The Concept of Positive Deviance

In every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviors or strategies enable them to find better solutions to a problem than their peers, while facing similar challenges and constraints & having access to same resources.

Positive Deviance: The Key Steps

There are 5 steps to the Positive Deviance method carried out by members of the community:

1. Define the problem
2. Determine presence of PD individuals
3. Discover existing uncommon behaviors & strategies
4. Design and develop initiatives to leverage these solutions to the whole community
5. Discern the effectiveness of initiative (M & E)
Positive Deviance in Organizations

Step 1:
Identify “positive deviants”, i.e., organizations that consistently demonstrate exceptionally high performance in an area of interest.

Step 2:
Study organizations in-depth using qualitative methods to generate hypotheses about practices that allow organizations to achieve top performance.

Step 3:
Test hypotheses statistically in larger, representative samples of organizations.

Step 4:
Work in partnership with key stakeholders, including potential adopters, to disseminate the evidence about newly characterized best practices.

Steps in the positive deviance approach.