

Translational Research: Experiences from the Population Council's Reproductive Health Program

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Overview of presentation

- Audiences and use of data
- Strategies to maximize use of data from research
- Lessons learned: strengthening translation / utilization of research in developing countries
- Turning Research into Practice – a framework
- Evaluating our utilization efforts – have we made a difference?
- Summary of key points

Which audiences do we seek to inform and influence – and why?

- Early days:
 - US, UN organizations, developing country policymakers
 - Focus on population, economy and environment
- Current audiences:
 - Policymakers / managers in developing country health, education and related sector programs
 - Donor and technical assistance organizations
 - Focus on understanding reproductive health behaviors, service needs and configurations

Types of data generated by Population Council

- Human reproductive processes and immunology
- Feasibility and effectiveness of contraceptive and microbicide technologies
- Social dimensions of poverty; determinants / consequences of gender inequality; disparities / vulnerabilities during adolescence
- Social, behavioral, and biomedical aspects of RH, HIV and AIDS
- Development, evaluation, and scale-up of effective service delivery models

Uses for data from research on RH behaviors and services

- ✓ Policy review and formulation
- ✓ Advocacy
- ✓ Resource allocation
- ✓ Planning and management
- ✓ Program systems development and strengthening
 1. Strengthening service delivery systems
 2. Improving information communication and service delivery to clients
 3. Scaling-up and replicating (cost-) effective systems and service delivery activities

Strategies for using research for:

- Policy review and formulation
- Advocacy
- Resource allocation
- Planning and management

- Translate and synthesize research findings into recommendations for decisions
- Communicate findings and recommendations through channels for targeted audiences
 - Conferences, publications, internet, etc.
- Pro-actively participate in committees, join interest groups, etc.
- Provide technical assistance during policy, planning and program design

Research for systems / services development and strengthening

- Data generated through:
 - Descriptive research to understand and diagnose
 - Experimental research to pilot-test alternative or new systems / services / activities
 - Evaluative research to assess existing services
- Data can provide evidence on:
 - Client behaviors, needs and preferences
 - Feasibility of systems / services
 - Acceptability
 - Effectiveness
 - Cost (and cost-effectiveness)

Strategies for using research to strengthen systems / services

1. Plan for utilization BEFORE starting the research
 -even BEFORE writing research proposal
 - even BEFORE obtaining funding
 - a. Who will be the users of the data?
 - b. What decisions can be influenced?
 - c. And can they commit themselves to making **and funding** the changes needed?

Maximizing use of research to strengthen systems / services

2. Engage and work with data users and other stakeholders throughout the research process
 - a. Involve them in research design – what data would convince them?
 - b. Give regular progress reports; encourage site visits
 - c. Work with them to interpret the results before finalizing

3. Undertake research in a favorable context
 - a. Feasibility and effectiveness when fully implemented
 - b. Well-performing sites (clinic or community)
 - c. Political and programmatic stability

Maximizing use of research to strengthen systems / services

4. Use strongest research design and methods
 - a. Experimental
 - b. Ethical
 - c. Collect data that can inform decisions

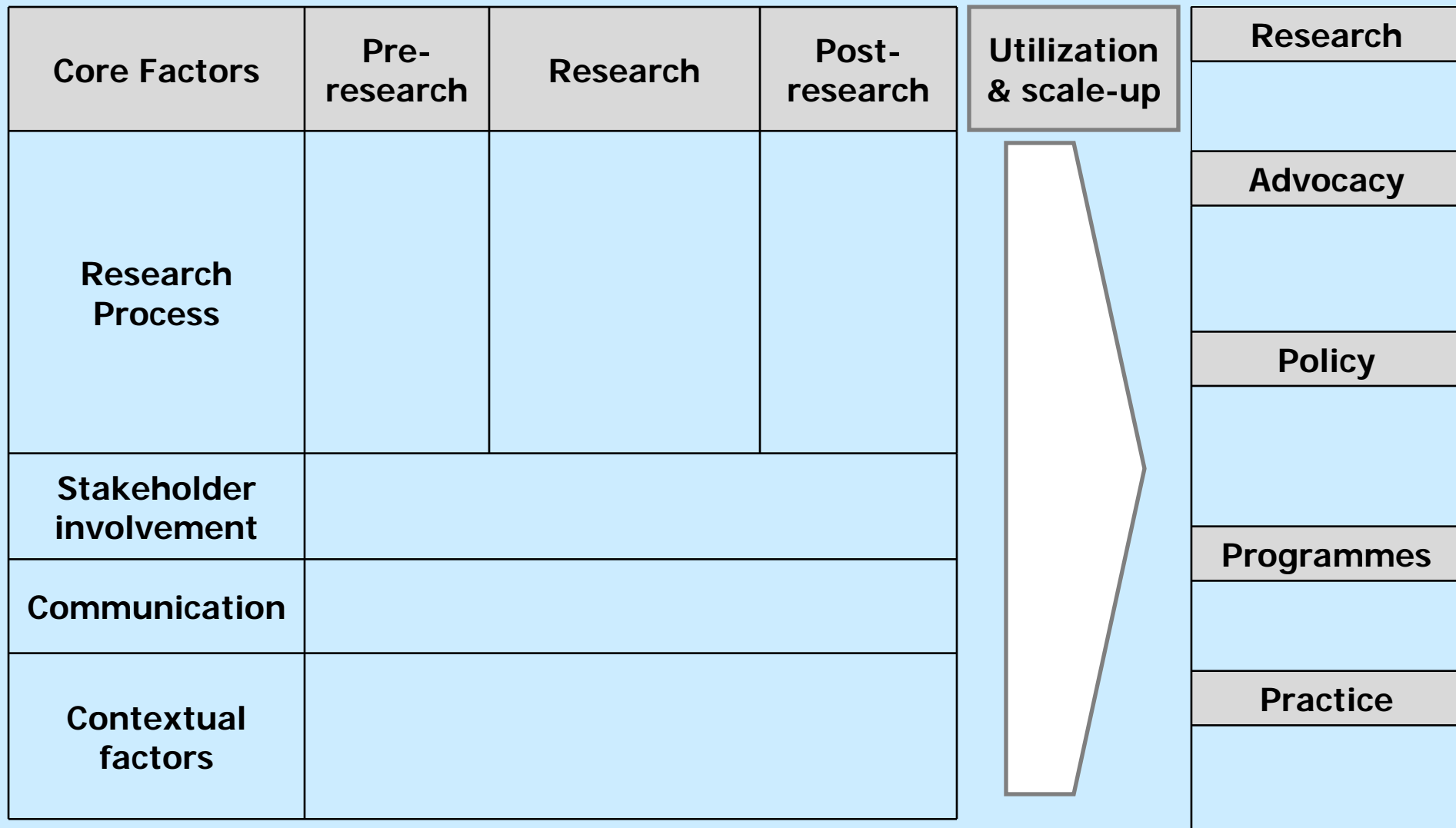
5. Analyze data quickly and prioritize results for needed for decisions
 - a. Keep initial analysis simple, yet appropriate
 - b. Involve decision-makers in analysis and interpretation
 - c. Translate data into actionable statements
 - d. Communicate to decision-makers and communities participating in study first

Maximizing use of research to strengthen systems / services

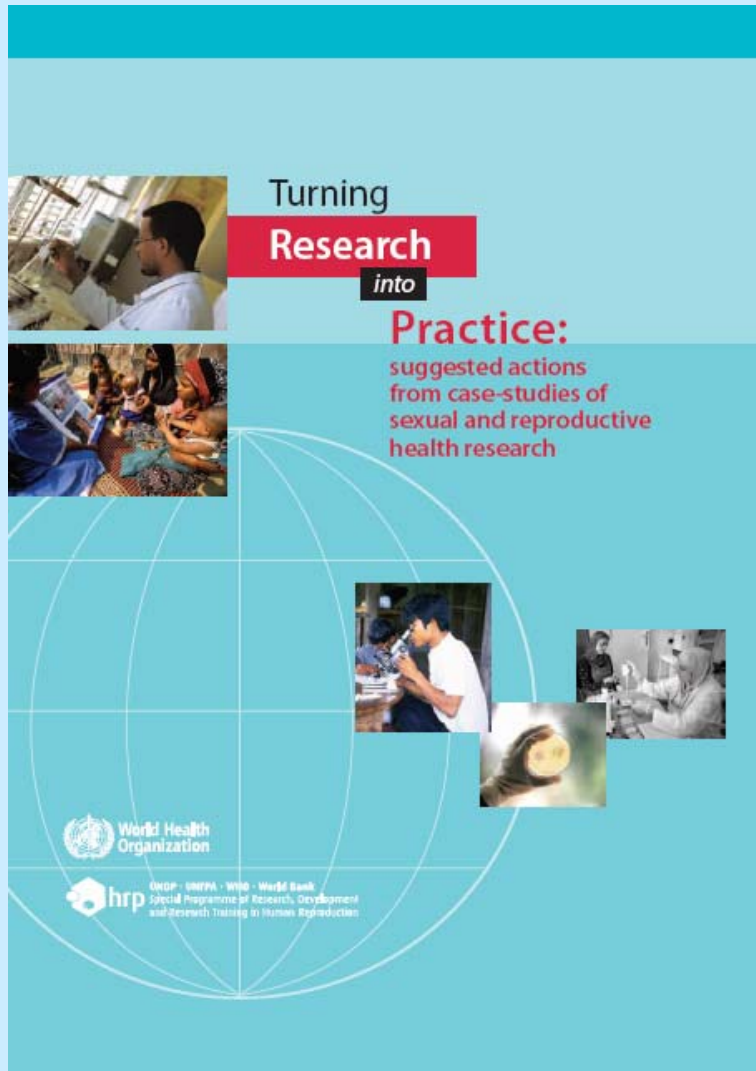
6. Plan for, budget for, and include a “utilization” phase within the research process
 - a. Service strengthening research should not end with dissemination of results
 - b. Provide technical assistance to services program to help in making changes indicated by results
 - c. Advocate widely for acceptance of changes, drawing from range of supportive data

**BUT...ONLY IF THE RESULTS DEMONSTRATE
FEASIBILITY, EFFECTIVENESS AND
POTENTIAL FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

Turning Research into Practice: A guiding framework



The TRIP framework – WHO and partners



See handout for example of applying TRIP to explain utilization of operations research on introducing Postabortion Care services in Francophone West Africa

Evaluating research utilization efforts – why is it important?

- ✓ Increasing recognition of the value of evidence-based policy making and services programming
- ✓ Research needs to demonstrate “making a difference” to the funder and the funder’s funder
- ✓ Justifies allocation of resources and prioritizes future allocations
- ✓ Focuses researchers’ attention on utilization and application
- ✓ Helps improve design and implementation of research to increase likelihood of utilization

Evaluating operations research: A framework and indicators

- 14 process indicators
 - Who participated
 - Implemented as planned
 - Methodology
 - Credible and relevant results
 - Result availability and accessibility
- 11 utilization indicators
- 6 contextual factors
 - Factors facilitating research and/or utilization
 - Factors hindering research and/or utilization
 - Did funder use results
 - Cost assessment included

EVALUATION MANUAL

EVALUATING OPERATIONS RESEARCH UTILIZATION:
GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING PROCESS AND IMPACT

M. CELESTE MARIN
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FAMILY HEALTH INTERNATIONAL
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USAID COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT NO. HRN-A-00-98-00012-00

Key utilization outcomes

1. Improvements made to program?
2. (If successful) improvements scaled up?
3. (If successful) improvements replicated?
4. Policy (re-) formulated?
5. Increased funding available?
6. Organizational capacity enhanced?

Summary of key points

- Successful translational research starts before and ends after the research study
- Agree on and plan for how data will be used from research **well before** starting research process – get commitment from users first
- No formula for maximizing utilization – but process now well understood and guidance available
- See “influencing decisions” as your primary goal – and be prepared to be evaluated accordingly