International experiences in mobilizing knowledge to improve health systems

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New Approaches to Knowledge Mobilization Conference
July 2018, Sydney, Australia
Presentation overview

WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION?

THE PROBLEM IN LMIC HEALTH SYSTEMS

THE EVOLUTION OF KMB IN GLOBAL HEALTH

NEW HORIZONS

Bridging the worlds of research and policy
WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION?
Definitions

- **Knowledge mobilization**: a two-way process that makes use of the existing stock of knowledge and co-creates new knowledge to help foster change. (Shaxson et al. 2012)
Different approaches for similar goal...

Knowledge translation  
Knowledge transfer  
Knowledge mobilization  
Evidence use  
Embedded research
THE PROBLEM IN LMIC HEALTH SYSTEMS
Knowledge is crucial to build stronger health systems

- **Universal Health Coverage** needs well functioning health systems with policies informed by knowledge and evidence.

- **Health Policy and Systems Research (HPSR):** mature field of research focused on changing policy and practice to strengthen health systems.

Still – there are significant gaps in knowledge mobilisation to improve health systems in low and middle income countries (LMICs).
Making sense of KMb gaps in LMIC health systems

Supply side factors

- Growth in HPSR but not comparable with biomedical research (e.g. NIH annual budget USD 30 billion)
- Research doesn’t answer questions asked by health system decisionmakers
- Research often driven by external funders and universities, reflecting their priorities
- Capacity gaps in LMIC institutions
- All forms of knowledge not recognized (e.g. tacit and experiential knowledge, grey literature)

Number of HPSR publications
All countries, all publications from 1990-2015

HPSR funding
(US$ mil)

- United States: 1263
- World Bank (IBRD & IDA): 894
- Global Fund: 575
- Gates Foundation: 492
- Canada: 215
- United Kingdom: 123
- Norway: 110
- Australia: 39
- France: 37
- Sweden: 32

370% increase
Demand side factors

- Knowledge sometimes “out there” but not available to those who need it, when they need it
- Research exists, but does not answer questions that health system decision-makers ask
- Absence of platforms for evidence sharing and dialogue
- Norms and culture of evidence use in health systems often poorly developed
Disconnect between worlds of knowledge and action

- Incentive systems for the two communities are divergent
- Limited opportunity for collaboration and dialogue

Bridging the worlds of research and policy
Objectives:

• Providing a unique forum for the health policy & systems research community
• Supporting institutional capacity for the conduct and uptake of health policy and systems research
• Stimulating the generation of knowledge and innovations to nurture learning and resilience in health systems
• Increasing the demand for and use of knowledge for strengthening health systems
THE EVOLUTION OF KMB IN GLOBAL HEALTH
The evolution of KMb in global health

• Heavily influenced by the evidence-based medicine paradigm, now beginning to embrace non-linear political science thinking: evidence-informed policy

• Initial focus on supply side actions is now transforming into approaches based on dialogue and partnerships

• This involves fundamental challenges to traditional academic paradigms of scholarly communication and dissemination

• Attribution of complex pathways of impact on policy and practice remains an issue
The turn towards “embedding” research

“An approach to health systems research in which research is carried out as an integrated and systematic part of decision-making and implementation processes.”

(Ghaffar et al. 2017)
• In Peru, the Alliance supported embedded implementation research project under the leadership of the Ministry of Health, PAHO and an academic institution, shed light on the fragmentation of health services for TB and HIV coinfected patients.

• The results informed the development of an integrated care model for HIV and TB now being scaled-up nationally with a US$10 million grant from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria.
The Nigraan project in Pakistan involved embedded implementation research to develop and test program design for supportive supervision for lady health supervisors (LHS), to improve community case management of pneumonia and diarrhoea in children under five years.

The NIGRAAN project has now obtained a 1-million USD grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to scale-up the design in one other District of Sindh Province.
Nigeria

- In Ogun State, Nigeria, an embedded participatory action research project focused on establishing dialogues between communities, health providers, and local government to create action plans for improving immunization services.

- The dialogues created social pressure for change making health workers more available and accountable to citizens.

![Percent un-immunized chart](chart.png)

- 2014: 53%
- 2015: 40%
- 2016: 20%
- 2017: 9%

Intervention period
Learning from the VOICES project in India was incorporated into the National Health Mission’s policy guidance on Village Health, Sanitation, and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC) to all states.

India has more than 600,000 VHSNCs - key mechanisms for community participation and accountability of health systems.

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Public Health Foundation of India collaborated to test implementation of a support package to strengthen VHSNCs, and refined the package for scale-up.
Alliance’s embedded research portfolio

3 initiatives; 7 calls; 33 countries; 90 projects
Rapid review to address decision-maker requests
Embedding Research Units in Health Systems Decision-Making

- **2018-2019**: Alliance will integrate review services directly within health system institutions.

- Embedding RApid Reviews in Health Systems Decision-Making (ERA)
  - stimulate the production and use of demand-driven and policy-relevant knowledge.
  - embedded units will respond to timely requests for rapid health policy and systems research syntheses, expressed by decision-makers.
Key challenges

• How do we know what works? Attribution and tracking of complex impact pathways

• Domestic commitment is needed – which is a political rather than technical process

• The incentive systems in the research and academic professions worldwide are deeply entrenched and not well aligned to KMb

• The spread of disinformation globally, especially with the proliferation of social media, needs to be countered
New horizons

Bridging the worlds of research and policy
New horizons

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Thank you!

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