

Introduction

ResUpMeetUp was orchestrated as a symposium and training event for anyone interested in research uptake and knowledge management. This 4-day event brought together over 100 participants eager to learn and exchange ideas about research uptake in all its various forms. COMDIS-HSD was represented by Sudeep Uprety of Health Research and Social Development Forum (HERD, Nepal), Badru Gidudu Walimbwa of Malaria Consortium (Uganda), and Simin Deng of Global Health Research and Development (GHRD, China). Below are their reflections on the event.

Simin Deng, GHRD

Uptake, downtake and sidetake

What is research uptake? This question has been stuck in my head for a long time. In China, at least for now, research uptake is not valued as much as in other countries, and research uptake is quite new concept to me. During the symposium, we tried to define it in a small session, but it turns out to be a tough concept to define. Actually, research uptake is a broad field, and it can be defined diversely in different contexts. Also, it is an ongoing process and it requires long term investment, partnership and a clear strategy. Moreover, 'uptake' can happen to be 'sidetake' or 'downtake' sometimes. Most research aims at a practical level – the public or practitioners – rather than policy makers. In this case, 'uptake' could be regarded as 'downtake'. Before ideas from research can be generalised and taken up by policymakers, those ideas should be known by other researchers first; a kind of peer-review. This is how 'sidetake' works.

The impact of research uptake and how to measure it

In many cases, research objectives are not consistent with policymakers and community needs. To increase the impact of research uptake, we need to meet the priorities of stakeholders and to realise who the audiences are, what the current situation is, and what the public interest is. But how to measure the impact is still a critical issue and needs to be discussed. As I learned from the meeting, UKCDS has posted guidelines on [evaluating the impact of research uptake](#).

Evidence matters

'We need beliefs, ideologies, values to be challenged by evidence from well synthesised quality research, and those things are what drives policy', said Philip Davies from 3IE. Yes, evidence is everywhere. However, what we need is high quality evidence that would not bias the synthesis. Systematic review is one of the approaches for evidence synthesis.

Pitching

I've never pitched to donors before, so this was an interesting and practical session. Dr. Dennis Garrity from the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) gave an inspiring speech on pitching for impact. He shared his experience of pitching to donors and policymakers. He also indicated that building trust and personal relationships is crucial for partnership building. When pitching, one should know who the audiences are, what they are interested in, and, most importantly, donors like seeking low-risk investment projects, just like bankers. Also, telling stories and making conversations is the path to giving a perfect pitch.

Sudeep Uprety, HERD

This event has been really helpful in terms of being exposed to very high profile professionals working in RU. As [media engagement](#) was highlighted in the symposium as one of the major components of research uptake, the participants have realised its importance and, based on discussions, could possibly be one of the major components of a RU strategy document which shall be produced after this event. The training sessions were particularly helpful and introduced me to a diverse range of ways of communicating our research products.

Badru Gidudu Walimbwa, Malaria Consortium

DFID's approach to research uptake: How to develop an uptake strategy

This session was facilitated by Kate Oshea of DFID. She took us through the basics about DFID including their key investment areas and how much DFID is willing to spend on research. In regard to [developing an uptake strategy](#), she emphasised that for every study, one should first identify the audience or stakeholders, map their interests, identify who has power and who you can influence.

Key messaging and pitching for impact: How to influence decision makers to take up research

This session was facilitated by ICRAF with a key note address from Dr Dennis Garrity, Dryland Ambassador for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and Senior Fellow at ICRAF. In his address, he mentioned that policy makers are sometimes like donors who may have an idea of what you want to talk about, but would want you to present the facts/evidence to them in a logical and convincing manner. There is a need to build strong personal relationship with some of the policy makers and engage them through the study process in order to increase uptake. He suggested the following as tips for preparing briefs:

- Know your audience very well
- Be clear about your findings and facts
- Tell the story and demonstrate why they should care
- Present your actions/recommendations and present them as doable
- Bear in mind that not all research uptake activities lead to policy change