



Policy Engagement & Communication

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*First Meeting of the Strategic Group
Accra, Ghana: 18th August 2015*

Discussion Points

- Advocacy unit
a good number of sites without an existing unit
- Engaging with appropriate governmental policy people
- Annual Lectures/Dissemination:
- Publications (High Impact journals)
- Scientific briefs
- Policy briefs
- Annual report



In-Country Meetings

Bring together policymakers, researchers-HDSS, academia, media, community reps, other important stakeholders to begin to dialogue on bridging the gap between research and policy and identifying ways in which research could easily be made visible to policymakers.

Both – getting the two sides of the story, and kick-starting the dialogue/interaction.



In-Country Meetings

Ghana In-Country Meeting, Navrongo, Dec 2014



INDEPTH Network
Better Health Information for Better Health Policy

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INDEPTH Network
Better Health Information for Better Health Policy

In-Country Meetings

India In-Country Meeting, Pune, Jan 2015



INDEPTH Network
Better Health Information for Better Health Policy

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In-Country Meetings

Tanzania In-Country Meeting



INDEPTH Network
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INDEPTH Network
Better Health Information for Better Health Policy

Translation

Research is difficult to access or is not being translated in a user-friendly form for the policymakers and other people who could influence them e.g. media: Scientific publications, Power point presentations, Very detailed reports.

“Researchers should keep their messages straight and simple.”

Templates for major reports that contain the full findings and also short summaries: Summaries that use dot points, diagrams, pictures that can also easily be distributed.

Maintaining regular contact

Identify key people and give them regular updates, in a variety of formats that are easily accessible, in addition to peer reviewed journal articles. Can include regular emails, newsletters - hard copies or online or social networks -Twitter with links to main reports or to project websites.



Engaging them

Make enough effort to initiate contact to policymakers

“We invite them in our meetings, they rarely come.”

Response: “Government officials get many invitations to attend meetings. So you have to be very clear and make your agenda interesting to make these people choose your meetings over others. You also need to learn how to lobby.”

Take time and effort to build relationships – Make them part of scientific committees, Boards etc. There is a cost. Seek out opportunities to attend forums and conferences organised and/or attended by policymakers.

“They don’t use our findings.”

“Involve them in their planning, so they know what you do/plan to do and you know their priorities.”



Publications/Forums

Researchers prioritize the importance of publication of articles in refereed journals over other forms of presenting and discussing research.

Reasons for this given by researchers include:

High time and effort costs in relationship building and translating results

Reward systems and funding structures which do not adequately recognise or reward dissemination and non-academic research use and impact. Can we find ways of encouraging those who do effort in repackaging their work in user friendly ways?, Come with innovative ways of sharing their findings, take part in media interviews, write newspaper commentaries? Write briefs?

Forums and networks available to bring together researchers and non-academic end-users of research

Need to create opportunities for bringing researchers and policy makers together: Scientific Days of Nouna Health Research Centre, Manhica – Annual Lecture in Global Health, Ifakara has Knowledge Forums, 3 per year (Funded by Irish Aid and DFID), In-Country Meetings.



Media/Level of Impact/Apathy

Working with the media

When an issue is raised by the media, they take it very seriously. Find ways of working closely with the media.

Don't wait for national and international level impact - can start implementation of some best practices with local communities. Some findings show impact within researched areas.

Community dissemination: People are tired of being researched. Take samples from them, they are not told what happened later...

Culture of apathy for change among policy makers - "this is how we do things here" . This needs to change.



Communication Units

Absence of communication units –

HDSS cited budgetary constraints or smallness of their sites. Ideally a centre should have a communication unit or a communication officer with basic skills to do communication work (write articles, photography, website, social media) has media and some political networks. Suggestions included projects contributing a small percentage for communication activities.



Working together

Website:

Website has an average monthly average of 5000 unique visitors (new visitors), 9000 visits (new and returning visitors), and 150,000 hits (engagement including visits, downloads etc). New website: More space for centres besides centre profiles. You can send us photographs, field stories, any reports etc. We also include links to centre websites. Disseminates, Promotes the work of centres.

Social media: Stories we published from Nouna HDSS last week had an Reach rating of 1500 people. We encourage you to share pictures, news pieces, announcements, events etc which we can use. Twitter, 452 followers. And very active – any materials we get from you we summarise and use.

Newsletters:

Three newsletters, Friday newsletter which you know very well, Newsletter to the Board and Quarterly newsletter. The quarterly newsletter goes to over 6000 people every three months. The Friday newsletter circulates to all 45 centres, so these are avenues centres could use to share information and promote their work.



Materials

Advocacy materials: We could share best examples of templates for policy briefs, brochures, project profiles, newsletters, Annual Reports, instead of each of the centres designing their own. Also videos and documentaries.

Impact Case Studies: Collate case studies from centres where research has had an impact on policies or practice, and whether there are lessons others can learn.

Put online and printed copies distributed during meetings .Very simple way of showing people our contribution to policy and practice. It also helps others to learn from what other centres did and why they succeeded.



Conclusion

With funding becoming more competitive, researchers will increasingly be under pressure to demonstrate the return on investment by articulating the impact of research. If funders are to sustain or increase their funding there is need to demonstrate the value of research.

