SESSION 5
SYNTHESIZING EVIDENCE
RECAP OF PREVIOUS DAY OR SESSION
SESSION 5 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will:

- Know key characteristics for assessing ‘usability’ of evidence
- Define evidence synthesis and describe steps in synthesizing
- Describe what makes policy recommendations ‘actionable’
- Know functions and key elements of a policy brief
- Demonstrate evidence synthesis and draft a policy brief on their issue
- Use the ‘elevator pitch’ strategy to effectively deliver key messages about their policy issue
- Two tips for effective presentations
Determining Usability

Scenario: You are considering using a piece of evidence.

To be useful in your situation, what kinds of questions are you asking about the evidence?
USABILITY OF EVIDENCE – 2

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. **Applicability** refers to the *feasibility* of an innovation in a particular setting
   - Is it possible to implement it in your country?

2. **Transferability** refers to the *generalizability* of an innovation
   - If relevant to your context, is it likely to generate the same impact in your setting?
GROUP ACTIVITY:

APPLICABLE FOR YOUR CONTEXT?


2. In small groups, choose an institution or organization you are familiar with, e.g. the MoH.

3. Answer questions to determine the evidence or innovation’s applicability (feasible) and transferability (generalizable) in the chosen institution. [20 min]

4. Report backs [10 min]
SYNTHESIZING EVIDENCE

Let’s hear from our experts in the room… who routinely synthesizes evidence at work?

What is synthesis anyway??

WHAT IS SYNTHESIS?

“Synthesis is the process of ordering, recalling, retelling, and recreating into a coherent whole” (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003)

• Brings information together in new ways & helps interpret it
• Enables you to provide background, explore causes & effects, contrast explanations, or consolidate support for your argument
• Can consolidate summaries of several sources & point out their relationships
SYNTHESIS – WHAT ARE THE STEPS?

STEPS FOR SYNTHESIZING EVIDENCE

1. Identify
2. Read
3. Focus
4. Think
5. Arrange
6. Write
7. Visualize
8. Revise
9. Document

TIPS FOR COMPELLING AND CONCISE SYNTHESSES

• Summary is evidence-informed

• Simplify complex evidence

• Complement quantitative and qualitative evidence (Use facts and stories)

• Keep it short and simple

3 main messages:
- The problem
- Supporting evidence
- Recommendation
TIPS FOR COMPELLING AND CONCISE SYNTHESIS (CONT.)

The 5Cs for effective summaries

1. Clear
2. Compelling
3. Credible
4. Coherent
5. Concise

Unpack complex into simple

58% of people in Malawi cannot afford maize flour

Nearly 6 in ten people in Malawi cannot afford maize flour
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Basic reading/writing technique</td>
<td>1. Advanced reading/writing technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pulls together information to highlight the key points</td>
<td>2. Pulls together information to highlight AND draws your own conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Re-iterates the information</td>
<td>3. Combines and contrasts from different sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Shows what original authors wrote</td>
<td>4. Reflects your knowledge about original authors writing, but creates something new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Addresses one set of information (article) at a time. Each document remains distinct</td>
<td>5. Combines parts and elements from a variety into one unified entity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Presents cursory overview</td>
<td>6. Focuses on both main ideas and details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Demonstrates understanding of overall meaning</td>
<td>7. Achieves new insight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COPYING IS PLAGIARISM

Do not take someone else's work or ideas and pass them off as yours.

1. Paraphrase – put text in your own words
2. Quote if you cannot say it any better
3. Cite your source in any case
Prepare summaries and a synthesis of the main findings and conclusions from evidence found to answer your policy question.

1: Prepare summaries of your key documents (~60 min)
2: Based on the summaries, prepare a 2 page synthesis of the findings, implications and conclusions (~1 hour 30 min)
3: Facilitators provide individualised feedback (1 hour)

Worksheet: Synthesizing evidence and writing actionable recommendations.
What is a policy recommendation?
What makes it actionable?
A POLICY RECOMMENDATION IS...

• ... simply written policy advice
• ... the chief product of the work of government managers to create & administer public policy

Examples:
• As a global public health recommendation, infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development and health.

• Require hospitals to establish representative Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committees with defined responsibilities for monitoring and promoting quality use of medicines.

• WHO’s 2012 task sharing recommendations to allow: clinical officers to provide tubal ligation and vasectomy services; auxiliary midwives to offer implants and IUDs in the context of targeted supervision and monitoring and evaluation; Community health workers to provide injectables in the context of targeted supervision
When making specific recommendations, you should know what the current situation is — what is working and not working — as well as the evidence for other policy options and recommendations in addition to yours.

This type of analysis can improve the recommendations you propose and give them credibility.

It also allows you to effectively respond to counter-arguments or competing recommendations.
DEVELOPING ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Ask:

- What specifically needs to be changed?
- How will this change come about?
- What resources will be needed? Where will the resources come from?
- What is the overall benefit to the policymaker and to society?

The word ‘actionable’ suggests that recommendations should use active language – words like use, engage, incorporate.
EXAMPLES OF ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS...

From Case Study:

1. Harmonize funding
2. Strengthen government leadership in enabling FP & HIV linkages
3. Ensure supply chain and commodity security
4. Address human resources challenges – skills, numbers, motivation
5. Strengthen the M&E system
6. Engage civil society & community
PRACTICAL APPLICATION
EXERCISE 5

1. Prepare a few slides to share your:
   - Key findings from the synthesis you prepared
   - Three (3) actionable recommendations [30 minutes]

2. Participants present and receive feedback [1 hour 15 min]

ODI Handout on ‘How to Write a Policy Recommendation’
POLICY BRIEFS

What are they?
How are they used?
What is included on a policy brief? What is NOT included?
POLICY BRIEFS (CONT.)

... are concise, stand-alone documents focusing on a particular issue requiring policy attention

... are an important research product for use by decision-makers

They can be particularly effective in bridging research/evidence and policy
POLICY BRIEFS (CONT.)

Four Main Functions

1. Explain and convey the urgency of the issue
2. Present policy recommendations or implications
3. Provide evidence to support the reasoning behind policy recommendations
4. Point the reader to additional resources
WHAT DO POLICYMAKERS WANT TO SEE IN A POLICY BRIEF?

The impact of your policy recommendations partly depends on how well the issue and arguments are presented.

WHAT POLICYMAKERS WANT IN A BRIEF

1. Short, visually appealing document that is concise, quick to read, easy to understand

2. Content immediately useful and relevant to operational work

3. A visual or diagram mapping the evidence - the most helpful summarize evidence for & against interventions, and note quality/region of evidence

4. A clear, accessible key messages section

5. References to allow readers to follow up

KEY ELEMENTS OF A POLICY BRIEF

- Title of Policy Brief
- Executive summary or Key Messages
- Introduction (Context and Importance of Problem)
- Critique and justification of the policy options
- Recommendations
- References

KEY ELEMENTS OF A POLICY BRIEF CONTINUED

A policy brief may contain the following:

- Boxes and sidebars
- Tables
- Graphics
- Photographs
- Authors
- Acknowledgements
- Publication details
- References

Plan both the content and format of your brief. Generally, policy briefs are four pages in length (around 2,200 words, including references and tables).

VIDEO: ART & CRAFT OF POLICY BRIEFS

Source: The Women’s and Children’s Health Policy Center (WCHPC) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (2016). The Art and Craft of Policy Briefs: Translating science and engaging stakeholders'.
GROUP ACTIVITY

CRITIQUE POLICY BRIEFS

1. Break into groups

2. Use sample briefs and checklist handout, Policy Brief Checklist, to critique briefs [15 min]

3. Groups present summary of assessment [3 min]
PRACTICAL APPLICATION
EXERCISE 6

Developing your policy brief

1. Begin writing the first draft of your policy brief
2. Use the Handout on Key Elements of a Policy Brief for guidance [2 hours 30 min]
3. One-on-One feedback on drafts [40 min]
ELEVATOR PITCH: WHAT IS IT?
3 COMPONENTS OF AN ELEVATOR PITCH

1. Problem
2. Evidence
3. Recommendation
ELEVATOR PITCH SHOULD BE A…

Brief, persuasive speech about your policy issue — 60 sec

- Interesting
- Memorable
- Succinct
- Passionate

Source: https://aggieresearch.wordpress.com/2012/02/21/anatomy-of-an-elevator-pitch-to-the-nsf/
THINK ABOUT YOUR AUDIENCE

What is the hook that will get them interested in your issue?

- What is in it for them?
- Why should they listen to you?
- End with a request - What you want from your audience (e.g., a meeting to discuss the issue further)
DEMONSTRATE PITCH – EIPM

Evidence Informed Policy Making

Problem:
Governments cannot create effective policies without accurate information. There are unfortunate gaps between what we know and what we do, due to considerations in policymaking, including ideology, politics.

Solution:
So it’s very exciting that policymakers globally and in Australia, are starting to use evidence as part of their decision-making processes. It’s being described as “evidence-informed policymaking”. This means considering how different forms of evidence can feed into the decision-making, given the information available.

Relevance:
All sorts of policy decisions can be informed and tested. The focus is on the particular problems, identifying the most powerful solutions, and then assessing which have the highest impact from the investment. This is not documented, and holds a lot of potential for us as individuals.

The ask:
Would you be interested in a longer conversation on evidence-informed policymaking? Like accessing, appraising, and synthesizing evidence?
PRACTICAL APPLICATION
EXERCISE 7

1. Write a draft of your elevator pitch [30 min]

2. In two groups, role play giving your elevator pitch and receive feedback [40 min]
TIPS ON POWERPOINT AND PRESENTATION
Less is more.
ONE WORD ON EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS

Practice.
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- Use the ‘elevator pitch’ strategy to effectively deliver key messages about their policy issue
- Identify tips for effective presentations
SESSION REFLECTION AND EVALUATION

Reflection:
• After your own reflection, share with the group 2-3 things you learned about synthesizing evidence
EXTRA SLIDES
EVENING READING

• SUPPORT Tools for Evidence-informed health Policy Making (STP) 13: Preparing and using policy briefs to support evidence-informed policy making

Participant’s Guide: Handouts & Readings section
REFLECTION

What did you learn that you can use in your work place?

What would you share in a debrief at your work place?

Are there sub-topics from the session you want to explore more?

What ideas did this session generate for you?

Are there tasks or “to-do’s” you want to follow up on later?

Are there topics or areas you want to clarify with the facilitator or group?
TIPS FOR DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

• Few slides
• Limit information to a single point or idea per slide
• Keep slides simple with plenty of open space
• Use powerful titles that communicate the point of the slide
• Use ‘power-points’ not sentences
• Use visuals – graphics, pictures
• Simplicity
• Large readable type
• Strong color contrast
• Use slide master to create consistent slides
TIPS FOR DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE GRAPHS & CHARTS

• Keep it simple – avoid complexity in graphs/charts
• Focus on key information – one message per chart/graph
• Have clear labels & legends
• Don’t use a chart/graph if you don’t have to
TIPS FOR DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE GRAPHS & CHARTS CONTINUED

1. Make friends with white space
2. Don't just share data - MAKE MEANING!
3. Serve bite-size pieces

More blogging = MORE LEADS.

More than 1/3 of marketers say Twitter is "critical" or "important" to their business.

Impact of blog size on monthly leads

Sample size: 767 customers.
* Each range includes article data for approximately 25% of customers.
** Data is based on blog articles posted as of 2/1/10 and leads generating in January 2010.

How Important Are These Services to Your Business? (2010 vs. 2009)

JUST ONE BITE!