RECAP OF PREVIOUS DAY OR SESSION
MODULE 2 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module participants will:

- Know tips for engaging with researchers for increased access & use of evidence
- Identify relevant high-quality search engines/databases for conducting searches
- Explain steps in a search strategy
- Know Boolean search terms & tips for searching the Internet
- Identify search terms & relevant sources for searching for their policy question
- Describe characteristics of quality sources of evidence
- Demonstrate effective searching, assessment of sources & development of components of their own search strategy
GROUP BRAINSTORM:
WHERE DO YOU GET EVIDENCE?

Imagine a work scenario...

Imagine a decision at home...
Major Sources of Information in Policy Research

1. Specialized Policy Unit
   Policy & Planning
   Departments of the Government

2. Official Statistics
   Data on the economic and political aspects of society

3. Think Tanks
   NGOs that engage in the study of public policy

4. Academic Community
   Universities/Research Institute
   (Source of Knowledge)

5. Traditional Knowledge
   Accumulated knowledge passed from generation to generation

6. Polls
   Public opinion on specific topics

7. Media
   Newspapers, Radio, Television, Internet


Anything missing? Not emphasized?
PERSON-TO-PERSON CONTACT IS ESSENTIAL

- Establish and build relationships with trusted ‘experts’, opinion-leaders, academics, researchers, evidence generators

- Network & engage with those who can help
TIPS FOR LINKING WITH EXPERTS, RESEARCHERS & RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

- Know top researchers in your area
- Make initial contact
- Inform them of key policy issues that you wish their research could answer
- Involve them in policy-making processes; invite to meeting
- Request them to involve you in conferences, meetings & studies
- Attend key scientific conferences in your area of interest
- Subscribe to newsletters & ‘communities of practice’ of research institutions
TOP SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

Whenever possible, check with me first
TOP SEARCH ENGINES, REPOSITORIES & DATABASES

Which are your favorites?

TOP TIER DATABASES & SEARCH ENGINES FOR HEALTH

1. Google*
2. Google Scholar*
3. HINARI*
4. Africa Index Medicus
5. Cochrane
6. POPLINE
7. PubMed
8. Research for Life
9. WHO databases
10. Development Experiences Clearinghouse (DEC)

* If nothing else, at least learn to use these.
www.Google.com  Most-used; more than three billion searches each day. Hunt in publicly accessible documents offered by web servers vs. database search.

From a librarian: “Using general Internet search engines such as Google to identify potential studies is a good resource. Google may be used to retrieve current (both published and unpublished) studies. Google will have more grey literature.”
TOP THREE SEARCH ENGINES

[www.scholar.google.com/](http://www.scholar.google.com/) -- indexes the full text of scholarly literature across formats and disciplines. Includes most peer-reviewed online journals of Europe’s and America's largest scholarly publishers, plus non-peer reviewed journals. Contains ~ 160 million documents.

From a librarian: “Google Scholar is good because it is peer reviewed. Both Google and Google Scholar will give you a lot (neither is “indexed” - read by staff who apply index terms). These two simply match your terms – so you may have to put in a lot of different terms. E.g., you can’t assume ‘vaccine’ will get everything vaccine related (e.g. vaccines, immunize, immunizations). You have to put in all possible alternatives. …And you’ll get duplicates.”
www.who.int/hinari/en/ -- HINARI Access to Research in Health Program provides free or very low cost online access to major journals in biomedical and related social sciences to local, not-for-profit institutions in developing countries. Up to 13,000 journals (in 30 different languages), 29,000 e-books, 70 other information resources are now available

From past EIPM workshop participants, “We like HINARI. Lots of value.”
USE MULTIPLE DATABASES

The idea of evidence-informed is to look at everything. Ensure you are getting all sides of the issue by doing in search in multiple databases.

Check out this great resource:
Guidance note on using evidence. 2016. DFID Research and Evidence Division
THE SEARCH STRATEGY
GROUP BRAINSTORM:
WHAT STEPS DO YOU TAKE WHEN SEARCHING?

STEPS OF A SEARCH STRATEGY

1. Plan!
2. Define your information need – based on question
3. Identify potential sources and limiters
4. Identify search terms & cluster them
5. Launch search - start wide & keep refining
6. List results
7. Evaluate results
8. Record your search strategy
9. Document your references

A lot of can be done away from the computer

Strategies vary and they’re iterative
Work smart: take a few minutes to think it through

Define the information are you looking for? Form a question, which focuses need & defines relationships.

- Specific or general?
- Statistical data?
- Quantity and depth for general information?
STEP 3
IDENTIFY POTENTIAL SOURCES & LIMITING FACTORS

Sources:

- Online journal databases – which specific databases/journals?
- National level reports - Demographic Health Surveys, Census reports
- Local research institutions (websites)
- Grey literature

Limiting Factors:

- Document type codes: primary studies only? Study design? Systematic reviews?
- Geographic
- Time period
- Language
INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY:
DEFINING INFORMATION NEED & IDENTIFYING SOURCES

Worksheet: Search Strategy Template

Instructions: Define information need & identify potential sources [15 min]
STEP 4
IDENTIFYING SEARCH TERMS: KEYWORDS

Start with what you know about your topic.
STEP 4
IDENTIFYING SEARCH TERMS

Careful choice of search terms is vital:

- What key words do you think will appear on the site/article you want?
- What key concepts is it a part of or related to?
- Are there any synonyms for these keywords or concepts?
- Are there any alternative spellings for your keywords/concepts (e.g. American English)
- Are plurals or capitalisation involved?
EXAMPLE OF CLUSTERING CONCEPTS

Look for related concepts that flow from more general terms & ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key concept 1</th>
<th>Key concept 2</th>
<th>Key concept 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Family Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases</td>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>Family Planning Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV AIDS</td>
<td>Republic of Kenya</td>
<td>Natural Family Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV AIDS Prevention</td>
<td>Eastern Africa</td>
<td>Family Planning Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TURN CONCEPTS INTO SEARCH TERMS

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<td>Eastern Africa</td>
<td>Family Planning Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Search query: “HIV AIDS” Nairobi “Family Planning Services”
INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY
CREATE SEARCH TERMS

Worksheet: Search Strategy Template.
Instructions: Identify and list your search terms

[15 minutes]
STEP 8

EVALUATE RESULTS

Look at what you’re getting. If you get nothing helpful, there may be a couple reasons: there may be not much out there, your terms are wrong, or the relationships are not right. Go back and try again if you’re not getting what you want.
SEARCHING FOR EVIDENCE IS AN ITERATIVE CYCLE...

- Reflect
- Review
- Revise
REVIEW & REVISE YOUR SEARCH

Hopefully you have found what you are looking for, or at least places to start from, but:

- Be prepared to review & revise your search scope & strategy
- Try new sources of information (familiarity can be too easy)
- Start again near the beginning of this process if you need to
STEP 9

RECORD YOUR SEARCH STRATEGY

Recording your strategy is a good practice even if you are not writing a manuscript or conducting a systematic review (where it would be a requirement).

Recording the basic fields of information in your strategy is not necessarily for reporting but to help you know what you have already done and what you still intend or need to do. This helps you and/or your collaborating colleagues to not repeat work and is particularly helpful if the search effort extends over many months or is done by more than one person.
STEP 9
RECORD YOUR SEARCH STRATEGY (CONT.)

These are the types of information from your search strategy to record:

- List search terms
- List all databases searched
- Copy & save search terms as they are used to search each database; this is called a search strategy
- Note the dates of the final search with the relevant results for each database AND the period searched
- Note any language or publication status restrictions
- List grey literature sources
- List individuals or organizations contacted
- List any journals and conference proceedings specifically hand-searched for the review
- List any other sources searched (e.g. reference lists, the Internet).
STEP 10

DOCUMENT YOUR REFERENCES

You can use an Excel spreadsheet or even a Word document to collect & organize your references.

Reference manager software makes this task much easier & enables you to add notes to references, cite your references & create bibliographies more easily.

There are many programs available – some free ones are Zotero, Mendeley, & basic versions of Endnote (Endnote Online).
BOOLEAN & MORE

SEARCH

TIPS
BOOLEAN SEARCHING

- Uses commands (operators) such as AND, OR, NOT
- Different search tools may use different symbols
  - +
  - –
- Different search tools may use AND as a default setting (e.g. Google)
- Sometimes Boolean operators must be entered in capital letters (e.g. Synergy OR Interaction)

As search engines like Google are becoming more sophisticated, Boolean terms are becoming a thing of the past.

Still, some repositories use them so it's good to know about.
Query: I would like information about education or literacy

OR logic is most commonly used to search for synonymous terms or concepts.
Query: I'm interested in the relationship between education and literacy.

The more terms or concepts we combine in a search with AND logic, the fewer records we will retrieve.

We will not retrieve any records with only "education" or only "literacy"
Query: I want to see information about education, but I want to avoid seeing anything about secondary.
1. Using quotation marks allows you to search for an exact phrase, e.g., “information literacy”

2. Truncation: place a symbol at the end of the word so you search for variant endings of that word

   E.g. litera$ would look for literature, literacy, literal

1. Wildcards: place a symbol within a word to find variations on it

   E.g. analy*e would find analyse or analyze
DEMONSTRATION
TAKING A FIRST PASS - IS IT RELEVANT?

“The worst way to approach this task [reading a scientific article] is to treat it like the reading of a textbook—reading from title to literature cited, digesting every word along the way without any reflection or criticism. Rather, you should begin by skimming the article to identify its structure and features. As you read, look for the author’s main points.”

APPRAISAL SHORTCUT

- Read results/findings
  Are they relevant/applicable to practice?

- Read the methods
  Are they appropriate

- Read article
  Decide if worth further appraisal

Yes

Yes
EXERCISE 2

1. Access internet
2. Use search terms identified
3. Search for evidence to address your policy questions
4. List references of the information/articles/resources
5. Prioritize them from most to least important

Worksheet: Sourcing evidence for answering your policy question

[1 hour 10 minutes]
ASSESSING SOURCE CREDIBILITY

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/dc/Circle-Thumb.png

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/27/Circle-Thumb-Down.png
ASSESSING QUALITY OF SOURCE

Reputation: The source is sometimes as important as the evidence

- With Cochrane, for example, you can have a certain amount of confidence about the credibility of the evidence.

Journal Rankings: Ranking systems can provide an indicative proxy guide regarding the scrutiny with which a study has been subjected prior to publication

- The principal system is the ‘Impact Factor’ rating. Journals often publish their Impact Factor ranking on their website.
JOURNAL IMPACT FACTOR

It is the measure of how many times the average article has been cited in the last two years.

The higher the number the better.

See list in Participants Guide

But don’t be oversold or exclusive on high ranking journals. Could be a new journal or people are not writing about it. Ranking may not include southern academic organizations or online journals.
When looking at formal electronic publications, quality issues are easier if you consider:

- Established publishers
- Established journals

But additional quality issues arise, particularly related to the appropriateness of information and the selection criteria.
COLLECT & EVALUATE INFORMATION

- Evaluate to ensure it is relevant, accurate, of high enough quality, etc.

- Collect it via printing, pen & paper, flash-drive, email, saved searches, or online bookmarking tool (e.g. Diigo)

- Keep a complete record of the source for citing later
CONTENT CRITERIA FOR SOURCE

- Validity – is it reliable?
- Accuracy – is it accurate?
- Authority & reputation of the source
- Uniqueness – is it original?
- Completeness – is any information missing?
- Coverage – what depth does it go into?
- Timeliness – is it up-to-date?
- Affiliation – is it biased?
- Funder – is it state or privately funded?
Not all well-designed & robustly applied research is to be found in peer-reviewed journals and not all studies in peer-reviewed journals are of high quality.

For more see - *How to Note: Assessing the Strength of Evidence* e DfID’s in the Participant’s Guide.
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MODULE 2 REFLECTION & EVALUATION