

# FROM HEALTH TO DEVELOPMENT: A Growing Centre of Excellence in Systematic Reviewing

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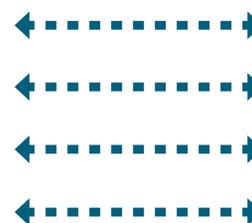
## Objective

This poster reports on the growing centre of excellence in systematic reviewing at the University of Johannesburg and reflects on how systematic reviews in development differ from those in health.

## Background

- It is a credit to the Cochrane Collaboration that systematic reviews are increasingly viewed as gold standard evidence for decision-making in disciplines other than health
- There has been a recent paradigm shift in International Development towards commissioning and making use of systematic reviews
- Our UJ team has played an important part in these developments

## Reflecting on breadth of experience



Cochrane Consumers and Communication Review Group

THE CAMPBELL COLLABORATION

Collaboration for Environmental Evidence

ePPI CENTRE

## Engaging policy-makers

- Reviews commissioned largely by international agencies (USAID, DFATD, DFID, AusAID, 3ie etc)
- National and international policy-makers considered main 'user' group
- Some concern that drive to engage with policy-makers and promote individual reviews may undermine local governance
- Underlying tensions regarding the concept of 'international development'

## Answering different questions



## Analysing causal pathways

- Greater emphasis on understanding how interventions work, not just whether they do
- Include consideration of multiple and / or complex interventions and outcomes
- Drive for integration of additional bodies of evidence within the pathways but the methodology for this is relatively underdeveloped

## Searching

- More sources needed
- Databases vary in coverage
- Less reliable index terms
- Lack of structured abstracts
- Skills shortage
- Database and internet access problematic

## Risk of bias

- Some opposition to judgements of quality in new field
- Lack of clarity over which study designs are 'good enough'
- No standardised tools for assessing bias of different study designs
- Variation in practice but emerging consensus

## Synthesis

- Meta-analysis of varied study designs controversial
- Tension between drive for standard approaches and need to develop methodology
- Tendency to fall back on narrative synthesis

## Conclusions

- Systematic reviews in development address broad questions using adapted Cochrane methods
- Considerable potential exists to influence the nature of systematic reviewing in development
- It is key for Southern academics to play a role and share experiences
- Our Centre is one of a few growing non-Cochrane centres of excellence in Africa
- From 2014 we will also be working with African governments to build capacity in the use of research evidence.
- We are keen to work with others: please join our new initiative - the Africa Evidence Network ([www.africaevidencenetwork.org](http://www.africaevidencenetwork.org))

## References

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