

GETTING RESEARCH INTO POLICY & PRACTICE (GRIPP): COLLAPSING THE THICK WALL BETWEEN POLICY MAKERS RESEARCHERS & USERS

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Outline



- **Introduction**
- **Actors involved in GRIPP**
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- **Key Enablers and Challenges of GRIPP**
- **Improving the relationship b/w research and policy makers: what must we do?**
- **Balancing technical processes with social relations in GRIPP**
- **End Note**

Introduction



- **Getting research into policy and practice (GRIPP) is a process of going from research evidence to decisions**
- Getting Evidence into Policy and Practice (GEPP), Knowledge translation (KT), Knowledge uptake (KU), translating research into practice and policy (TRIPP) etc.
- **Involves Four broad issues: Producing evidence, Stakeholder engagement, Communicating evidence, Using evidence in decisions**
- A tasking exercise but, must be done if to inform policy and change practice

Actors in GRIPP



The process of GRIPP involves four main actors that can be reached through different networks:

- **Researchers**
- **Policymakers**
- **Implementers (street level bureaucrats)**
- **Policy Beneficiaries**

Experiences of an African Health Policy Research Group (HPRG) in GRIPP activities, trying to influence our domestic policy makers

Benjamin Uzochukwu, Obinna Onwujekwe, Chinyere Mbachu, Chinenye Okwuosa, Enyi Etiaba, Monica E. Nyström and Lucy Gilson. The challenge of bridging the gap between researchers and policy makers: experiences of a Health Policy Research Group in engaging policy makers to support evidence informed policy making in Nigeria. *Globalization and Health* 2016, 12:67 DOI: 10.1186/s12992-016-0209-1

3 Categories of HPRG studies with 4 GRIPPRESYST Strategies



- 1. Policy maker-initiated empirical research studies**
- 2. Projects directly addressing GRIPP itself**
- 3. Researcher-initiated empirical research studies**

Four HPRG GRIPP strategies



Researcher-initiated
empirical research
studies



Policy maker-initiated
empirical research
studies



*Strategy 1 (S1): Policymakers
and stakeholders seeking
evidence from researchers*

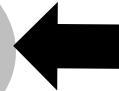
*Strategy 2 (S2):
Involving stakeholders
in designing objectives
of a research and
throughout the
research period*

*Strategy 4 (S4):
Active dissemination
of own research
findings to relevant
stakeholders and
policymakers*

GRIPP

*Strategy 3 (S3):
Facilitating policy maker-
researcher engagement in best
ways of using research findings
to influence policy and practice*

Projects directly
addressing GRIPP
itself



1. Policy maker-initiated empirical research studies:

Polycymakers and stakeholders seeking evidence from researchers (S1)



- Objectives set together and research carried out together
 - Held several workshops and briefing meetings **before, during and after** the research.
 - The **active collaboration and participation** by the stakeholders facilitated the dissemination and acceptability of the results.
 - **Close and long relationship between the HPRG researchers and policy makers particularly in Anambra and Enugu States facilitated this (Partnership & Trust).**
 - **Evidence exists that the States implemented the results of the project.**
- Examining appropriate diagnosis and treatment of malaria: availability and use of RDTs and ACTs in public and private health facilities in Enugu southeast Nigeria (S1)
 - **Accountability mechanism for implementing the BHCPF (S1)**
 - **Policy brief in place long before National implementation strategy was produced**
 - **Input into national implementation strategy**

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2. Policy maker-initiated empirical research studies: :

Involving stakeholders in designing objectives of a research and throughout the research period (S2)



- Objectives were set by researchers and validated by policy makers in line with their preferences and research carried out together
- Several workshops and briefing meetings throughout the research.
- The active collaboration and participation by the stakeholders facilitated the dissemination and acceptability of the results.
- **Relationship building, partnership, and Trust**
- **Evidence exists that the States started implementing the results of the project after result dissemination**

Cost-effectiveness analysis of alternative strategies for the deployment of ACTs at community level in Enugu state, southeast Nigeria (S2)

3. Projects directly addressing GRIPP itself:

Facilitating policy maker-researcher engagement in best ways of using research findings to influence policy and practice (S3)



- Workshops for middle and senior-level policy-makers in Lagos State
- A training manual was developed for this purpose.
- Two policy retreats including policy dialogue
- Policy makers got to know what research evidence existed in their State
- Researchers presented their works and had the opportunity to interact with the policy makers
- **A Policymaker-Researcher committee formed**
- **Change of practice in immunization, malaria control, and NCD control**
- **Repository of research evidence in the ministry**
- HPRG as GRIPP facilitators

The PREVIEW (Policy Research EVIdence for Effective Working of the Nigerian health systems) project- Concept and implementation (National Academy of Science + Lagos State Ministry of Health) (S3)

3. Projects directly addressing GRIPP itself:

Facilitating policy maker-researcher engagement in best ways of using research findings to influence policy and practice (S3)



- Workshops for Lower, middle and senior-level policy-makers
 - Emphasis on generating information for Action
 - Two dialogue sessions
 - A policymaker-Researcher committee formed for M&E
 - Change of practice in M&E for Malaria and other public health programmes
 - Embedded Researchers
 - **HPRG as GRIPP facilitators**
- Establishment of Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) systems for the Anambra Malaria Control Booster Project (S3)

4. Researcher-initiated empirical research studies:



Active dissemination of own research findings to relevant stakeholders and policymakers (S4)

Production of policy briefs and distribution to policy makers and programme managers

Stakeholders' workshops: commissioners of health, permanent secretaries, directors of public health, heads of line ministries, CSO reps, traditional rulers of the research communities

One-on-one discussions of results and advocacy with policy makers and programme managers

Presentations of findings in both local and international conferences

Close and long relationship between the HPRG researchers and policy makers particularly in Anambra and Enugu States facilitated this (Relationship & Trust)

- CBHI Scheme in Anambra state, Nigeria: an analysis of policy development, implementation and equity effects. (S4)
- An assessment of policy development and implementation process of District Health System in Enugu state, Nigeria. (S4)
- **Quality of MCH data within the HMIS in Nigeria - a post field reflection. (S4)**
 - **Intervention in Anambra State to improve HMIS**
- **STRATEGIC PURCHASING FACTSHEET (S4), National Health financing policy and Strategy (2017), Lead TWG**

Packaging evidence for uptake:

Communication is the vehicle



- Scorecards
- Blogs
- Infographics
- Factsheets
- Posters.
- Policy briefs
- Newsletters
- Power Point presentations
- Videos
- Twits

The packaging, tailoring, and targeting of evidence is crucial for making it meaningful and understandable to advocates and decision-makers, enabling effective action.

Key Enablers of GRIPP



- Credibility of researchers
- Embedded researcher
- Social and interactive skills
- Personality of researcher very important
- Understand and respond to the politics – Best timing?

- Linkages to academic-social Forum
- In-built capacity development plan in the research process to access and apply evidence – *workshops, certificate courses etc.*
- *Mentorship*
- *Integrated knowledge translation*

Challenges and Recommendations



- Capacity to use HPSR – in terms of decision-makers demand for and uptake of evidence is still weak
 - Build capacity within the research process to access & apply evidence
- Communication gap between researchers, donors and policymakers still exists
 - Policy dialogue necessary
- Managing the political process of GRIPP: limited engagement of researchers in policy processes
 - Build interest of researchers
- Lack of willingness of some policy makers to use research
 - Engage closely with policy briefs

Improving the relationship b/w research and policy makers: what must we do?



What researchers have to do

- Form a core working group with all the relevant stakeholders from the beginning to the end of the study
- Design studies to maximize their policy relevance and utility
- Identify opinion leaders and innovators and make them to understand the implication of the research findings
- Call for seminars, conferences, briefings, and workshops to disseminate research findings and educate policy makers about research
- Provide a range of different type of research reports- newsletters, short policy briefs, Executive summaries,etc.

Improving the relationship b/w research and policy makers: what must we do?



What policy makers have to do

- Ensure that all major policies and programmes have evaluation built into their budgets and implementation plans rather than seeing evaluation as optional extra
- Set up formal communication channels and advisory mechanisms involving researchers and policy makers to identify researchable questions , develop research designs and plan dissemination and use of findings jointly
- Publish the findings of all public programme evaluations and view evaluation as an opportunity for policy learning
- Commission research and evaluation directly and consider having additional in-house research capacity

Balancing technical processes with social relations in GRIPP



Research to policy processes are fundamentally social

Stakeholder engagement is the foundation – trust is everything

- Stakeholder engagement should be comprehensive, continuous, cross-sectional, horizontal across peers and vertical across levels.

Interpersonal relationships and trust are key to strengthening the relationship between the researcher, policy makers and the practitioners

Linkages are essential

- Researchers should be able to understand the mind of the policy maker

End note



- **Researchers can influence domestic policy makers if appropriate strategies are employed**
- There is a need for a new 'linkage system' between the two policy communities
- If each of the parties plays its own role well, the thick wall separating the two will collapse
- When the wall collapses, the two will become more friendly and interested in each other's activities
 - 'Together we can pull the wall down'

