

# REALIST EVALUATION WORKSHOP IN HEALTH POLICY AND SYSTEMS RESEARCH

October 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru



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**IndiaAlliance**  
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**First workshop on Realist Evaluation in health policy and systems research**  
**October 9 – 11, 2019**  
**Institute of Public Health (IPH) Bengaluru**

Between the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2019, IPH organised a 3-day workshop on realist evaluation in health policy and systems research. The facilitator was Dr. Prashanth N S (Assistant Director Research of IPH, Bengaluru) supported by Dr. Pragati Hebbar (PhD Scholar and Wellcome Trust/ DBT India Alliance early career fellow).

The purpose of the workshop was to improve the application of theory into evaluation of public health programs or policies. The workshop began by introducing the concept of a health system and its social construction and then introduced participants to the concepts underlying theory-driven inquiry and realist evaluation. Theory of change approach was also discussed. Workshop used participatory methods to help participants apply the concepts onto a project of their own.

**Day 1: Foundation concepts for RE in HPSR**

1. What kind of research questions fall within HPSR? What are the methods used in HPSR?
2. What is complexity in health systems and how to understand/integrate this into our research?
3. What is the nature of programmes and policies and how do we prepare/begin an evaluation of a programme/policy in HPSR

<b>Time</b>	<b>Session details</b>
9.00 AM 9.30 AM	Welcome & introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening welcome remarks</li> <li>• Participants introduction</li> <li>• Participants pre-test</li> </ul>
9.30 AM 10.00 AM	Course overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants' expectations from the course</li> <li>• Course learning objectives</li> <li>• Adapt/edit schedule to bring the 2 together</li> </ul>
10.00 AM 1.00 PM	HPSR conceptual foundations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complexity, systems thinking and terminologies</li> <li>• HPSR primer &amp; threshold concepts</li> <li>• Self-check on ontology and epistemology</li> <li>• Identifying 3 workshop research scenarios</li> </ul>
1:00 PM 2:00 PM	LUNCH BREAK
2.00 PM 3.00 PM	Small group activity (SGA): What's your (HPSR) problem? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine your research question, identify elements of complexity in question/setting and peer-review</li> <li>• Identify typology and possible HPSR methods that may be useful for the question</li> </ul>
3.00 PM 4.45 PM	Policies and programs: Concepts and terminologies, entry-points for evaluation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unpacking programmes and policies including group-work</li> <li>• SGA: In groups of 3, take the HPSR problem of one of the members and break it down to programme intentions (session ends with identifying context as an important construct and try to lead the discussion to the “idea” of a mechanism in the realist sense)</li> </ul>
4:45 - 5:00	Assignment briefing

### Day 2: RE from concept to practice

1. What is TOC and TDI and how do these two compare with RE?
2. What are the elements of an RE? What is a programme theory, CMO configuration and RE cycle?
3. What kind of research questions in HPSR are amenable for RE?

Time	Session details
9.00 AM 9.30 AM	Welcome back Recap by 2 volunteers Day overview
9.30 AM 10.30 AM	3 presentations of TOC/TDI based approaches applied to HPSR question; 10 mins for presentation and 10 mins for peer-review & discussion
10.45 AM 1.00 PM	RE & related methodologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss TOC, TDI and RE</li> <li>• Principles of RE including philosophical foundations</li> </ul>
1:00 PM 2:00 PM	LUNCH BREAK
2.00 PM 3.00 PM	Steps in RE
3.00 PM 4:45 PM	Learning together 1: 3 - 4 groups pick from a menu of RE papers and discuss the methods and analysis of 3-4 papers; 30 mins for discussion in groups and 20 mins per paper discussion (10 for sharing the paper summary and 10 for discussion)
4:45 - 5:00	Volunteers for recap and final assignment

### Day 3: Designing a realist evaluation

How to plan a realist evaluation? What are the steps?

How to choose data collection methods and tools in a realist evaluation?

How to find support and resources to help design a realist evaluation?

Time	Session details
9.00 AM 9.30 AM	Welcome back Recap by 2 volunteers Day overview

9.30 AM 11.00 AM	<p>3 presentations chosen from previous day with one respondent for each problem for expanded discussion.</p> <p>Groups divide with one respondent in each group. At end of group work, present a full RE protocol which <u>at least</u> identifies one program theory, with few CMOs formulated. Consider use of VICTORE checklist</p>
11.00 AM 1.00 PM	Groupwork presentations by three study respondents
1:00 PM 2:00 PM	LUNCH BREAK
2.00 PM 3.00 PM	<p>Paper discussion illustrating method-neutrality &amp; diversity of tools</p> <p>Group work: Build on the PT and CMOs from morning discussion and identify data collection methods and tools identified along with full details of how the study will be carried out in the chosen setting. Make assumptions if needed. Purpose is to help the respondent go from the question to an RE. Consider use of VICTORE checklist</p>
3.00 PM 4.00 PM	<p>Learning together 2 RE analysis: Paper discussing RE cycle and iterative nature of cases and inquiry</p> <p>Group discussion on how to analyse data in RE using mixed examples of quant-qual/qual-qual/qual-quant iterations either through papers/assumptions</p>
4.00 PM 5.00 PM	<p>Wrap-up and feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building Indian RE network</li> <li>• Mapping out resources/support available for RE practitioners (SHAPES, RAMESES)</li> <li>• Quality and standards in RE</li> <li>• RE in HPSR (WHO Alliance resources - HRH manual, Geoff Wong chapter)</li> <li>• Certificate distribution</li> </ul> <p>Group feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content and logistics</li> </ul>

## Day 1 Summary

The workshop commenced by 9 AM and a total of 16 participants were in attendance. The first day of the workshop was dedicated to foundational concepts of HPSR. The day started with a welcome and introduction of the participants. The participants were asked to give a pre-test and a brief introduction to the workshop's learning objectives were given. The session began with a discussion on what a health system is and what it consists of and its foundational concepts, clarifying some commonly used terminologies. The discussion further led to health system dynamics frameworks. A few participants shared their experiences, the frameworks used by them and their reasoning for choosing particular frameworks. After a short tea break, second session commenced. It consisted of discussions on complexity, recognizing complexity in health system and agency. A small discussion on how setting boundaries in a research is important was done. The session ended by an introduction to a value framework.

After a lunch break, the third session commenced. It consisted of discussions on public health a science, 'reductionism', the science in public health, power of prediction and self-check on ontology and epistemology. A short tea break was later followed by a fourth session of the day, which consisted of an exercise wherein each person was asked to decide on a research question and were asked to evaluate it based on the concepts learnt during the day. Later, participants were divided into three groups and the same exercise was performed. Following the structured brain storming and information exchange, the participants interacted well. The session ended with a brief introduction to the content of the following day.

## Day 2 Summary

The second day of the workshop commenced at 9 AM by a brief re-cap given by two participants and an overview of the sessions in line for the day was given. The first session consisted of discussions on theory of change, realist theory, program theory based on examples and theory driven inquiry. After a tea break, Dr. Vishal Rao, Senior Surgical Oncologist and Member of High-power committee on tobacco control, Government of Karnataka joined the workshop and shared his inspiring journey of policy change and the realities in translating policies in practice. The participants gained useful insights to keep in mind when they undertake policy evaluation including realist approaches.

Following a lunch break, the third session began by a quick revision of the theories learnt in the morning session theory of change and theory driven inquiry. An introduction to Realist evaluation was made. Participants were divided into four groups and were asked to discuss about the theories with respect to a pre decided research question.

## Day 3 Summary

The final day began with presentations from the group work session of Day 2. The group assignment from Day 2 consisted of choosing individual research projects and proceeding to develop a theoretical approach for each given research question. After developing the approach, each group drew up a realist evaluation protocol.

Following the group activity, a review of the foundational concepts of theory of change, theory-driven inquiry, and realist evaluation was completed. Theory of change starts with empirical observations and is primarily interested in how a program works. Theory-driven inquiry starts with a theory and uses both middle-range and grand theories. Realist evaluation examines why, how, and for whom, and focuses on agents instead of beneficiaries.

The last activity of the workshop involved reviewing literature detailing studies that applied realist evaluation. The exact foci of the papers varied. One detailed how to create program theories by formulating C-M-O configurations from program theory. Another detailed systems thinking in Ghana, and illustrated how though actions in a programme may be similar, the ultimate reasons and motivations may be different. The ultimate takeaway was that case diversity is important in realist evaluation. Prior to ending the workshop, the group decided on next steps regarding maintaining a network of for those interested in realist evaluation in India, a feedback session was conducted prior to departure.

## Workshop Participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Institution</b>
<b>Meena Putturaj</b>	Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru
<b>Jack Fukushima</b>	SOCHARA, Bengaluru
<b>Dr. Jose Jom Thomas</b>	JSS Medical College, Mysore
<b>Dr. Sukanya Mohanty</b>	Jawaharlal Nehru University
<b>Vivek Dsouza</b>	Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru
<b>Angel Sudha V</b>	Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru
<b>Bharani Seelam</b>	The George Institute for Global Health, Delhi
<b>Dr. E.Rajalakshmi</b>	National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai
<b>Lathadevi C</b>	Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru
<b>Sreenidhi</b>	Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram
<b>Vineet Raman</b>	Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru
<b>Dr Swathi S Balachandra</b>	Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) Restore Health, Bengaluru
<b>Mary Mathew (Sr. Regin)</b>	Olive Wellness Centre – Janasaukhya, Wayanad
<b>Yogish C B</b>	Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru
<b>Sabu K U</b>	Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru
<b>Shivanand Savatagi</b>	Institute of Trans-Disciplinary Health Sciences and Technology, Bengaluru



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