



# **Ethical challenges and improvement pathways: a case study on health research priority setting in the Philippines**

---

Reneepearl Kim Sales, Joseph Oraño, Lynnell Alexie Ong

Alliance for Improving Health Outcomes

2023 WHO GFBR meeting

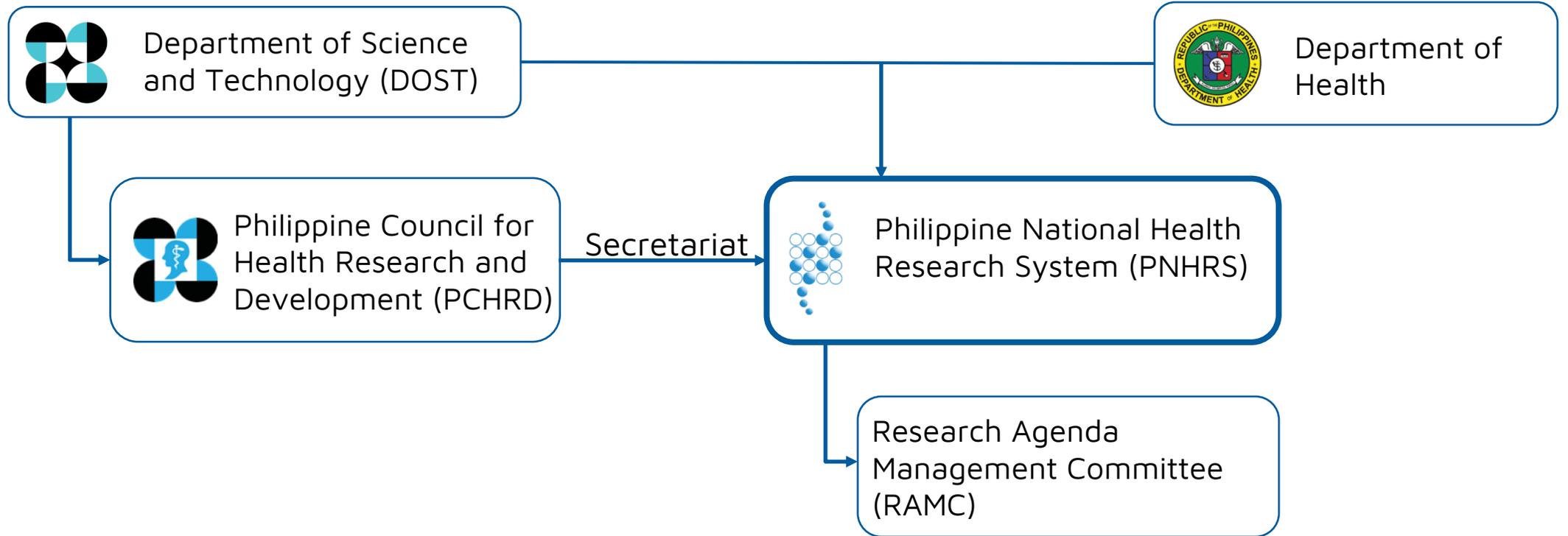
# DISCLAIMER

We receive grants from and support government in health research priority setting (RPS).

This case study was developed independent from funders.

**BACKGROUND**

# HOW IS HEALTH RPS ORGANIZED IN THE PHILIPPINES?



**Provides guidance** on shaping the country's health research agenda and aligning with societal goals across various sectors

# PHILIPPINE NATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH SYSTEM (PNHRS)

Rooted in Essential National Health Research principles:

- Inclusiveness and participation
- Quality
- **Equity**
- **Efficiency**
- **Effectiveness**

Identification of health needs and targeting research towards those needs will **lead to increased utilization of evidence in policymaking.**

# NATIONAL UNIFIED HEALTH RESEARCH AGENDA (NUHRA)

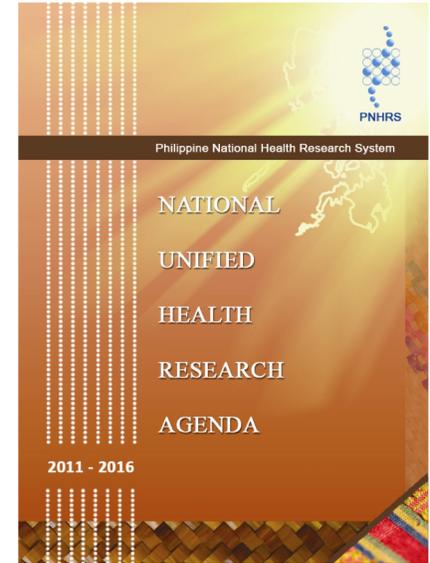
Advocacy document that aims to

- Guide health research activity
- Generate research support and funding
- Promote research translation

First made in 2006, the NUHRA **is developed every 6 years** and is coterminous with the Presidential term of office.



2006-2010



2011-2016



2017-2022



2023-2028

# OUR ORGANIZATION



# OUR ORGANIZATION



**Sales**, R.K., Reyes-Ramos, G.K., de Veyra, C. et al. Advancing health through evidence assisted decisions with health policy and systems research program: a qualitative evaluation of a national health research grant management process in the Philippines. *Health Res Policy Sys* 21, 73 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-023-01021-6>

**Sales**, R. et al. (2023) 'Evaluation of the Philippine national unified health research agenda 2017-2022', *Population medicine*, 5(Supplement). <https://doi.org/10.18332/popmed/165548>.

**Sales, R.K., Oraño, J.**, Estanislao, R.D. et al. Research priority-setting for human, plant, and animal virology: an online experience for the Virology Institute of the Philippines. *Health Res Policy Sys* 19, 70 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-021-00723-z>

Generale AJA, **Sales** RKP, Dizon TS, Feranil AB. Approaches to Health Research Priority Setting in the Philippines across the Years . *Acta Med Philipp* [Internet]. 2019Jun.28;53(3).

Dorotan MMC, Estanislao RDF, **Sales** RKP, Magdaraog MAC, Geroy LSA. Operationalizing the Development of the National Unified Health Research Agenda 2017-2022 . *Acta Med Philipp* [Internet]. 2019Jun.28;53(3).

Libunao AM, **Sales** RKP, Lopez JCF, Alcido MRH, Geroy LSA, **Oraño** JV, Estanislao RDF. Effect of Personality, Power, and Emotion on Developing the 2017-2022 Philippine Health Research Agenda: A Case Study. *Acta Med Philipp* [Internet]. 2019Jun.28;53(3)

de Leon PEN, **Sales** RKP, Geroy LSA, Lopez JCF. Strengthening Science and Technology for Health Research: Perspectives from Trade, Development, and Innovation . *Acta Med Philipp* [Internet]. 2019Jun.28;53(3)

Lopez JCF, Dizon TS, Regis RGMK. Achieving a Responsive Philippine Health Research Agenda: An Analysis of Research Outputs and Underlying Factors . *Acta Med Philipp* [Internet]. 2019Jun.28;53(3).

Lopez JCF, de Veyra CM, Geroy LSA, **Sales** RKP, Dizon TS, Cutiongco-de la Paz EM. Envisioning the Health Research System in the Philippines by 2040: A Perspective Inspired By AmBisyon Natin 2040 . *Acta Med Philipp* [Internet]. 2019Jun.28;53(3).

Lopez JCF, **Sales** RKP, Regis RGMK, Reyes KAV, Ho BLC. Strengthening the Policy Environment for Health Research in the Philippines: Insights from a Preliminary Analysis of Existing Policies . *Acta Med Philipp* [Internet]. 2019Jun.28;53(3).

Lopez JCF, Ruiz AS, **Sales** RKP, Magdaraog MAC, Dizon TS, Geroy LSA. Mapping the Influence of Socioeconomic Development Plans on Philippine Health Research Agenda: A Descriptive Study . *Acta Med Philipp* [Internet]. 2019Jun.28;53(3).

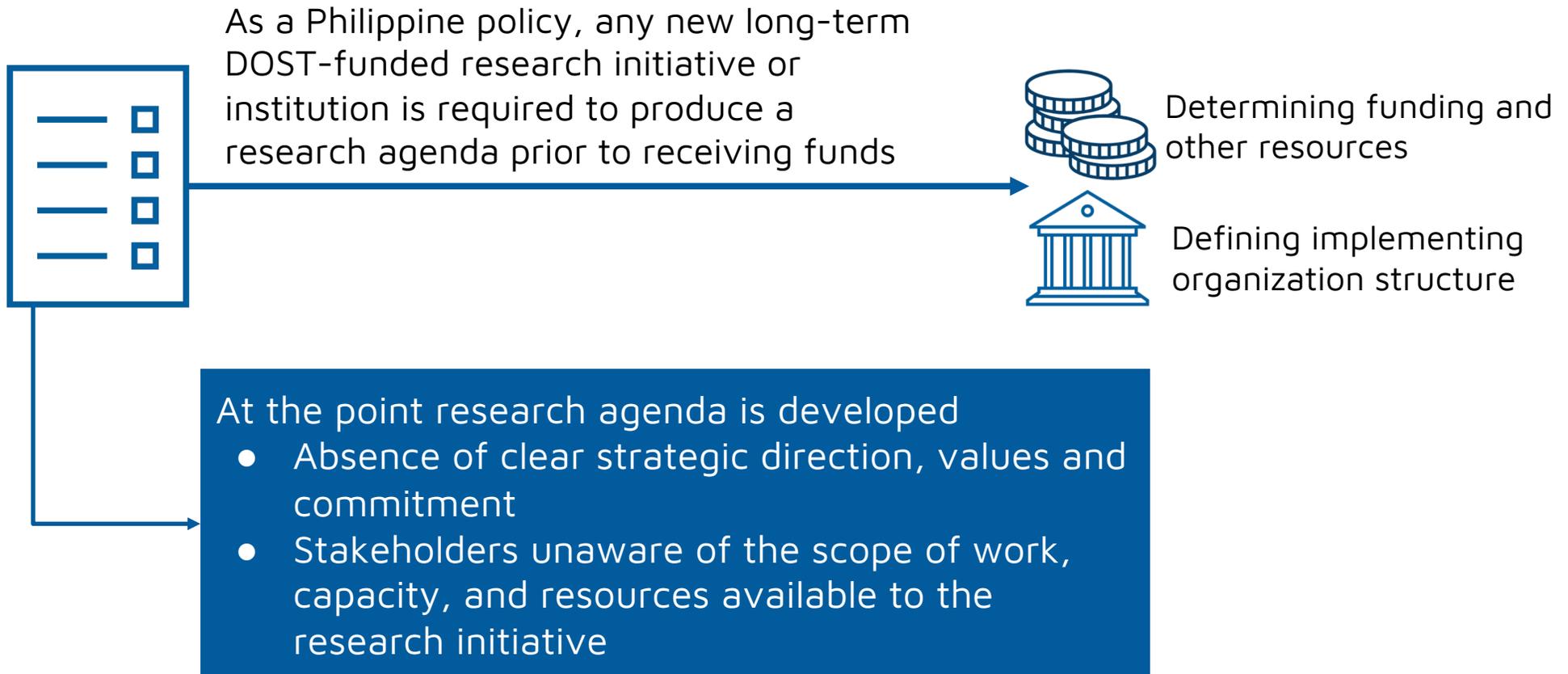
Otayza MLK, de Veyra CM, Lopez JCF. Implementing Lessons Learned from Past Versions of the Philippine National Unified Health Research Agenda . *Acta Med Philipp* [Internet]. 2019Jun.28;53(3).

Alcido MRH, **Oraño** JV, Geroy LSA. Applying Knowledge Management in Generating and Using Evidence in Health Research Priority Setting (HRPS) . *Acta Med Philipp* [Internet]. 2019Jun.28;53(3).

Mauricio III MU, Magdaraog MAC, Magtubo KMP, Geroy LSA. Enabling Greater Private Sector Participation in Health Research in the Philippines. *Acta Med Philipp* [Internet]. 2019Jun.28;53(3).

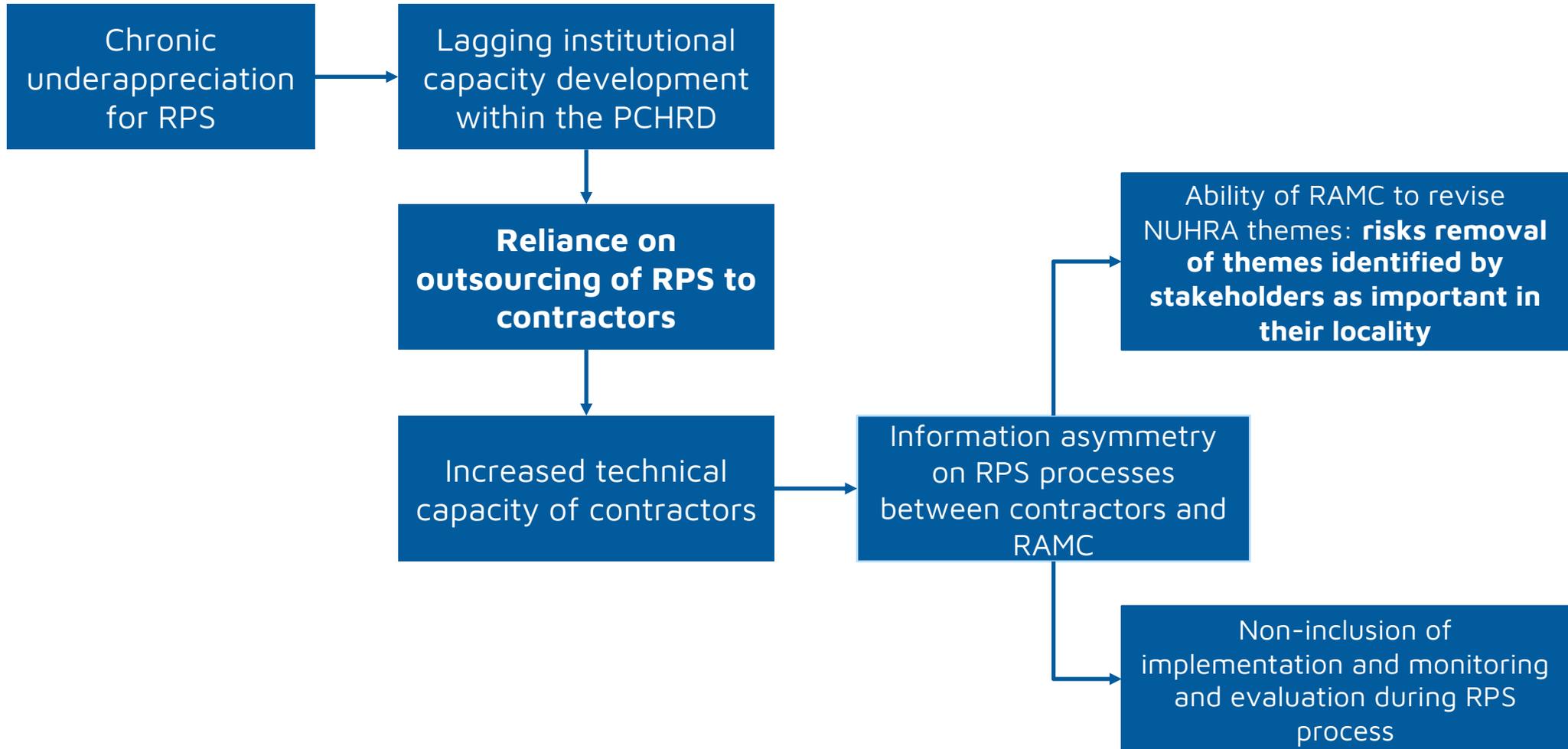
# ETHICAL ISSUES

# WEAK RESEARCH AGENDA STEWARDSHIP AS AN UNINTENDED EFFECT OF PUBLIC POLICY



Inadequate RPS stewardship has led to poor decision-making in value trade-offs, which may **not represent the values of the future research agenda implementer.**

# WEAK RESEARCH AGENDA STEWARDSHIP AND OUTSOURCING TO CONTRACTORS



If a research agenda is seen only as a prerequisite for funding or institutional growth, **its significance within a national health research system remains undervalued.**

**This hinders progress towards an effective and efficient national health research system.**

# THE CHALLENGE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E) TO SUPPORT EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Current health research M&E data is **not fit-for-purpose** and **of low utility in health research decision-making**.

Bottom-up RPS **requires substantial resources**, but without a relevant and effective M&E system, assessing the **returns on these investments remains uncertain**.

There may be **neglected** research areas and **duplication** of research efforts.

There is a risk of **perpetuating inefficiencies in the use of public research funds if M&E is not fit-for-purpose**.

# RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS AFFECT EQUITABLE HEALTH RESEARCH PRIORITY SETTING

There is an **increasing trend of short-termism in health policy and systems research**, including RPS contracts.

Despite short-termism, there remains an **expectation to adhere to good RPS practices**.

**Resource constraints enable innovative solutions**, such as the use of online tools during the pandemic that expanded our reach.

Trade-offs still occur, notably in stakeholder engagement.

Well-structured groups, such as academe and government agencies, are more commonly involved in RPS. **Less-organized groups (e.g., civil society and marginalized sectors) are harder to identify and compel to participate**.

This limited diversity and participation of these groups in RPS.

**Missed opportunity to contribute to a more equitable research agenda.**

# **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

# CONCLUSION

Weak stewardship leads to unclear strategic direction and values, resulting in **misaligned decisions that may not represent the values of future implementers**. This creates concerns for an **effective and efficient national health research system**.

**Ill-defined M&E mechanisms perpetuate inefficiencies** and provide low-utility data for health research decision-makers.

Resource constraints impact stakeholder engagement, creating a **missed opportunity to develop a more equitable research agenda**.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. Strengthen stewardship

**Capacitate** PCHRD and relevant institutions in research agenda development and management. **Integrate** research agenda management activities in all parts of the research cycle. Ensure **meaningful participation** of all RAMC members.

## 2. Shift mindsets on the purpose of a research agenda

Information on available capacity and funding should **inform** research agenda development.

## 3. Prioritize capacity development

Steer away from outsourcing RPS to contractors towards **knowledge and skills acquisition from contractors** to improve internal expertise and resources for research agenda development.

## 4. Extend RPS timelines

Allocate sufficient time for thorough RPS processes, allowing for diverse stakeholder engagement and thoughtful decision-making.

## 5. Develop an appreciation for M&E

Value M&E as an integral part of the research process. Identify **minimum viable M&E indicators** and clarify **stakeholder roles in M&E**.



**Thank you!**

Alliance for Improving Health Outcomes

Reneepearl Kim Sales // [ksales@aiho.org.ph](mailto:ksales@aiho.org.ph)

Joseph Oraño // [joseph.orano@gmail.com](mailto:joseph.orano@gmail.com)

Lynnell Alexie Ong // [long@aiho.org.ph](mailto:long@aiho.org.ph)