Utilisation of evidence: monitoring and evaluation

UJ-BCURE

CfAR
Linking the past with the present for the future

CENTRE FOR ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

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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

What is monitoring & evaluation (M&E)?

- Monitoring is the continuous assessment of project implementation in relation to agreed schedules, and of the use of inputs, infrastructure, and services by project beneficiaries
  - It is systematic, rigorous, routinely done and often focuses on two Es – efficiency, and efficacy
  - It identifies actual or potential successes and problems as early as possible to facilitate timely adjustments to project operation

- Evaluation is a rigorous, periodic, and scientifically-based assessment of a project's relevance, performance, efficiency, and impact (both expected and unexpected) in relation to stated objectives.
  - It is used to improve programmes and inform decisions about future resource allocation

The M & E system and evidence

- The 'M&E system' refers to the complete set of interlinked activities that must be undertaken in a coordinated way in order to
  - Plan for M&E
  - Gather and analyse information
  - Report findings
  - Support decision-making
  - Implement improvements in accountability, operational management, strategic management, knowledge creation, and empowerment

Components of the M&E system

Graphic from: 12 Components Monitoring and Evaluation System Strengthening Tool. Geneva: UNAIDS, 2009. Available from:
http://www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/document/2010/1_MERG_Assessment_12_Components_ME_System.pdf
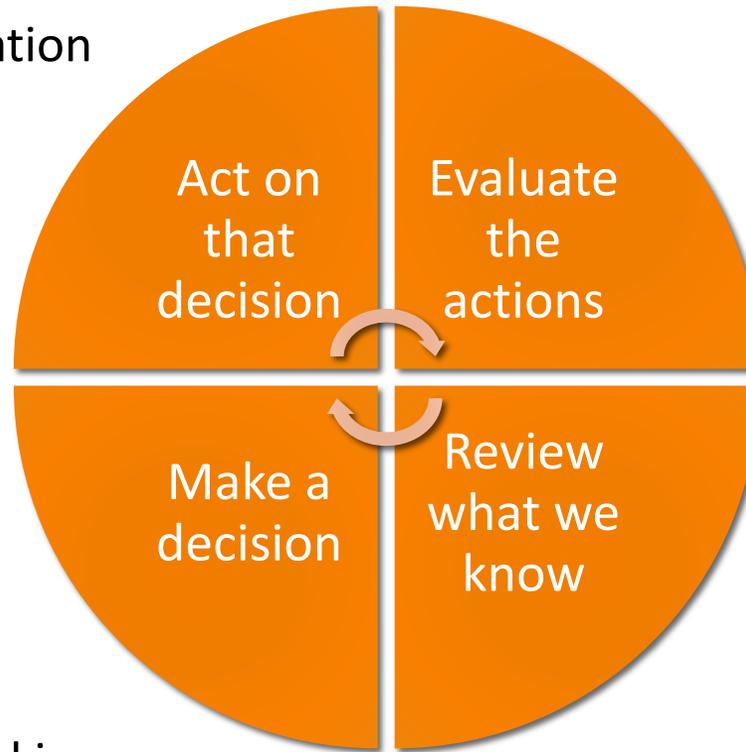
Products of the M&E system

- **Data**: raw and unprocessed facts, statistic or code; from an epistemological perspective an object of knowledge as presented to the mind
- **Information**: processed data or data presented in some sort of context
- **Evidence**: actual or asserted information intended for use in support of a conclusion; this information is known through observation or experience

A cycle of Evidence-Informed Decision-Making (EIDM)

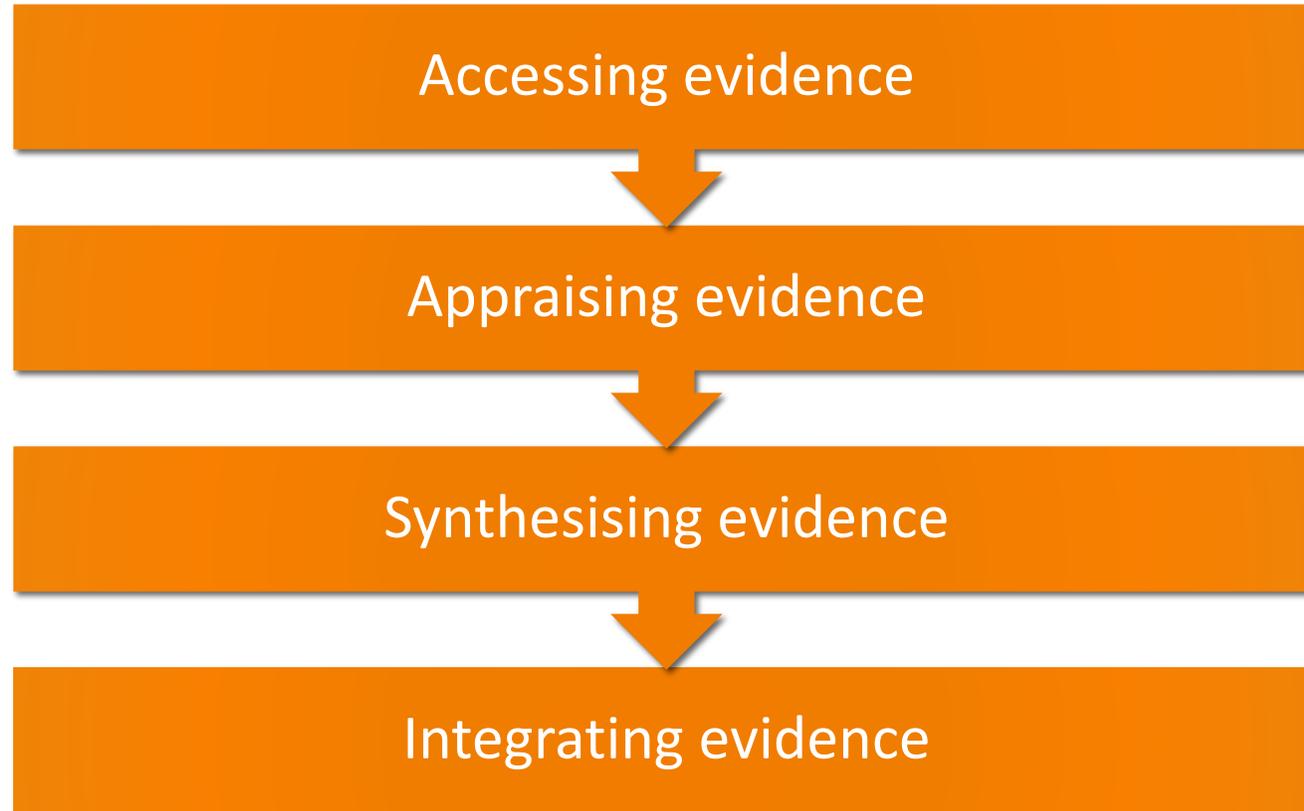- Implementation / action

- Monitoring, evaluation, and research

Act on that decision

Evaluate the actions

Make a decision

Review what we know

- Evidence-informed decision-making

- Reviewing the evidence

Steps towards EIDM

Accessing evidence

Appraising evidence

Synthesising evidence

Integrating evidence

Gough, D. and Thomas, J. 2012. Chapter 3: Commonality and diversity in reviews. In: Gough, D., Oliver, S. and Thomas, J. (eds) *An introduction to Systematic Reviews*. London: Sage.

What is 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

- Evidence is defined broadly

Evidence and policy-/decision-making

- Evidence-influenced policy uses the best available evidence to help planners make better-informed decisions

  - Evidence may include information from integrated monitoring and evaluation systems, academic research, historical experience and 'good practice' information

- Opinion-based policy relies heavily on the selective use of research evidence or the views of individuals or groups based on particular ideological viewpoints, values, etc.

- Evidence-influenced policy recognises that policy-making is an inherently political process, and that decision-makers may not be able to translate evidence into policy options due to various constraints
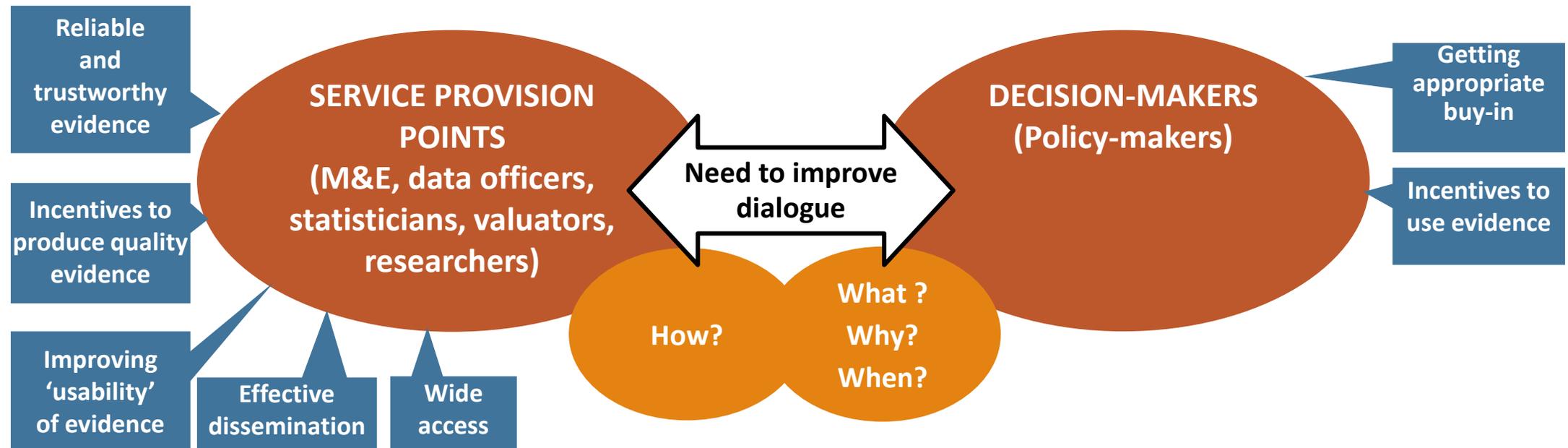
Follow up with policy-makers

▪What happens when evidence has been presented to policymakers?

▪Is there follow up on whether the evidence is being utilized in policy?

▪How important is follow up?

▪Examples of evidence that has been followed up with policy-makers

▪Whose responsibility is it to follow up?.

▪Challenges encountered when follow up is made

▪Is there need for a steering committee?

▪Ways to ensure that there is feedback and follow up with policy-makers

Exercise: M&E evidence

- What factors do you feel would affect the use of M&E evidence?

Increasing uptake of M&E evidence into policy decisions

Reliable and trustworthy evidence

Incentives to produce quality evidence

Improving 'usability' of evidence

Effective dissemination

Wide access

SERVICE PROVISION POINTS
(M&E, data officers, statisticians, valuators, researchers)

Need to improve dialogue

How?

What ? Why? When?

DECISION-MAKERS (Policy-makers)

Getting appropriate buy-in

Incentives to use evidence

Graphic adapted from: Segone, M. 2009. *Enhancing evidence-based policy making through country-led monitoring and evaluation systems.* UNICEF, Palais des Nations Switzerland, www.unicef.org/ceecis

Why is evidence produced?

- Having the best informed practitioners is vital to the immediate outcomes for highly disadvantaged people

- Good evidence may present a challenge to fundamental assumptions which may bring substantial advantages to service users

- Importance of providing safeguards over compulsory or quasi-compulsory decision-making

- Useful for an informed public

How does evidence production affect usefulness?

- The types of issues and questions addressed within the evidence

- Methods of data collection and the type of study used to produce the evidence

- Time taken from commissioning of the study to finalisation and publication of the findings

- Interaction with users (managers, etc.) during the conceptualisation phase, implementation, and final reporting

Challenges of using M&E evidence

- Timeliness of the information as it comes from the service delivery points

- Theory of change adopted by the M&E and programme management team without understanding

- Resistance to change

- There is no empirical data available on M&E's contribution to programme success or application as there is no counterfactual scenario

- Lack of incentives for decision-makers to utilize evidence

- Lack of:
  - Well trained M&E personnel
  - Analytical skills of M&E personnel
  - Ability of programme managers to interpret the data
  - Consensus on what constitutes evidence

What factors effect the use of evidence?

- Problems in interpreting and using research products, which are often viewed as too complex, academic, and statistical

- Individuals feel confident to use research-based information but lack their organisation's support to do so

- Relevance to, and fit with, practice and organisational issues

- Potential users sometimes feel that researchers and research products lack credibility and fail to offer the desired level of direction

- Lack of skills and sometimes motivation to use research themselves

- Hierarchy of decision makers (lower level cadre may be happy to simply take instructions from above with little understanding of it's significance)

Four key uses of M&E information

- M&E information can:
  - Support budgeting and planning processes when there is need for a more judicious allocation of scarce resources. Terms that describe the use of M&E information in this manner include evidence-based policymaking, results-based budgeting, and performance-informed budgeting
  - Help government departments in their policy development and policy analysis work and in programme development
  - Aid government departments to manage activities better. This includes government service delivery as well as the management of staff
  - Enhance transparency and support accountability by revealing the extent to which government has attained its desired objectives.
  - Have symbolic value as it can raise the profile of evaluated interventions, programme and contributes to the wide dissemination of findings

Why disseminate & utilise M&E evidence?

▪ M&E information:
- Is embedded in practice and therefore easily ploughed back to strengthen programmes
- Provides opportunity to engage all stakeholders
- Enhances and ensures accountability and reporting programme performance in line with overall goals
- Can be a very powerful tool to champion

for additional resources and useful for an informed public

- Can help in informing policies and advocacy, and can be vital to the immediate outcomes for highly disadvantaged people

- May present a challenge to fundamental assumptions about policy which may bring substantial advantages to service users

Contact details

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Citation

This presentation should be cited as: