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#347 - Balancing Data Collection and Service Delivery: The Challenges of Measuring Outcomes and Conducting Evaluations in the Social and Family Welfare Sector

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Evaluating the effectiveness of social and family welfare programs is essential for ensuring that interventions meet the needs of vulnerable individuals and families. However, measuring outcomes and conducting evaluations in this space can be challenging due to the diversity of services, the subjectivity of outcomes, and the long-term impact of interventions. In addition, there is often a tension between the need for data collection and the need to focus on actual service delivery.

Drawing on examples from the speakers' research in child welfare, this presentation will highlight the complexities of measuring outcomes in this space, including issues related to program delivery, organisational readiness, and evaluation. The presentation will also discuss the importance of balancing data collection with service delivery, acknowledging that service delivery is the ultimate goal of social and family welfare programs. The presentation will conclude with a discussion of potential strategies for balancing data collection with service delivery, drawing from lessons learned using the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NCFAS) and an embedded evaluator model. These strategies include the use of innovative data collection methods and the development of more collaborative evaluation approaches that engage stakeholders in the process. By addressing the challenges of measuring outcomes and conducting evaluations in the social and family welfare space, and by presenting strategies to balance data collection with service delivery, this presentation aims to contribute to the ongoing development of effective and evidence-based interventions for vulnerable individuals and families.

Keywords: social welfare, family welfare, data collection, service delivery, program evaluation, outcome measurement, NCFAS, embedded evaluator, vulnerable populations.