

MOVING BEYOND RESEARCH TO INFLUENCE POLICY WORKSHOP University of Southampton, 23-24 January 2001

BACKGROUND AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Going Beyond Research

One of the continuing challenges of reproductive and sexual health research programmes is how to go beyond the research itself and communicate results to stakeholders so that research is used for policy and planning to impact on evidence based decision-making and implementation. It is increasingly clear that research supported by donor agencies is expected to contribute directly to improving the access to and/or the quality of reproductive health services. It is also apparent that policymakers, programme managers, and donors expect those implementing the research programmes to go beyond research and communicate the results effectively to those responsible for service delivery. Yet researchers themselves often feel they lack the skills to effectively disseminate research outputs.

A further issue which challenges both donor and research organisations is the need to determine the impact of research programmes within the larger context of health and population development assistance. Measuring and evaluating the impact of any type of research is notoriously difficult, as is determining the components of a successful programme of research. Equally problematic are the related issues of measuring the quality of a research study, and the relationship between research quality and impact on decision-making.

To address these issues, in January 2001, the 'Opportunities and Choices' and 'Safe Passages' Knowledge Programmes (University of Southampton), FRONTIERS/Kenya and John Snow International (JSI) conducted a two-day workshop to provide a forum for exchanging experiences on these issues.

Objectives

The objective was to convene a two-day workshop to

- bring together researchers and relevant organisations to provide a forum for reviewing experiences and learning lessons on
 - effective communication and dissemination of research results to a range of audiences
 - factors determining use/non-use of RH research findings
 - approaches and indicators for assessing impact of RH research
- develop guidelines for strengthening communication, utilisation and evaluation of research programmes for the benefit of programme managers, policy makers, donors and technical assistance organisations and researchers.
- propose a set of common indicators and measurement approaches for evaluating the quality and impact of RH research programmes supported by donors.

Structure of workshop

The workshop ran over two days.

The **first day** addressed the first objective. The format of the first day was presentations and discussion around three main themes; use of reproductive health research outputs; communication of reproductive health research outputs; and evaluating the quality and impact of reproductive health research. The structure of the first day consisted of presentations and case studies, and after each session followed a panel discussion.

The **second day** of the workshop focused on developing specific strategies for communicating research beyond the academic community and strengthening links between reproductive health research programmes. The purpose of the second day was to focus on developing specific strategies and guidelines for improving communication, and utilisation of research results, and evaluating their impact. Participation in the workshop's second day was focussed on representatives of the DfID Knowledge Programmes, donors and some resource persons.