nature of the request.

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL KIKUNDI PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

- 1.** Collaboration with Uniting to Combat NTDs to discuss the 71st session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa,
- 2.** Partnership with the Coalition for Operational Research on NTDs (COR-NTD) to mobilize Program Managers across Africa to share their operational research challenges, which led to the design of new grant opportunities that reflected Program Manager priorities,
- 3.** Engagement with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Grand Challenges team to mobilize Program Managers to share their feedback on critical gaps in NTD research, which helped shape the Request for Proposals entitled "Innovations in Eliminating Neglected Tropical Diseases". Several Program Managers also served as reviewers for this funding opportunity

“I am now better focusing on data analysis and use. I am currently analyzing program data and developing a scientific publication with continued support from the Kikundi professional development program”

– Professional mentorship beneficiary

PROFESSIONAL MENTORSHIP

Kikundi provides a space for Program Managers to answer one another's questions and help brainstorm challenges to common problems. When solutions cannot be found within the CoP, Kikundi connects Program Managers with individuals external to the CoP who voluntarily serve as professional development resource persons. These individuals have experience in specific technical and operational areas, such as monitoring and evaluation, disease surveillance, finance and budgeting, and project management. These volunteers are matched with Program Managers to provide one-on-one support for specific professional development challenges. Thus far, thirteen volunteer resource persons are available to work with Kikundi Program Managers.

Program Managers are also supported in applying for research grants, primarily through peer review of research aims or full proposals. This year, seven Program Managers submitted grants supported by Kikundi to two different funding opportunities.

Program Managers take notes about the organization of a Rwandan MDA campaign during the 2021 site visit.





Participants in the 2021 site visit in Rwanda meet to observe NTD program activities and discuss solutions to shared challenges.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING THROUGH SITE VISITS

Kikundi organizes annual in-person site visits for Program Managers to observe one another's programs, brainstorm solutions to common challenges, and establish best practices across NTD programs. The week-long site visits serve as opportunities for Program Managers to observe NTD programs across the continent, including novel approaches employed in the fight against NTDs. During the inaugural 2021 site visit, ten Program Managers from ten different countries traveled to Rwanda to observe various NTD program activities, including an NTD Technical Working Group meeting, vector surveillance activities, community and school-based MDA campaigns, and morbidity management and disability prevention (MMDP) activities. Program Managers also participated in a one-day protocol development workshop.



Click to watch the Site Visit Video (left), and Highlights Video (right).

“I found the site visit very informative. It was an opportunity for learning through interaction and practice. Physically interacting with other Program Managers was also a welcome break from virtual meetings”
— 2021 site visit participant

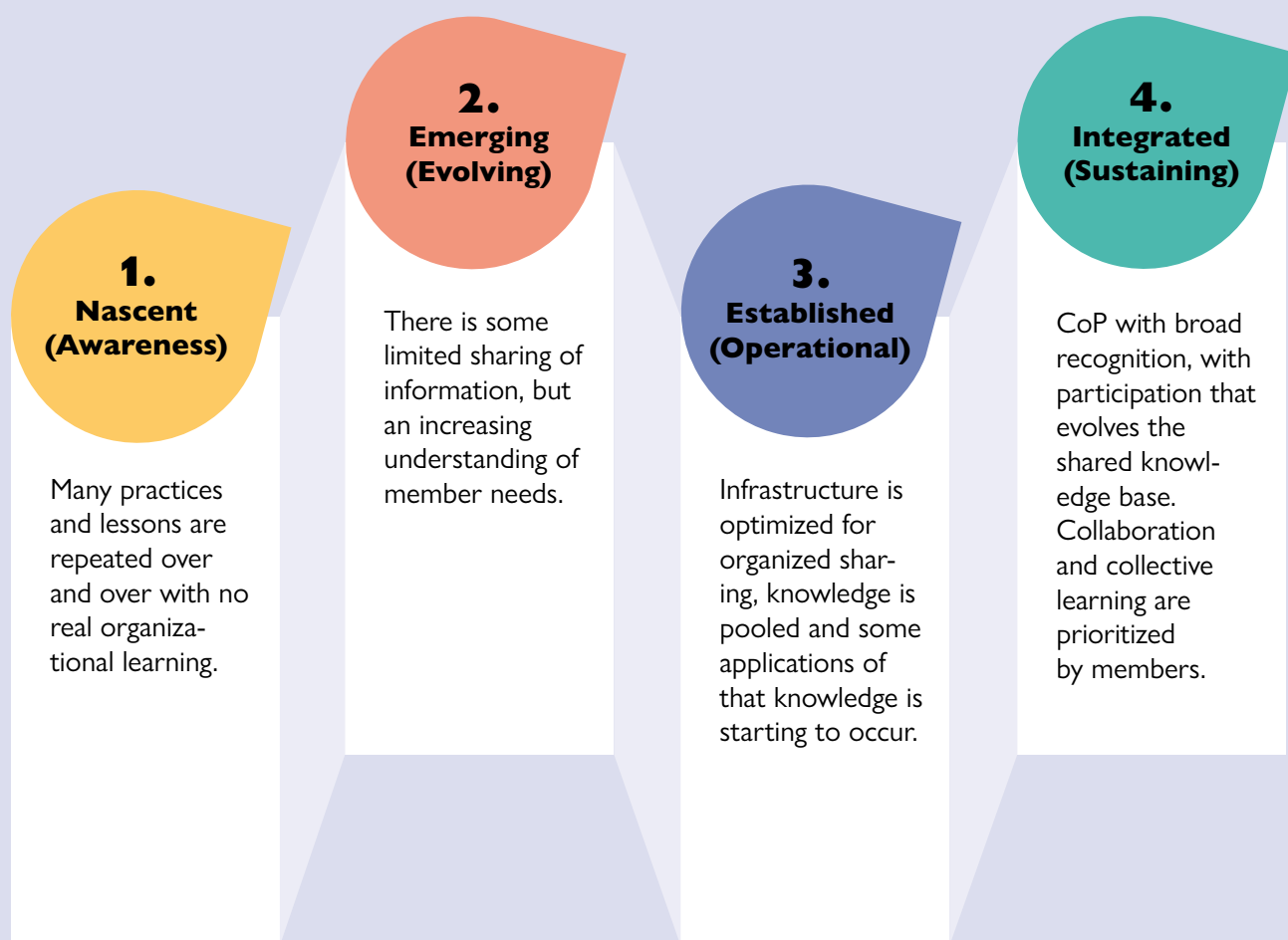
“Seeing a teacher giving drugs to children over 10 minutes really changed my view of the entire process. This is something I will try to convince my team back home to adopt. The work ethic between the community health workers and teachers was great to see”
— 2021 site visit participant

KIKUNDI'S IMPACT & ACHIEVEMENTS

Evaluation of Kikundi includes a robust longitudinal evaluation plan using a four-stage maturity model to track changes in growth and utility of the platform over time (Figure 1). After one year of implementation, Kikundi has reached the second stage of the maturity model, with a fully developed and deployed digital plat-

form. To track progress over time, annual surveys are administered to all CoP members. Select findings from the first longitudinal analysis are presented below. In total, 42 Program Managers participated in the baseline survey and 24 Program Managers participated in the annual survey after one year of implementation.

FIGURE 1: STAGES OF CoP MATURITY MODEL & DEFINITIONS

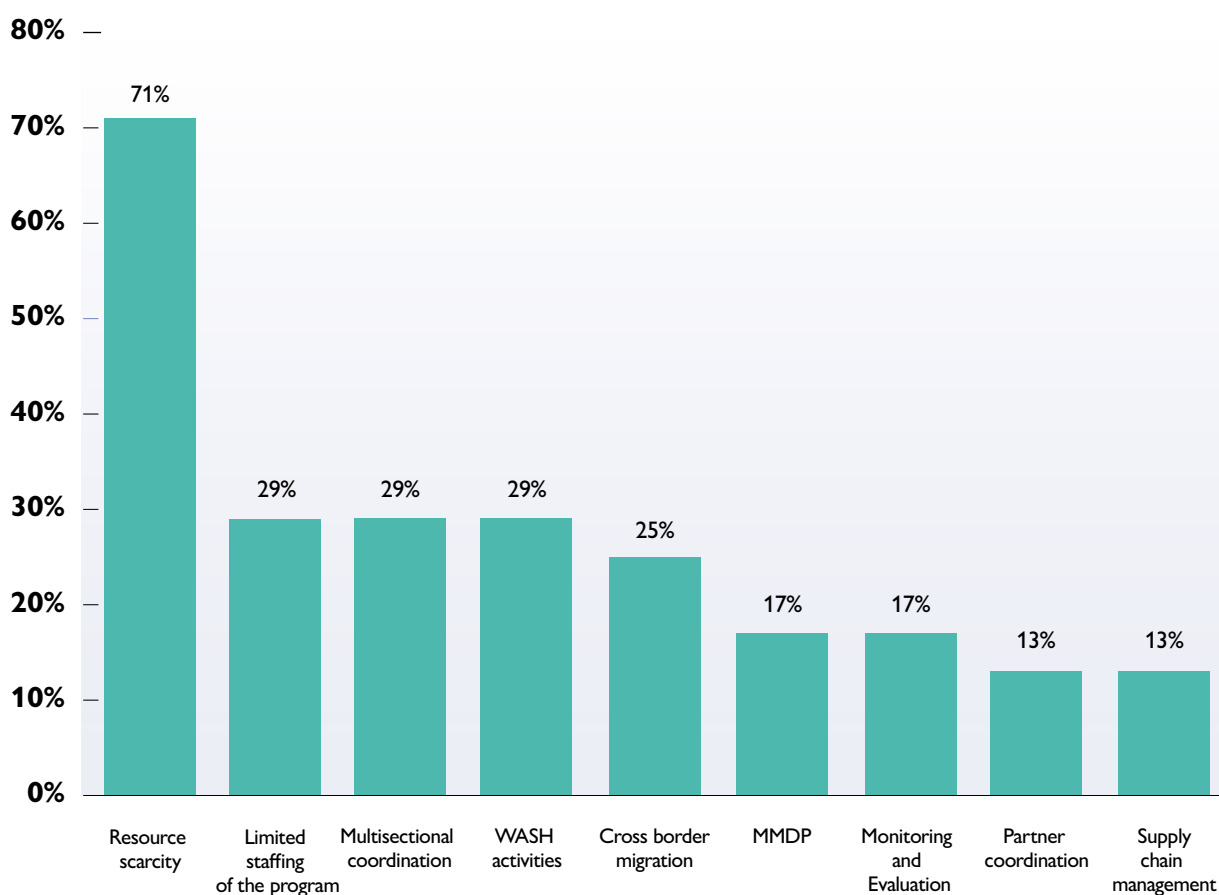


KIKUNDI'S MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

The main challenges that Program Managers face have been relatively constant over time, including: resource scarcity, implementing WASH activities, partner coordination, supply chain management, limited program staffing, and implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities. (Figure 2). To address these and other noted challenges, Kikundi has strived to improve the capacity of and collaboration between African NTD

Program Managers. Notably, the proportion of Kikundi members who said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs increased from 62% at baseline to 71% after one year. The CoP is continuing to build community among Program Managers, particularly through opportunities for communication, collaboration, and peer-to-peer support.

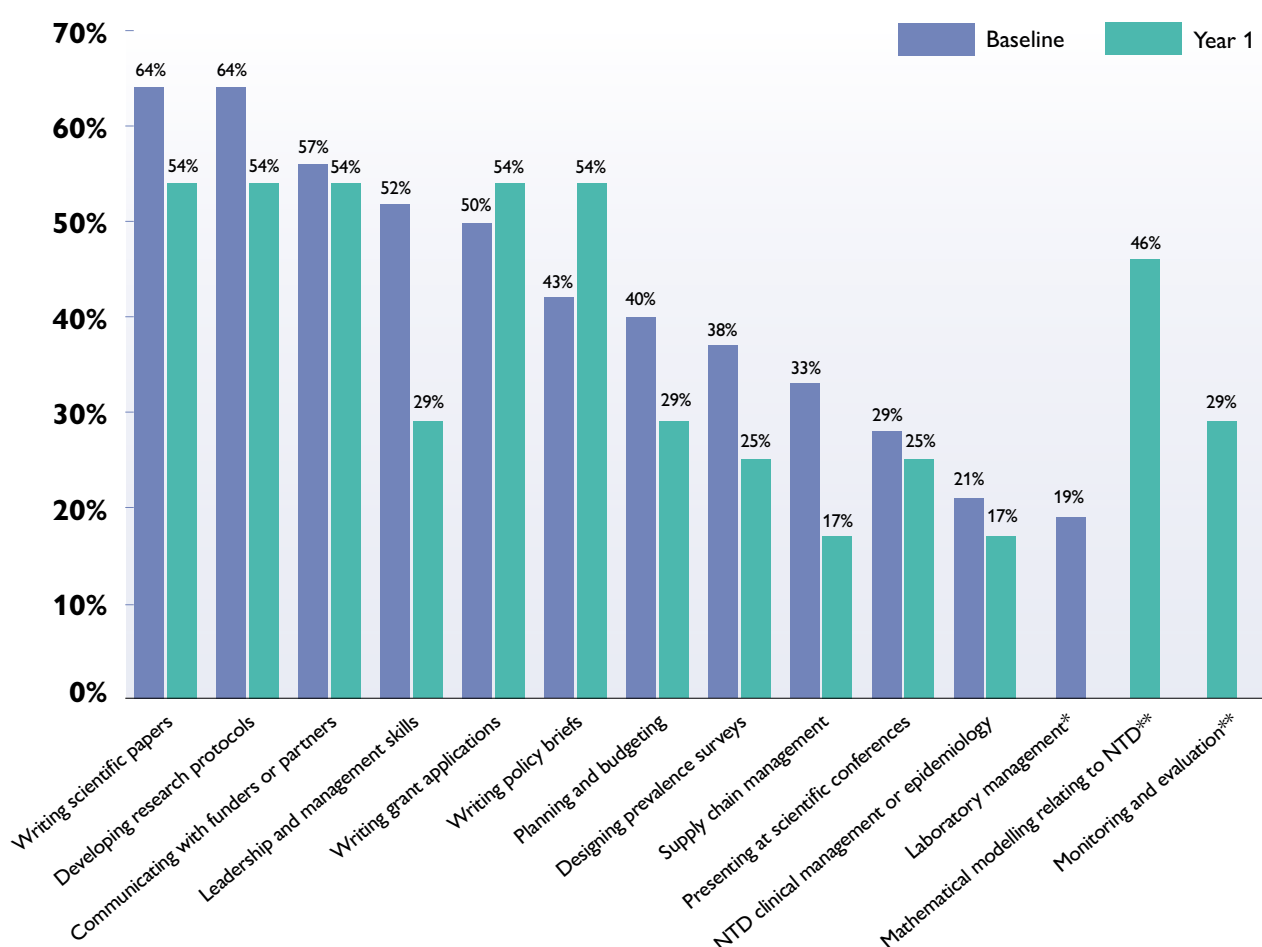
FIGURE 2: COMMON CHALLENGES FACED BY PROGRAM MANAGERS IN IMPLEMENTING NTD PROGRAMS (Year 1: N=24)



At baseline, Program Managers identified skills they wanted to build within the CoP, including developing research protocols (64% of Program Managers), writing scientific papers (64% of Program Managers), and developing skills to improve communication with funders or partners (57% of Program Managers) (Figure 3). In the

past year, Kikundi has identified specific opportunities for Program Managers to build their targeted skill sets. For example, Kikundi worked with nine Program Managers to draft a manuscript as co-authors, seven Program Managers to write grants, and ten Program Managers to complete a protocol development workshop.

FIGURE 3: ADDITIONAL TRAINING REQUESTED BY PROGRAM MANAGERS AT CoP LAUNCH AND AFTER ONE YEAR (Baseline: N=42, Year 1: N=24)



*Variable not included in the year 1 survey

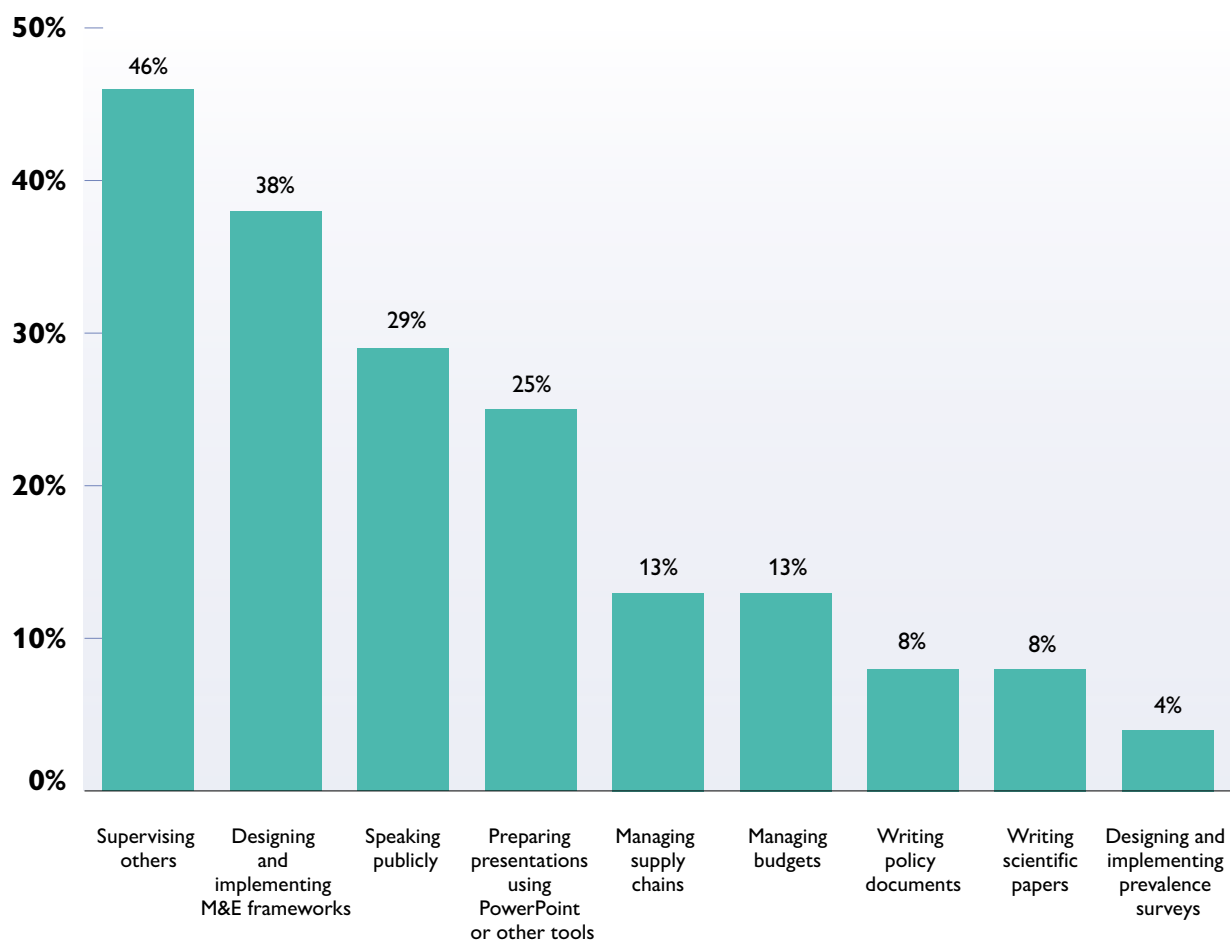
**Variable not included in the baseline survey

One year later, the overall proportion of Program Managers who requested additional training in the topics specifically offered by Kikundi (leadership and management and research protocol development) decreased over time, indicating that Kikundi is supporting Program Managers in gaining targeted skill sets (Figure 3). Among a subset of individuals who were members of the CoP for a full year and responded to both a baseline and an annual survey one year later, these trends were more pronounced; the proportion of Program Managers who requested additional training in writing grant applications

decreased by 18%; in leadership and management skills by 31%; in developing research protocols by 13%; and in designing prevalence surveys by 17% (data not pictured).

When asked what skills Kikundi helped Program Managers to develop over the past year, 46% of Program Managers responded that Kikundi helped improve their skills in supervising others and 38% said the CoP helped develop skills in designing and implementing M&E Frameworks (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4: SKILLS THAT PROGRAM MANAGERS BELIEVE KIKUNDI SUPPORTED THEM IN DEVELOPING OVER THE PAST YEAR (Baseline: N=42, Year 1: N=24)

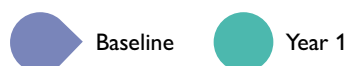
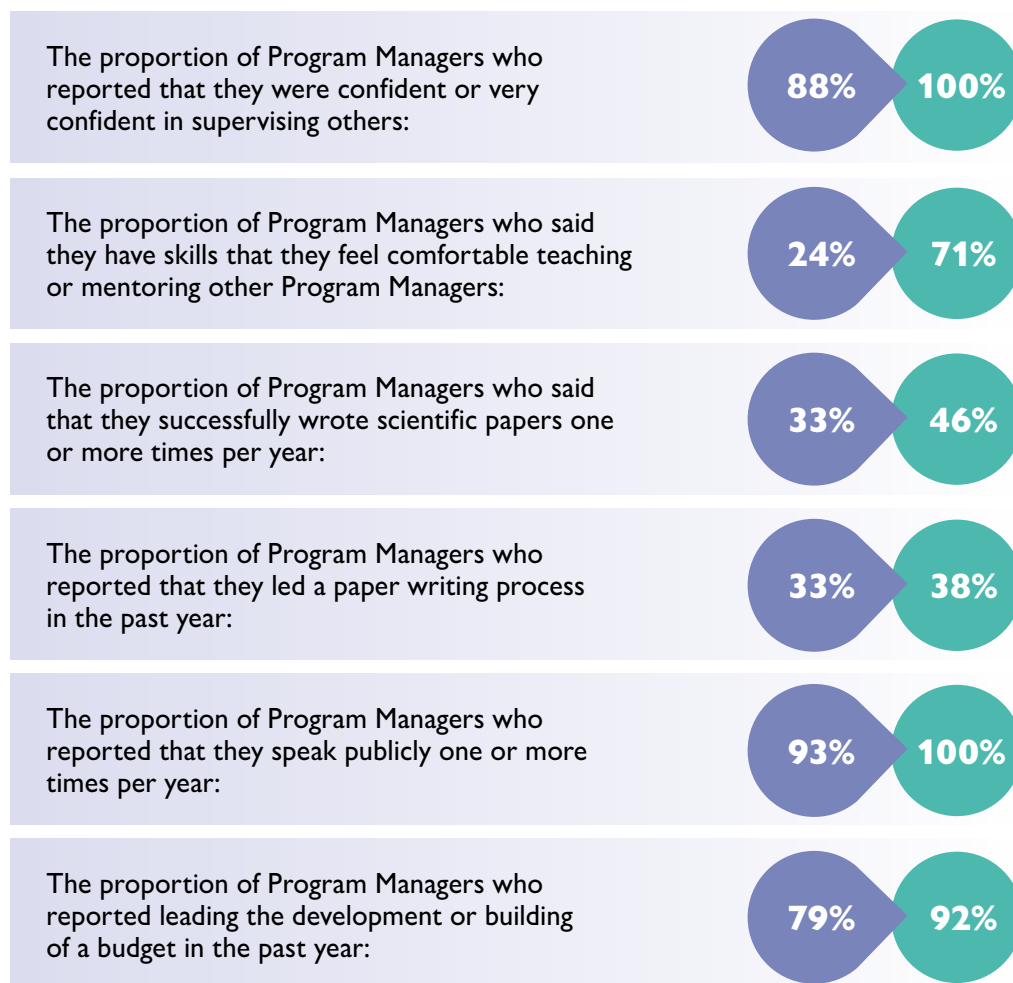


Kikundi has invested in building the skills and confidence of Program Managers as managers and leaders. After one year, the proportion of Program Managers who reported that they were confident or very confident in supervising others increased from 88% to 100%. Program Managers also expressed that they are increasingly confident in mentoring their peers; the proportion of Program Managers who said they have skills that they feel comfortable teaching or mentoring other Program Managers increased from 24% at baseline to 71% after one year.

One year after Kikundi launched, Program Managers were asked about their experiences engaging in the CoP. When asked how often they received helpful answers to their questions on the platform, 54% said they always or very often receive helpful responses from their peers.

71% of Program Managers reported that Kikundi helps them with the adoption of new NTD guidelines or tools.

EXAMPLES OF INCREASED CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS OVER THE FIRST YEAR



WHAT IS NEXT ON THE HORIZON?

Along with these strong achievements, Kikundi has also identified some areas of improvement. Primarily, the CoP has gone to great lengths to reach out to all eligible Program Managers on the African continent. Despite the successes in membership recruitment so far, many programs are yet to join the Kikundi platform. Kikundi is best placed to achieve its goals when Program Managers from all regions of Africa join and engage in the community.

Some ongoing and planned activities for year 2 include amplifying Kikundi's mandate through increased partnerships, empowering members to proactively reach out to fellow Program Managers, and inviting non-members to Kikundi community conversations and events so that all Program Managers can benefit from the communal knowledge bank formed during these activities.

Furthermore, Kikundi is developing new professional development courses, webinars, and training to address the challenges and gaps identified by Program Managers. Key skills such as budget management are highly impactful in enabling Program Managers to better plan, manage, and achieve their targets and goals outlined in their country master plans. Kikundi will be building these opportunities in collaboration with partners and collaborators —ensuring high quality and relevant information is available to all members.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

The second year of Kikundi will provide even more opportunities for Program Managers to collaborate and learn from one another. If you are an NTD Program Manager who would like to join Kikundi, please email hello@kikundi.org.

In December 2021, the first annual Kikundi Partners Meeting was held with participants from over twenty global organizations working on NTD-related programs. The purpose of the meeting was to inform partners about Kikundi's progress and identify opportunities for further collaboration and engagement within the platform. If you would like to attend the 2022 Partners Meeting, please email hello@kikundi.org.

Program Managers and partners can learn more about Kikundi by following Kikundi on social media:



