



How to Spot a Success Story

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The road to showing the impact of research is a long one. Reaching your destination is the objective of the journey, but actually moving in the right direction is also success. You need to look for success in different ways, as many as genuinely show movement. It's worth thinking about the journey in three stages:

- Has the information reached people? (Output)
- What have others done once they have the information? (Outcome)

- What changes in policy or practice have come about? (Impact)

The following good practice checklist presents some key elements of success stories at the output, outcome and impact stages of a research project and is based on the work of CIMRC communication consultants M. Lloyd Laney and I. Biswas-Benbow.

Output level

| <i>What are you trying to show?</i> | <i>What can you use as evidence?</i> |
|---|---|
| That awareness been raised about the fact that the research has been completed and is available | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotional materials on project results • Features in your own, the research funders' and research partners' websites, newsletters, and internal information • Features in relevant professional organisation publications (e.g. the Institution of Civil Engineer's <i>Innovation and Research Focus</i>) • Features in research partner newsletters or publications • Press releases to relevant media and relevant 'popular' science and technology magazines, newsletters or websites • Articles in academic refereed journals • Inclusion in research outputs catalogues • Internal organisation staff meeting or staff presentation minutes or a copy of the 'slide' presentation given on project completion |
| That information has reached the desired target audience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research product distribution lists broken down by stakeholder group • Research products distributed at external forums e.g. conferences, workshops • Research products used by authors/ research partners on training courses, and in participative research etc. |

Outcome Level

| <i>What are you trying to show?</i> | <i>What can you use as evidence?</i> |
|---|--|
| That target audiences have an increased awareness of the research findings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgements, thanks, critical feedback • Research reviewed in professional journals • Research classified and put in institutional libraries • Research included as resource by information brokers • TV broadcasters (e.g. BBC, TVE, etc.) ask to include research results in forthcoming programmes • Increase in public enquiries |
| That the audience has actually read the research findings and increased their knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback asking questions of clarification, disputing analysis or adding information etc. • Increased levels of debate around the research issues/findings in professional and development journals, professional e-conferences or bulletin boards • Requests for information referred to the research • Increased public dialogue around issues raised by research (reflected at e.g. workshops, e-discussions) |
| Increased adaptation or incorporation of the research information (uptake) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests from various countries regarding advice on how to adapt research to their circumstances • Requests from southern organisations requesting publishing permission • Requests from students interested in including findings in their work • Requests from NGOs or CBOs to incorporate research information into their work • Media (e.g. print or radio) conversion of press releases into articles or radio broadcasts (Track how much coverage, which publication or radio station, and what messages were communicated) • Findings/recommendations/approaches found in other materials (cited or not) |
| You or your organisation or DFID are recognised as authorities or specialists in the research subject | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The media increasingly come to you to comment on related events/write about the subject • Increased numbers of consultancies • Increasingly approached by other researchers/ institutions for joint work • Invitations to conferences/workshops etc. • Invited to be peer reviewer of other materials |

Impact Level

(policy makers, practitioners, researchers or trainers change their behaviour or take up new actions)

| <i>What are you trying to show?</i> | <i>What can you use as evidence?</i> |
|---|--|
| Increased emphasis and funding for the issues, projects or programmes advocated by the research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New funders support the area of work/research • In-country donors or Ministries provide funding to support this area of work/research • Key decision-makers become champions for the area of work/research |
| Nature of dialogue changes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and professional forums take up the themes/issues • Professional/development journals commission 'special issues' or ask for editorials on the subject • Policy rhetoric (e.g. what a donor is saying in official documentation about the subject) changes • Non-specialists adopt the technical language of the subject or evolve a new language to describe the issues |
| Research is formally incorporated into academic or 'frontline' training materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical publishers or publishers for policy makers include research within new textbooks • Research is included in and adapted for practical technical or policy guidance manuals worldwide • Research is incorporated and adapted by relevant professors and teaching staff in university departments (e.g. civil engineering, hydrology, geology, urban development etc) and/or by those in centres of excellence or think tanks |
| Infrastructure/urban planners and managers take up research recommendations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of improved management of resources and better service delivery (e.g. to enable increased access by poor people) in various countries are captured as success story case studies • Examples of take-up of pro-poor growth strategies (that increase poor people's incomes and/or reduce their vulnerability) are captured as success story case studies. |
| Practitioners (e.g. engineers, urban planners, etc) take up research recommendations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of application and use of research in various countries are captured as success story case studies. (Evidence of use of research to develop or maintain pro-poor infrastructure services is particularly useful). |