

Chapter 3.7: Research Resources to Support Policy and New Research

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Learning objectives

To understand:

1. Key research resources on the effects of interventions in Health EDRM
2. How to access these resources
3. How the evidence from this research might be used in decision making

Looking for Research Evidence: Challenges

Evidence :

- Helps policy makers and practitioners to understand what works, where, why and for whom.
- Helps to mitigate health and disaster risks.
- Helps to avoid interventions which may cause harm.
- Can, and should, inform operational and strategic decision making.
- However, using evidence can present challenges.

Looking for Research Evidence: Challenges

The contested
nature of
evidence

Evidence is
seldom
definitive

Scientific vs
'real world'
validity

The role of
expertise and
experience

The influence of
beliefs and
ideology

The urgency of
humanitarian
action

Too much
evidence

Not all evidence
is of equal
quality

Looking for Research Evidence: Challenges

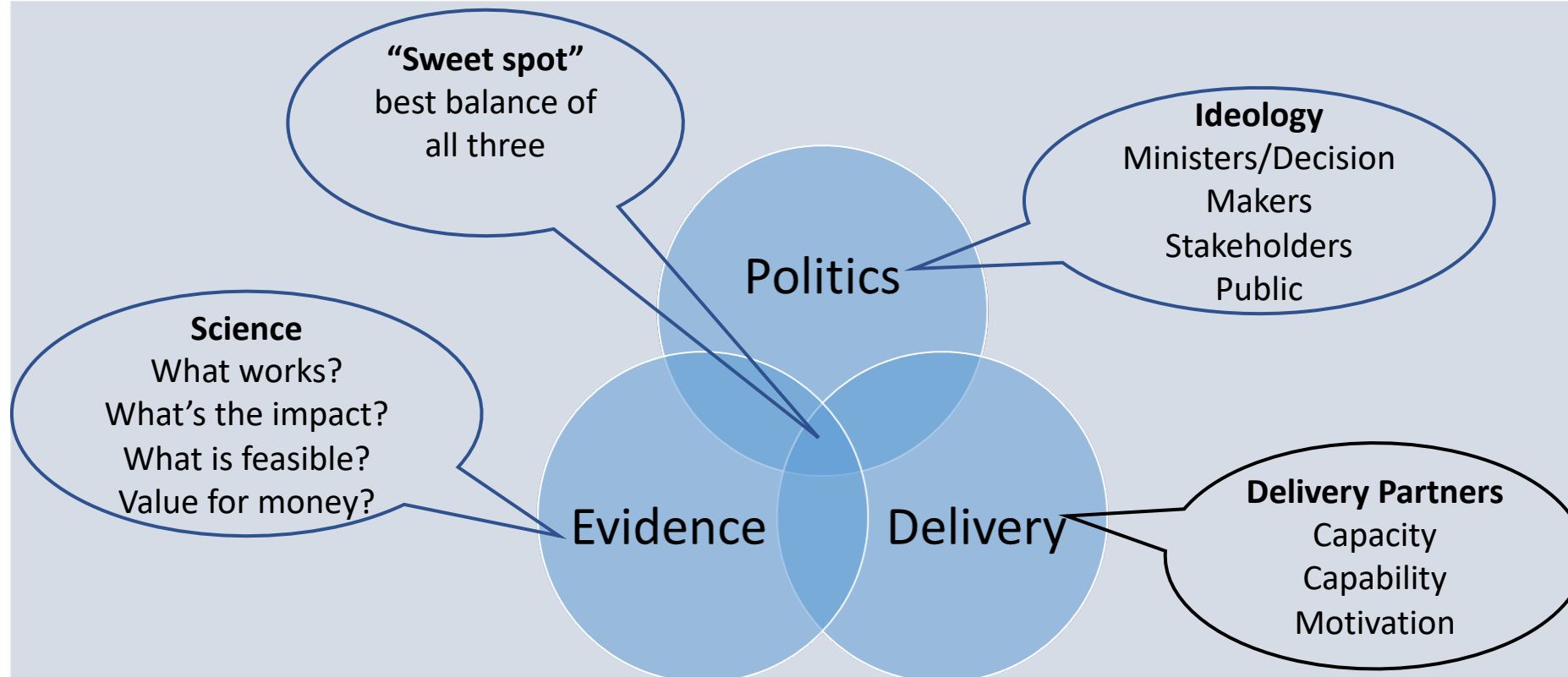
For policy makers and practitioners:

- It is often difficult to understand what evidence actually exists even though they wish to use it .

For researchers:

- It may be challenging to see what gaps are present in the evidence base and hence where to direct scarce research resources.

Policy Venn Diagram

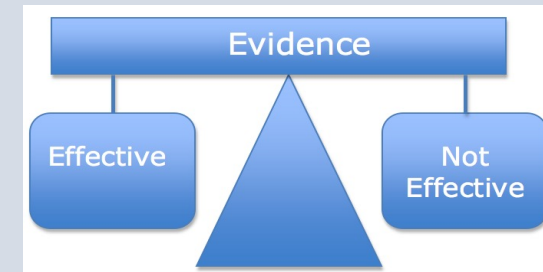


The Evidence Base for Interventions in Health EDRM

Question	Evidence
• What works? • Which intervention is (most) effective?	Experimental and Quasi-Experimental studies
• How does the intervention work? • What makes it work?	Process evaluation Theory of Change Analysis Qualitative studies Case studies/Field studies
• Is it good value for money?	Economic Appraisal
• What does the totality of the available evidence tell us?	Evidence Synthesis Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis

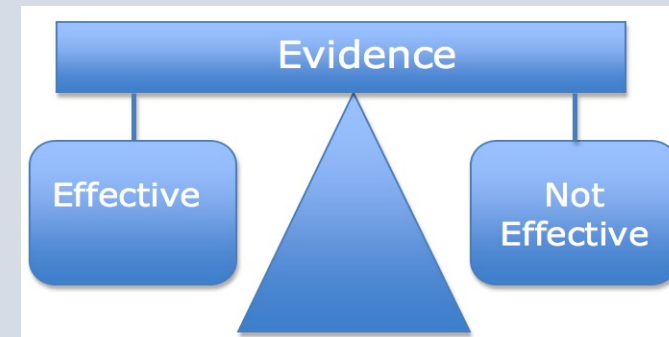
What is Evidence Synthesis? (see Chapter 2.6)

- A way of establishing the *overall balance* of global empirical evidence on a topic or policy
- A comprehensive gathering and critical appraisal of the available evidence
- Separates higher quality from lower quality evidence
- Considered the highest form of valid and reliable evidence



Types of Evidence Synthesis (see Chapter 2.6)

- Statistical Meta-Analyses
- Narrative Systematic Reviews
- Rapid Evidence Assessments
- Qualitative Systematic Reviews
- Evidence Maps and Gap Maps



Case Study: *Mapping and synthesizing the evidence base*

- Creates 'Evidence Gap Maps' (Zie, 2013)
- Provides a visual display of existing evidence on a topic
- From systematic reviews and impact evaluations
- Structured around a framework of interventions and outcomes
- Identifies where there is, and is not, existing evidence

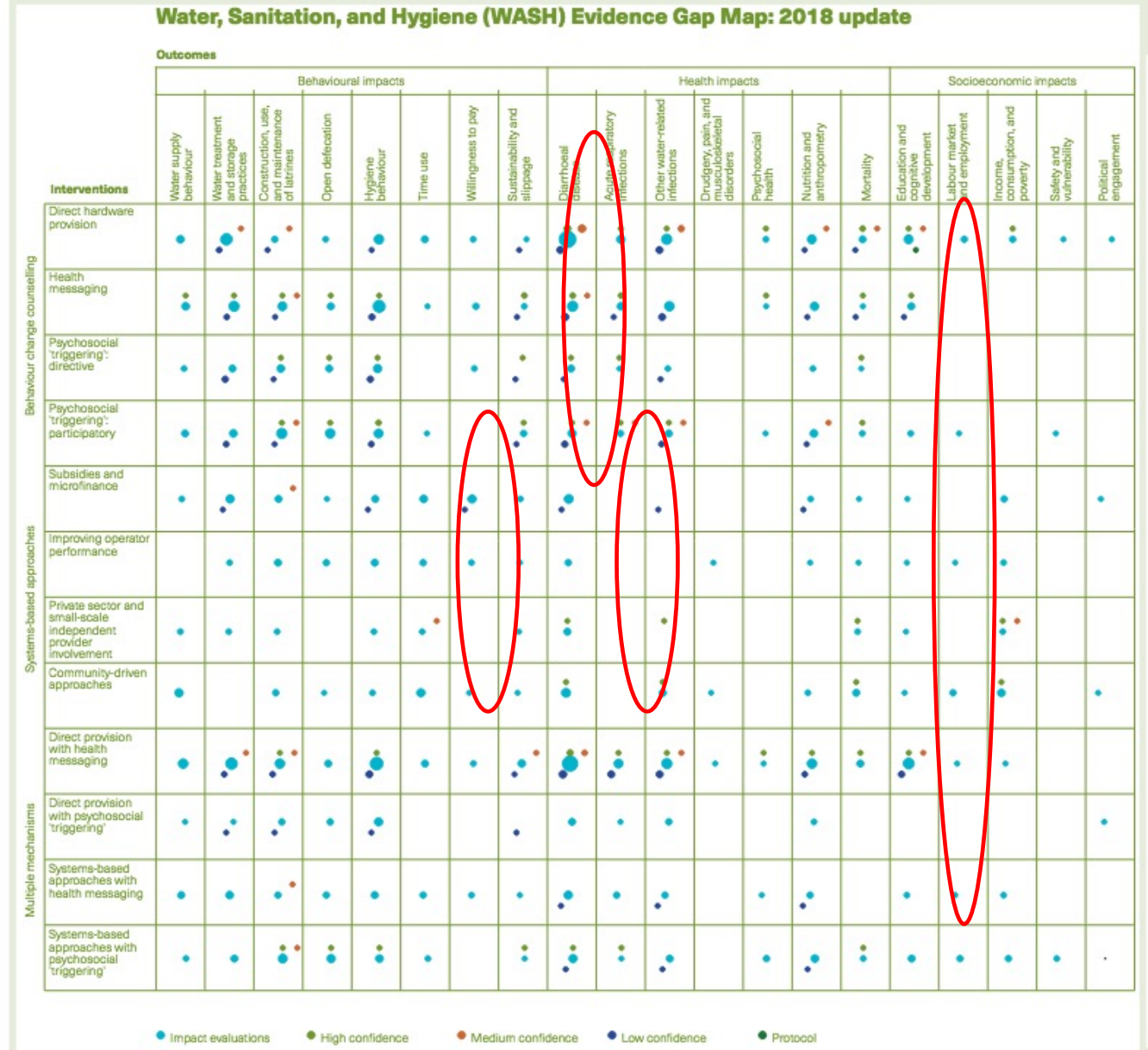
Case Study:

Mapping and synthesizing the evidence base

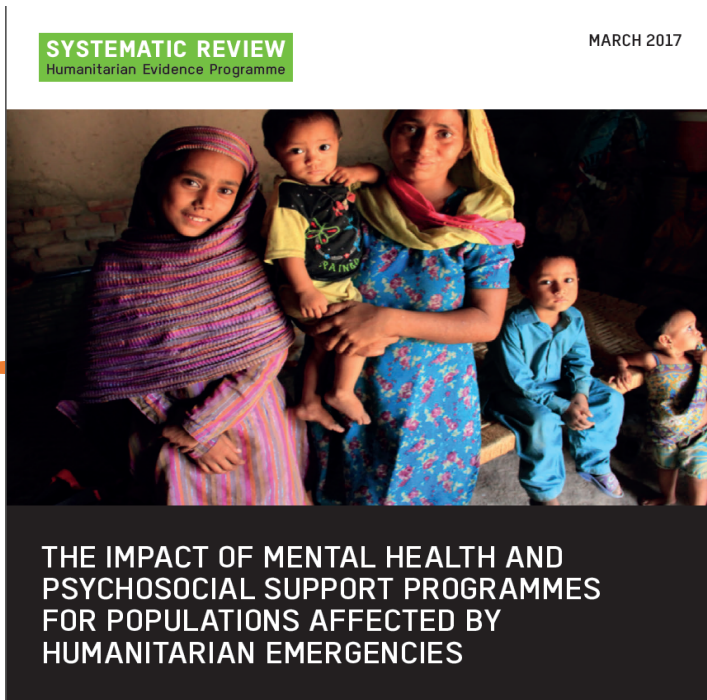


<https://www.3ieimpact.org/>

Figure 3.7.1 Example of a 3ie gap map, on water, sanitation and health*



Case Study: Statistical Meta- Analysis



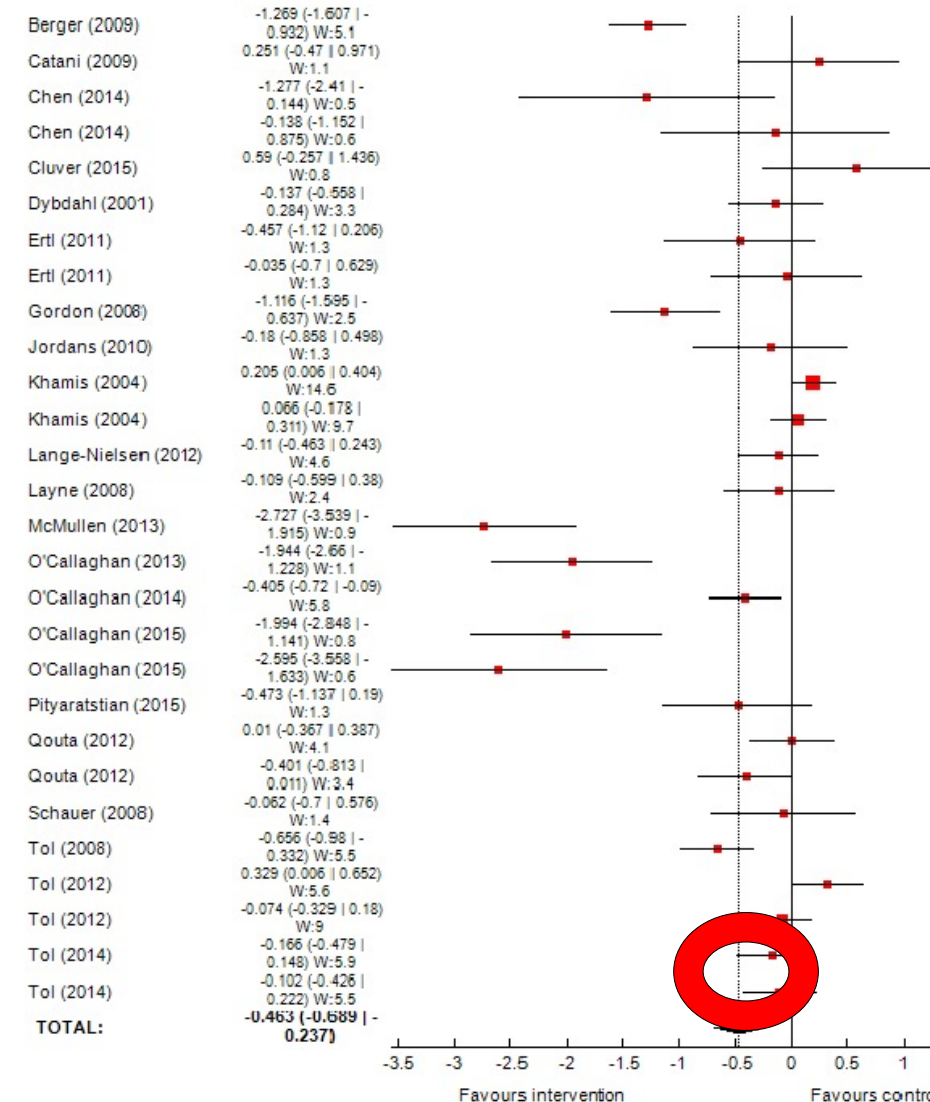
Source: Bangpan, M., Dickson, K., Felix, L. and Chiumento, A. (2017).

Figure 5.7: Forest plot – pooled SMD of MHPSS studies reporting PTSD, random effects model (n=21)

Measure: Continuous: d (Hedges g)

Heterogeneity: $Q = 206$; $df = 27$; $p = 0$; $I^2 = 86.9\%$; $\tau^2 = 0.29$

Random effects model: -0.463 (-0.689, -0.237)



Key Message

"MHPSS programmes probably slightly reduce PTSD symptoms"

Case Study:

Evidence Collections of Systematic Reviews



<https://evidenceaid.org/>

- Developed by Evidence Aid
- Review and curate systematic reviews on a range of topics in humanitarian aid
- Provide accessible, synthesized evidence that can be used to inform decision-making
- Consist of one-page summaries of systematic reviews
- Built around: What works; what doesn't work; what is uncertain
- Provide links to the original reviews

Case Study: Evidence Collections of Systematic Reviews



<https://evidenceaid.org/>

The screenshot shows the Evidence Aid website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Evidence Aid logo on the left and links for "Search all resources", "Evidence collections" (highlighted in red), "About us", "News and blog", "Training and events", "Contact", and "Donate" on the right. A "My selections" button is also visible in the top right corner. The main heading is "Evidence collections". Below this, a paragraph states: "In our evidence collections we bring together a curated selection of some of our most topical and most used resources. To see a full list of all resources, go to [search all resources](#)." Another line of text mentions: "Four additional collections have been created in collaboration with Cochrane. [View the Cochrane – Evidence Aid collections](#)." The page features a grid of ten collection tiles, each with a title, a representative image, and a "Read more >" button. The tiles are: "Earthquakes" (debris), "Health of refugees and asylum seekers" (tent), "Humanitarian impact of climate change" (hands), "Japanese guidelines on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)" (text), "Prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition" (child), "Resilient Health Systems" (healthcare workers), "Windstorms" (clouds), "Zika" (mosquito), "Coronavirus (COVID-19)" (microscopic view), and "Ebola" (medical equipment).

evidenceaid

Search all resources **Evidence collections** About us News and blog Training and events Contact Donate

Evidence collections

In our evidence collections we bring together a curated selection of some of our most topical and most used resources. To see a full list of all resources, go to [search all resources](#).

Four additional collections have been created in collaboration with Cochrane. [View the Cochrane – Evidence Aid collections](#).

Earthquakes
Read more >

Health of refugees and asylum seekers
Read more >

Humanitarian impact of climate change
Read more >

Japanese guidelines on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Read more >

Prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition
Read more >

Resilient Health Systems
Read more >

Windstorms
Read more >

Zika
Read more >

Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Read more >

Ebola
Read more >

Case Study: Outcomes and Evidence Framework



<https://www.rescue.org/>

- Developed by the International Rescue Committee
- As an aid to using research synthesis in practice
- A publicly available online platform
- Built around the outcomes and sub-outcomes to be achieved
- Summarises the best available evidence on the effectiveness of interventions
- With a primary focus on evidence from systematic reviews

Case Study: Outcomes and Evidence Framework



<https://www.rescue.org/>

CHOOSE AN OUTCOME			
SAFETY			
AT HOME → People are safe in their homes and receive support when they experience harm DESCRIPTION ⓘ	AT SCHOOL → Students are safe in their schools and receive support when they experience harm DESCRIPTION ⓘ	IN THEIR COMMUNITY → People are safe in their communities and receive support when they experience harm DESCRIPTION ⓘ	AT WORK → People are safe in their work places and receive support when they experience harm DESCRIPTION ⓘ
HEALTH			
PREGNANCY & CHILDBIRTH → Women and adolescent girls are protected from and treated for complications of pregnancy and childbirth DESCRIPTION ⓘ	NEONATAL CARE → Children are protected from and treated for neonatal complications DESCRIPTION ⓘ	MALNUTRITION → Children are protected from and treated for malnutrition DESCRIPTION ⓘ	CHILDREN & COMMUNICABLE DISEASES → Children are protected from and treated for communicable diseases DESCRIPTION ⓘ
NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES → People are protected from and treated for the consequences of non-communicable diseases DESCRIPTION ⓘ	UNINTENDED PREGNANCY → Women and girls prevent unintended pregnancy DESCRIPTION ⓘ	STIS → Women and girls are protected from and treated for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV DESCRIPTION ⓘ	GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE → Women and girls are protected from and treated for the consequences of gender-based violence (GBV) DESCRIPTION ⓘ
WATER & SANITATION DISEASES → People are protected from water, sanitation, and hygiene-related diseases DESCRIPTION ⓘ	ADULTS & COMMUNICABLE DISEASES → Adults are protected from and treated for communicable diseases DESCRIPTION ⓘ	MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT → People are protected from and treated for mental health and psychosocial support concerns DESCRIPTION ⓘ	

Repositories of Research Evidence and Systematic Reviews



<https://www.3ieimpact.org/>



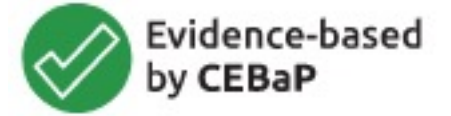
<https://ghi.aub.edu.lb/about-us/>



<https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/>



<https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/>



<https://www.cebap.org/>



<https://www.cochrane.org/>



Research for Development Outputs

<https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs>



<https://www.elrha.org/>



<https://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/>



<https://evidenceaid.org/>



<https://hhi.harvard.edu/>



<https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/research/centres/health-humanitarian-crises-centre>

Humanitarian and Conflict Response Unit

<https://www.hcri.manchester.ac.uk/>



<https://www.rescue.org/>



<https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/>



<http://hopkinshumanitarianhealth.org>



Feinstein International Center
<https://fic.tufts.edu/>



<https://www.unicef-irc.org/>



Emergencies: Humanitarian Health Action
www.who.int/hac/techguidance/en

Key messages

- Policy makers and practitioners in Health EDRM can and should make systematic use of high-quality evidence to inform operational and strategic decision making.
- Researchers should consider the evidence from existing research before embarking on a new study.
- Systematic reviews and other forms of evidence synthesis may offer a pathway to turn this high-quality evidence into sound policy and effective interventions.
- Many such reviews are available in free-to-access repositories such as those listed in this chapter.

Further readings

Blanchet K, Allen C, Breckon J, Davies P, Duclos D, Jansen J, et al. Using Research Evidence in the Humanitarian Sector: A practice guide. London, UK: Evidence Aid, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Nesta (Alliance for Useful Evidence). 2018.

This booklet describes how evidence coming from research and evaluation can help you understand what works, where, why and for whom. It can also tell you what does not work, and help you avoid repeating the failures of others by learning from evaluations of unsuccessful humanitarian programmes. Evidence can also guide the design of the most effective ways to deliver specific interventions.

Further readings

Blanchet K, Sistenich V, Ramesh A, Frison S, Warren E, Smith J, et al. An Evidence Review of Research on Health Interventions in Humanitarian Crises. The Harvard School of Public Health and the Overseas Development Institute. 2015.

This review provides a rigorous assessment of the quality and depth of the evidence-base that informs humanitarian public health programming globally, assessing the quantity and quality of intervention studies, rather than measuring the actual effectiveness of the intervention itself.

Further readings

Clarke M, Allen C, Archer F, Wong D, Eriksson A, Puri J. What evidence is available and what is required, in humanitarian assistance? 3ie Scoping Paper 1. New Delhi: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie). 2014 https://www.3ieimpact.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/3ie_scoping_paper_1-humanitarian-top.pdf (accessed 4 January 2020)

In this scoping paper, the authors identify information that should help researchers and others who wish to identify topics in the humanitarian sector that are likely to benefit from new research (in particular, impact evaluations). It is based on a study that used an online survey and semi-structured interviews with experts from the humanitarian sector to identify their evidence needs and mapped these needs to available evidence. The authors conclude that further operational research and impact evaluation efforts can identify additional humanitarian research evidence gaps.

References

- This chapter:** Allen, C., Davies, P., Taylor, B. H. Research resources to support policy and new research **Using Research Evidence in the Humanitarian Sector: A practice guide.** Evidence Aid, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Nesta (Alliance for Useful Evidence). 2018.
- What does evidence mean? Most languages translate 'evidence' into 'proof'.** Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice. 2017: 23(5): 971-3.
- What evidence is available and what is required, in humanitarian assistance?** https://www.3ieimpact.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/3ie_scoping_paper_1-humanitarian-top.pdf
- What methods may be used in impact evaluations of humanitarian assistance?** doi:10.23846/WP0022.
- The use of systematic reviews and other research evidence in disasters and related areas: preliminary report of a needs assessment survey.** PLoS Currents: Disasters 2013: January 22.
- What makes an academic paper useful for health policy?** BMC Medicine 2015: 13: 301.
- The impact of mental health and psychosocial support interventions on people affected by humanitarian emergencies: A systematic review.** Humanitarian Evidence Programme. Oxford: Oxfam GB. 2017.
- WHO Handbook for Guideline Development.** Geneva: WHO. 2015.
- Prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition in humanitarian emergencies: a multi-organization collaboration to increase access to synthesized evidence.** Journal of International Humanitarian Action. 2019: 4: 11.

References (continued)

Prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition in emergencies and humanitarian crises. www.evidenceaid.org/prevention-and-treatment-of-acute-malnutrition-in-emergencies-and-humanitarian-crises/

The Outcomes and Evidence Framework. International Rescue Committee. oef.rescue.org

Feasibility of a rapid response mechanism to meet policymakers' urgent needs for research evidence about health systems in a low income country: a case study. Implementation Science. 2014; 9: 114.

Online collections of research for the humanitarian sector [web page]. Evidence Aid. 16 May 2018. www.evidenceaid.org/online-collections-of-research-for-the-humanitarian-sector (accessed 21 May 2020).

Contact Information

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