

Introduction to evidence-informed decision-making

UJ-BCURE



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How is this relevant to you?

USE THIS SLIDE TO PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF THE RELEVANCE OF EVIDENCE-INFORMED DECISION-MAKING TO YOUR AUDIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS SPECIFIC WORKSHOP

Introduction to BCURE

- BCURE = Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence
- A three year programme of work funded by UK's Department of International Development (DFID)
- Focuses on increasing the use of research in decision-making through capacity-building
- Investment is mostly in the decision-makers
- Focus is on supporting governments through civil society capacity building rather than research

Exercise: What is evidence?

- Participant sharing – What is evidence in your world?
 - Each participant shares with their neighbour what they understand by evidence (could be data, information, numbers, policies, qualitative, quantitative, etc.)
 - A handful of participants are asked to share with the wider group (continue until a wide variety has been shared)
- Trainers sharing – What is evidence in our world?
 - We also have different backgrounds
 - Rigorous research evidence such as systematic reviews
 - First finding, appraising, and using what has been done before commissioning new research
 - Using the best, rigorously applied methods to address the question

What is 'Evidence-Informed Decision-Making' (EIDM)?

- EIDM is the process of “distilling and disseminating the best available evidence from research, practice and experience and using that evidence to inform and improve (public health) policy and practice” (NCCPH, 2011)
- A process involving: posing specific questions, searching for current best evidence, evaluating the evidence objectively, and taking action informed by the evidence
- Developed out of evidence-based medicine
- Acknowledges the importance of professional expertise and context
- Decisions are informed by evidence and a wide range of other factors; not dictated by evidence
- Transparency is key- the need to make information accessible to stakeholders
- Evidence is defined broadly

What is evidence in the world of EIDM?

- Evidence takes a variety of forms
 - Information gathered from monitoring, evaluations and research
 - Incorporating peoples' experiences and preferences (experiential evidence)
 - Information about the specific contexts in which one is working (contextual evidence)
 - Evidence includes qualitative and quantitative information
- Evidence is not necessarily proof; it is information, documents, and other material that can be used to demonstrate the value of something
- Evidence takes many forms—information provided in an application form, an email, a fingerprint, a conversation, or measurement of something

Types of evidence for decisions

- Different schools of thought sometimes promote different types of evidence using a hierarchy, for example claiming that 'quantitative evidence is better', or that 'local people's experiences are more valid than international perspectives'
- We prefer to adopt an approach where one starts with a clear question, and then seeks out the most appropriate evidence to address that question (pragmatic approach)

Types of evidence for questions (1)

■ What is happening?

- E.g., how many children attend school?
- These questions are usually addressed using routine monitoring data

■ What do people think?

- E.g., is the community going to accept this?
- Measuring or evaluating perceptions
- These questions can be addressed using qualitative or quantitative research methods

■ What works?

- E.g., what works best / better? What doesn't work? How effective is this approach?
- These questions can be addressed using evaluations and quantitative research which measure the impact of X on particular outcomes

Types of evidence for questions (2)

■ How and why?

- E.g., why is this not working? How do we make this work?
- These questions can be addressed using evaluations, and qualitative and quantitative research that assesses processes and mechanisms that lead to change, whether that change is positive or not

■ Cost questions

- E.g., how much will this cost? Was it value for money? Is funding available for this?
- These questions can be addressed using monitoring, evaluations, and research focused on the utilisation and management of funds and what outcomes are achieved (cost effectiveness links costs questions with what works questions)

■ Transparency

- How accessible is this information to stakeholders?
- This can be addressed by publications (e.g. through publications etc)

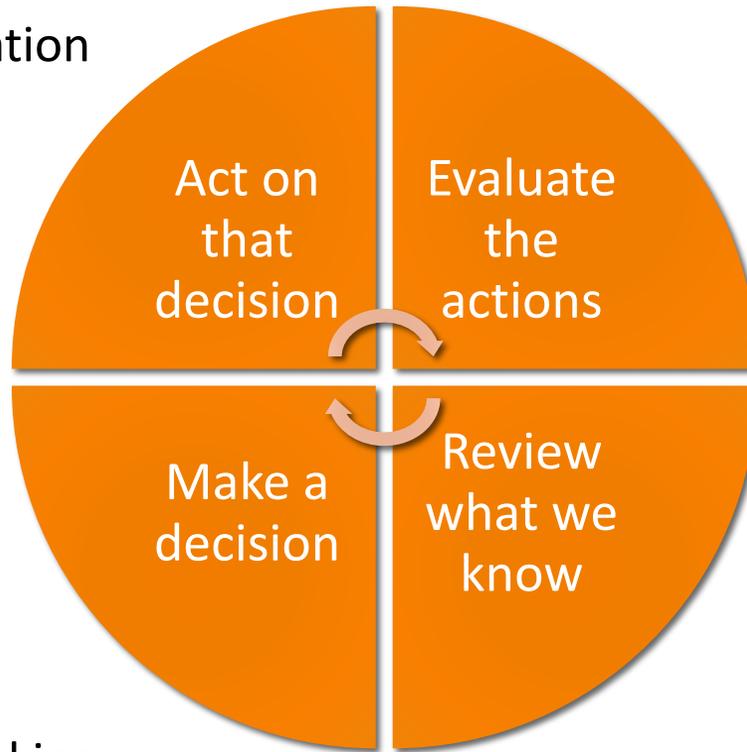
Exercise: Types of evidence for questions

- What other kinds of questions are important to address in your work?
- What types of evidence would you want to inform those kinds of questions?

A cycle of EIDM

- Implementation / action

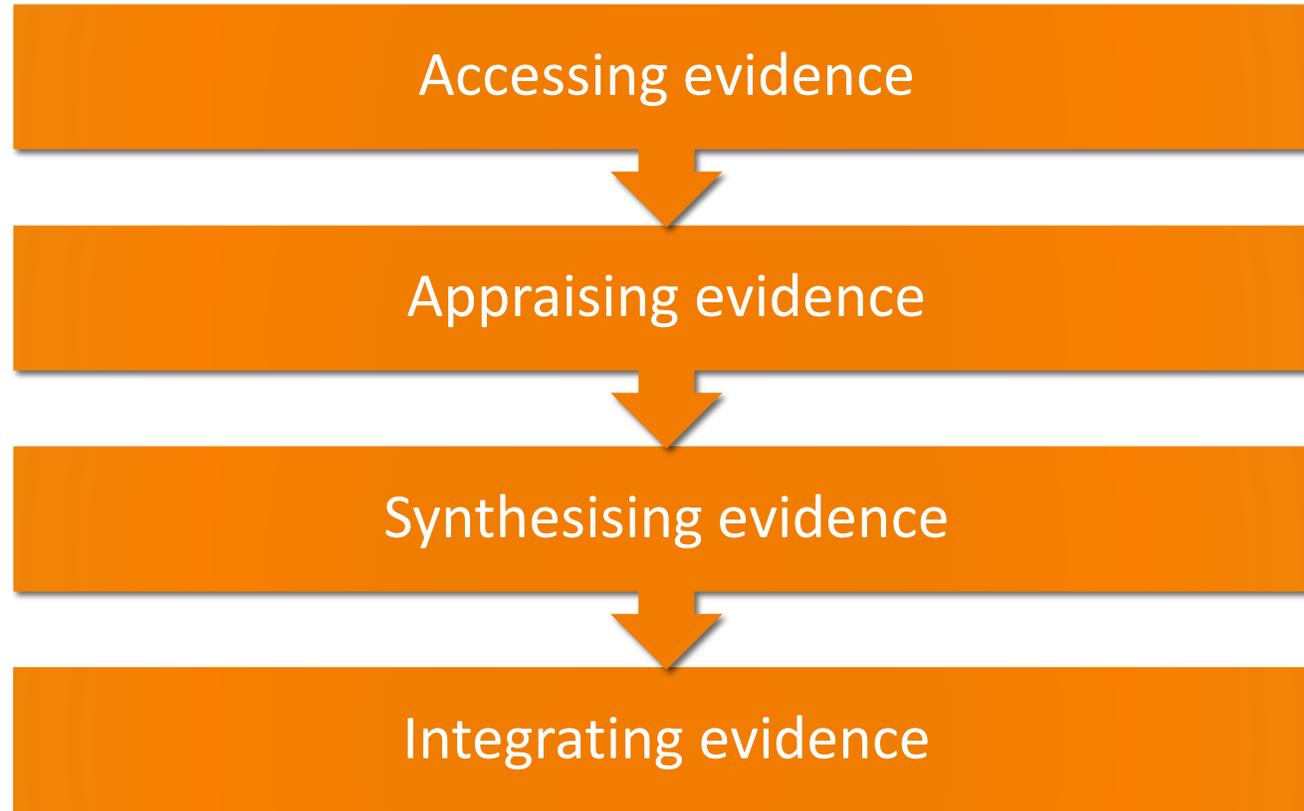
- Monitoring, evaluation, and research



- Evidence-informed decision-making

- Reviewing the evidence

Steps towards EIDM



Different roles of EIDM

- Allows for the adoption of the most effective and cost-efficient interventions
- Enables prudent use of scarce resources
- Assures better outcomes for individuals and communities
- Provides authority for decision-makers, particularly where there is pressure to take a particular approach which may not be in the best interests of the majority
- Promotes confidence in implementing changes or continuing with an intervention if the evidence supports the need to continue

Evidence does not always inform policy

- In 2008, an anonymous donor made a \$23m (£13.7m) five-year commitment to provide free or low-cost long-term contraception for teenagers in Colorado, USA
- An evaluation of this Colorado programme shows that it has dramatically reduced the rate of teenage pregnancy by 40% with implications for public health and national budgets
- Although the US teenage birth rate is decreasing across the country, Colorado has dropped faster than the national rate moving from 29th lowest teenage birth rate in the nation to the 19th lowest
- Fierce opposition to the idea of offering free birth control to teenagers from groups like Colorado Right to Life means that, despite positive evidence, it is unlikely that this intervention will become national policy without donor funding

Where evidence has made a difference

- WHO Collaborating Centre at University of Botswana Nursing Education Department used a variety of evidence-based activities applying a community development approach for community health based care committees (CHBC)
- The CHBC were responsible for delivering care to chronically ill patients in the community
- This led to a shift from institutionalised care to CHBC (Weiser et al 2006)
- Outcomes = better patient care and more community participation

Challenges for evidence use

- Time
- Inability to access evidence
- Inability to understand the language of evidence
- Lack of skills for critiquing evidence – how do you know if it is any good?
- Lack confidence in making change based on evidence
- Lack of sense of control over practice
- Resistance to change, decisions based on history
- Lack of support within the organisation for evidence-informed practice
- Lack of consensus on what constitutes 'good' evidence

Implications of contradictory evidence

- Contradictions might include
 - When the evidence is contradictory or doesn't agree with prevailing religious systems
 - Low status of scientific evidence i.e. evidence based on observations and proof, in the political pecking order
 - Reliability and varying nature of evidence
- At a meeting of the Royal Society chief scientific adviser to the UK Department of Energy and Climate Change, Professor David MacKay, gave an account of how the rational utopia of evidence-based policy was sunk by legal restrictions when he attempted to use data and complex modelling to outline the UK's energy supply options
- “Yes, the evidence may well show that investing limited resources in insulating UK homes is a no-brainer, but if that doesn't help to meet the UK's legally binding targets for renewable energy (15% by 2020) then it won't be a government priority” – www.guardian.com, March 18 2014

Contact details

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Useful Resources

- Evidence-based Policy: In search of a method. <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/politicaconomy/research/cep/pubs/papers/assets/wp3.pdf>
- Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Checklists. <http://www.casp-uk.net/#!casp-tools-checklists/c18f8>
- Evidence in the programme cycle. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-development>
- Evidence based decision making: the six step approach . <http://bmj-ebm.highwire.org/content/8/6/165.full>
- Communication research for evidence-based policy-making: A practical guide for researchers in socio-economic sciences and humanities http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/guide-communicating-research_en.pdf
- Developing Effective Policy: Analysis and Use of Evidence <http://www.ripainternational.co.uk/EU-Programmes/selections>
- Evidence-Informed Policy-making in Education in Europe (EIPEE) <http://www.eipee.eu/>

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