Describing impact:
The Research Impact Framework
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Study aims

• To describe the impact of maternal and newborn health grants funded by BMGF
• To explore the link between dissemination activities and impact.
The RIF

• Kuruvilla et al. Describing the impact of health research: a Research Impact Framework *BMC Health Services Research* 2006; **6:**134:1-18
• Framework used by researchers to reflect on impacts of their work
• Four impact categories: research-related, policy, service, societal
# Research Impact Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research-related impacts</th>
<th>Policy impacts</th>
<th>Service impacts</th>
<th>Societal impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of problem/knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Level of policy-making</td>
<td>Type of services: health/intersectoral</td>
<td>Knowledge, attitudes and behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research methods</strong></td>
<td><strong>Type of policy</strong></td>
<td>Evidence-based practice</td>
<td>Health literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publications and papers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nature of policy impact</strong></td>
<td>Quality of care</td>
<td>Health status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Products, patents and translatability potential</strong></td>
<td><strong>Policy networks</strong></td>
<td>info. systems</td>
<td>Equity and human rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research networks</strong></td>
<td><strong>Political capital</strong></td>
<td>Services management</td>
<td>Macroeconomic/related to the economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>leadership and awards</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost-containment and cost-effectiveness</td>
<td>Social capital and empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research management</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Culture and art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainable development outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


What we did

• Interviewed key project staff as MNH grants neared completion
• Asked about dissemination activities and impacts
• Categorised impacts by RIF theme, adding layer describing mechanisms by which impact achieved
  – Adopted &/or adapted by others
  – Additional funding secured
  – Others adopt tools used in project implementation
  – Data used to inform policy and practice
  – Requests for advice, further research.
• Followed up 12 months later, and added more grants
• Produced a report for grantees and funder summarising dissemination and impact across three countries: Ethiopia, India, Nigeria.
Examples of impact

Research impact
• Funding secured for scale-up of newborn sepsis management in Ethiopia

Policy impact
• Use of antibiotics for newborn sepsis management included in government policy for Community Based Newborn Care, Ethiopia
• ICT innovations contributed to government’s mHealth strategy in Uttar Pradesh

Service impacts
• Training materials included in national training manual for Health Extension Workers

Societal impacts
• Community champions in NE Nigeria promoted MNH messaging.
Use and limitations of the RIF

How did the RIF help?
✓ Standardised way of categorising impacts
✓ ‘Light touch’ – not onerous

Limitations
✗ Anecdotal, would benefit from triangulation, verification
✗ Not always obvious which category an impact fitted into
✗ Difficult to relate dissemination activities to impact
✗ Who to talk to? Grantees easy to access, but more convincing if impact reported by others

Potential
• Case studies of what leads to impact
• Link to work on scale-up.