RTAC Webinar #4 Transcript

Transforming Research into Programs and Policies:

How to Use the Research-to-Action Plan Section

March 9, 2023

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Celia Laskowski: All righty. I think I'm going to go ahead and get started, and then people can trickle in as we're starting the introductions, but I want to make sure we have enough time to get through everything today. So, all right. Well, again, welcome everyone. My name is Celia Laskowski, and I am a program analyst with the Research Division within the Innovation Technology and Research Hub at the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID. I'm also joined today by my colleague, Julie MacCartee, who has been facilitating the prior webinars in the series, so I'm giving her a bit of a break today, but I wanted to let you know she's also on the call.

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Celia Laskowski: We're delighted to have you all joining us today for an in-depth look at the Research-to-Action Section of the Research Translation Toolkit developed under USAID's Research Technical Assistance Center, also known as RTAC. RTAC supports USAID missions, bureaus, and independent offices, to make evidence-based decisions. The project is funded by USAID and led by NORC at the University of Chicago with PRB as a core partner—just to get the names out of the way. So, before we get started, a few logistical points. Since there are a lot of people here today, we have turned off your videos and microphones, but we will be using and monitoring the chat box throughout the webinar.

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Celia Laskowski: I've already invited those of you who joined earlier to introduce yourselves. Please continue to do that in the chat box by entering your name, affiliation, country of residence, and why you're joining us today—we would love to hear it. Please make sure that the chat box is, if you want it, set to go to "Everyone." Make sure it says "To Everyone" at the top, there. I think it does default to "Hosts and Panelists." And be aware you are able…we encourage you to chat with others as well, but do be aware, if you message privately, we can see it in the, in the chat transcript at the end of the session. So that's fine to chat privately, just be aware we're able to see it later.

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Celia Laskowski: If you have a question during the webinar, we encourage you to use the Q&A feature instead of the chat box. That's just easier for us to track and answer your questions. So, there's both the chat box, and then also the Q&A feature. So, use the Q&A for any of those questions. And yeah, I think that's all of the logistics. So next slide. Thanks. So, as I mentioned, today's webinar is the last in a four-part series on how to use the toolkit. As a reminder, the Research Translation Toolkit is a comprehensive, standalone resource that can be used by anyone who wants to bridge the gap between research production and research utilization.

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Celia Laskowski: It's divided into three sections: Stakeholder Analysis section, the Communication Products section, and the Research-to-Action, or R2A, Plan section. Today, we'll be taking an in-depth look at the Research-To-Action Plan Section. If you weren't able to attend the first three webinars, which offered a comprehensive overview of the toolkit and an in-depth look at the stakeholder analysis and communication product sections, we encourage you to go back and watch the recordings, which you can find on the webinar event page. There will be a link to the page added into the chat box for your reference. We're also going to share a link to the Research Translation Toolkit in the chat box.

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Celia Laskowski: So today we'll discuss what the Research-To-Action Plan, or R2A for short, section of the toolkit covers. We'll explain why, when, and how to use this section to ensure that your research findings are seen and used to inform policies, programs, and practices. We'll also hear from a guest speaker, Dr. Marlene Lee, from PRB, who will share some real-world examples of how she has used the Research-to-Action Plan section in her own work. Throughout today's webinar, we encourage you to add any questions you have in the Q&A box as we go along. As mentioned, we'll be answering them on an ongoing basis. But we'll also make sure we have a dedicated time at the end of the webinar to discuss any of these questions.

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Celia Laskowski: Now I’m going to turn it over to Christine Power from PRB to lead us through a quick exercise to help frame where we're all coming from before we move on to the main part of this webinar. Christine is a senior policy adviser at PRB. She has more than 10 years of experience in research and policy analysis and translation, strategic communication, and developing advocacy strategies for policy change. Welcome, Christine!

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Christine Power: Thank you, Celia. I'm really happy to be here today to share more information about how you can use the toolkit's Research-To-Action Plan Section. Before we begin today's presentation, we're going to jump right into a brief activity by creating a group word cloud. We want to hear about one challenge that you or your institution face when it comes to ensuring that your research techniques and innovative products lead to action. Examples of putting research into action might be using your findings to spur policy change or to inform the design of a new government program. We've shared the link in the chat that you can use to respond to this question. All of your answers will contribute to a word cloud. So, the bigger and bolder words are those that are mentioned the most often. And this is going to help us get a sense of the common challenges that are faced among today's participants. Since you're limited to one word, we also welcome you to elaborate on your responses in the chat box if you would like.

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Christine Power: Okay, I'm seeing "clarity," "technical language," "timelines" really popping out now. And "time," "a lack of resources," "uptake," "jargon," "confirming relationships," "lack of capacity."

Thank you all for sharing some of the challenges that you're facing here. It's clear that a lot of us are facing some of the similar challenges in— in getting our messages out effectively. Fortunately, the Research-To-Action Plan Section is designed to help users address many of the barriers that you all have identified in this word cloud.

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Christine Power: So, let's take a deeper look at what this section covers, why and when you would use it, and how. The Research-To-Action Plan section of the toolkit is meant to help you develop a step-by-step plan to communicate your research findings to influential stakeholders and ensure your research leads to action. When we talk about stakeholders, we mean individuals and groups who influence or are influenced by the research and those who have an interest in the research. This includes end users of your research.

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Christine Power: The Research-To-Action Plan is essentially a map to help you think through how to most effectively share the implications of your research results in a way that is meaningful to people who might be outside your direct research community, but who have the power to make changes based on your findings. Ultimately, you want them to know how to use your data to improve programs and policies.

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Christine Power: To ensure research uptake, or in other words, to ensure that your research findings will be used, you need to know three things:

Number one: What sort of actions or changes you'd like your research to influence. These are your research-to-action goals.

Number two: What short-term steps you will need to take to reach those goals. These are your research-to-action objectives.

And number three: How you can best communicate your research findings to make this all happen.

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Christine Power: The Research-To-Action Plan Section will help you map out these steps. So, you may be asking yourself, why should I use this section of the Research Translation Toolkit? There are a few main reasons. You might use it to help create a plan that incorporates the stakeholder analysis and communication products that you've already developed. You might use it to identify the types of changes or decisions that could be made based on your research evidence. You might use it to ensure that your messages are clearly communicated, compelling, and credible to your audience. Or you can use this section to help you identify opportunities to highlight your research findings or generate interest in their use.

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Christine Power: You may recognize this graphic from the previous webinars when we went over where in the research process you can use the various sections of the toolkit. Here, we've modified it to focus in on where in the research process you could use the Research-To-Action Plan section to maximize the uptake and impact of your research findings. You can use this section as you begin planning your research during the Research Development…Research Question Development phase. It can help you think about how you want your results to be used, and how to involve and inform stakeholders throughout the research process.

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Christine Power: It is also helpful to use this section once you have some research findings. The Research-To-Action Plan can help you assess your results, determine who needs to hear about them, and then develop a plan on how best to do so.

Once you're ready to start your research-to-action planning, there are a few key steps you should take to make sure that your research results are actually put into practice.

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Christine Power: The first step is setting a research-to-action goal. This is where you ask yourself what sort of actions or changes you'd like your research to influence. Next, you'll identify stakeholders who have the power or position to help you get to where you want to go. The third step is then engaging these stakeholders throughout the research process by building relationships with them and involving them at each stage. Next, you will assess the policy environment to coordinate your plan with other critical timelines and happenings that could help highlight your research.

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Christine Power: The fifth step is to craft key messages from your research findings that will inspire action among your stakeholders. This is where you use your data to tell a story. Then, you'll package and disseminate your research in formats that are compelling to your audience. Lastly, you'll continue to foster evidence used by providing end users with the skills and knowledge that they need to integrate your findings in their work. Throughout all of this, you will continue to track and measure success to make adjustments to your plan as needed and then learn what works best.

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Christine Power: We will look at all of these steps in greater detail throughout today's webinar. But first, we wanted to show you what it looks like when you put all of these pieces together by walking through a research-to-action plan created by a research team in Nepal.

So, RTAC previously worked with a research team based at the Kathmandu Institute of Applied Sciences in Nepal. Their research activities focused on developing a paper-based analytical device, or PAD, for measuring pesticide residue on vegetables and fruit samples and a smartphone based microscopy system for detecting the infective stages of parasitic organisms.

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Christine Power: First, the Nepal team set their research-to-action goal to increase testing capacity to detect pesticide contamination of vegetables and fruit using PesticidePAD technology. To achieve this goal, they determined they needed to do two things. One, to get approval of PesticidePAD from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development. And two, to adapt PesticidePAD based on feedback from the stakeholders.

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Christine Power: Next, they developed a timeline of activities that could help them reach their goal. So, for example, holding meters— meetings with primary stakeholders and developing…developing a validation study in collaboration with the Nepal Agricultural Research Council to compare PesticidePAD technology with three other methods of pesticide detection. The Research-To-Action Plan section of this toolkit includes all of the same steps that this team took to make sure that their findings could be effectively used to support food security strategies in Nepal.

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Christine Power: Together, we'll go through each step of the Research-To-Action Plan section. And I'll just ask that if you are on the call to please mute yourself if you're not speaking; I'm hearing some background noise. Thank you.

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Christine Power: Okay. So there, as you can see on the screen here, there are seven main steps in the Research-To-Action Plan section of the toolkit. These should look familiar, as they correspond with the graphic that we previously showed you outlining the research-to-action planning process. Using the toolkit to follow these steps will help you develop each part of your research-to-action plan so you will be ready to use it. We'll walk through each of these steps in more detail now.

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Christine Power: As I mentioned earlier in the presentation, the first step in research-to-action planning, or Step 1A, is to decide what action you want your research to influence. So, for example, are you hoping to change certain behavior? Change an overall policy? Establish a new program? Developing these research-to-action goals will help you to determine the program, policy, or practice that your research results can help change.

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Christine Power: Your research-to-action goals should be broad. They focus on the big picture and the long term for each goal. You will also develop a set of short-term objectives that help you reach that goal. An example of a research-to-action goal might be to work with stakeholders to improve enforcement of wildlife protection, since our research indicates this gap allows wildlife tracking to occur. Your objectives that will help you reach that goal are to: “Fix regulation loopholes in the responsible agencies. Train official train enforcement officials with skills to detect illegal wildlife tracking.”

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Christine Power: One thing that I want to highlight here is that your research-to-action goals differ from your research goals. We often find that research teams have a hard time making this distinction. Your research goals determine the research process itself. But your research-to-action goals are all about how to encourage stakeholders to use the results of that research. With research-to-action goals, you want to focus on the action that you are looking for. Of course, to make sure that your research-to-action goals are based in evidence, you will need to consider what data you have.

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Christine Power: The next step, Step 1B, helps your team assess the project's research results to identify which ones can be used in program or policy making to… policy decision-making or to inform practice. One thing to note here is that Step 1A, which is setting your research-to-action goals, and Step 1B, summarizing your major project results, happen simultaneously.

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Christine Power: So now that you've determined the change that you want to see and identified your important findings, the next step, Step 2, is to determine who needs to know about these findings so that they can act on them and make your change a reality. This step is about stakeholder analysis.

Stakeholders might be government ministries, policymakers, the private sector, media advocacy groups, donors, and funding agencies, just to name a few.

In this step, you will identify a wide and diverse range of potential stakeholders with interest in and influence over your research, and then work to prioritize them by deciding which ones are most important to engage.

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Christine Power: Finally, you will determine how you want to engage or involve them throughout the research process. All of this work will prepare you to reach out to people with the influence to take policy and program actions that you often can't take as researchers.

While the Research-To-Action Plan section we are reviewing today talks a little about stakeholder analysis, we want to note that the Research Translation Toolkit also has an entire separate section on conducting a stakeholder analysis. We recommend using this section of the toolkit to help you through this step. The stakeholders are a very important part of creating a strategic research-to-action plan. If you missed our webinar on this section, you can access it on our webinar website using the link that was just shared in the chat.

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Christine Power: So, we all know that researchers have limited time and resources to dedicate to research-to-action, planning and engaging with stakeholders. As much as you'd like to, you can't always realistically engage every possible stakeholder. And that's why this step helps you prioritize which stakeholders are most important to engage, so that you can make the best of your limited time and resources. One way to prioritize stakeholders is by identifying the factors that motivate them to use research in their decision making.

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Christine Power: These factors include: awareness about the importance of your research; ownership in the research findings and how they might use these research findings to make decisions that others can benefit from; clarity on the research findings' importance and relevance to them; feasibility of action–stakeholders are more likely to use research findings in their decision-making if doing so does not worsen the constraints they face; timing—it will be easier to get stakeholders' attention on research and its implications if you share your findings before planning and budgeting processes or during a national event or day of recognition; and the final factor is political and other support. You should always assess potential stakeholders' political beliefs in advance to avoid engaging with those who may strongly disagree with your recommendations. You can use all of this information, these factors, to refine your list of stakeholders.

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Christine Power: So, we're curious to know which of these factors you think plays the biggest role in motivating your key stakeholders to use research and their decision making. We're going to run a quick poll to see what your experience has been. You can select one answer in the poll. The question is, which of these factors, do you think plays the biggest role in motivating your key stakeholders to use research and their decision making? So, we'll give everyone a couple of minutes to review the question and respond. And please feel free to share additional thoughts on your selection in the chat box.

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Christine Power: Okay, so we've had over 50% contribution to the poll, so we're going to end the poll here and take a look at the results. So the most selected factor was "feasibility of action" by about 33%, followed pretty closely in three-way tie by "ownership," "clarity of message," and "political or other support." And it seems that of these six factors, although it plays a role in motivating stakeholders, timing and awareness were perhaps playing the smaller roles in motivating your stakeholders to use research.

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Christine Power: Okay, so we are going to move back into Step 3. So, once you have identified your research-to-action goals and the people or organizations that might be interested, it's important to also consider the overall policy environment. For example, are there current events happening that will make your research findings more or less favorable in the public opinion? What are some current trends related to similar research topics?

Step 3 of the Research-To-Action Plan is going to help you figure out this policy environment and the priorities of current decision makers. By considering the overall context in this way, you can plan to strategically share your findings in ways that gain attention, are easy to understand, and are likely to be acted upon. The work you already completed in Step 2 to identify and prioritize stakeholders will also connect you with people that can help you when you are doing this step.

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Christine Power: Part of assessing the policy environment includes looking for what we call windows of opportunity. Windows of opportunity are moments in time where it might be easier, more strategic, to share certain types of information. So, for example, a budget planning process might be a window of opportunity to influence what gets funded, or how much funding is allocated. Whereas a policy planning process might create a window of opportunity to influence policy, formation, and implementation. This step in the toolkit will help you judge which information is needed, and when to make the most impact towards reaching your research-to-action goal.

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Christine Power: When you do decide to share your research results, you want to ensure that your target audience understands why this information is important to them and what they should do with it. This increases the chances that they will take the actions that you have outlined in your research-to-action goals and objectives. Step 4 helps you distill your research results and other evidence into main messages that tell a story tailored to your audience's interests. It also guides you through how to develop actionable recommendations that present your results in clear, accessible, and persuasive language.

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Christine Power: The story you are telling with your evidence unfolds in three parts. First, the relevant data or evidence, and these are your findings. Next, why those facts matter, or the implications of your findings. And finally, what should be done considering these findings and implications; this last piece is your recommendation. The audience should be… should be able to easily understand your story by reading these three parts of your main messages.

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Christine Power: Once you've completed Steps 1-4, you're ready to package your research in user-friendly formats to share with your stakeholders. Step 5 will help you determine the best format to reach your stakeholders by guiding you through several considerations. It is important to keep your audience and purpose in mind when you choose your formats, so they can receive the information in the way that best suits them.

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Christine Power: This graphic on screen here from the toolkit maps communication purposes against different types of target audiences to help you determine the appropriate preferred format for presenting your research results, implications, and recommendations.

For example, if your audience are policy decisionmakers, who probably don't have a lot of time to read long documents, and your communication objective is to persuade them to do something based on your research, an appropriate format might be a policy brief, an infographic, or a short video. And as you can see here, these are all formats that can share important information with a low level of technical detail and convey content, quickly, concisely, and compellingly for a stakeholder with not much time but the potential to make a strong impact.

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Christine Power: On the other hand, if your audience are program managers, and actually, could we—thank you—return. So if your audience, thinking of a different scenario here, if your audience are program managers and your communication objective is to change programs based on your research, you might create a scorecard or a toolkit, which has a slightly higher level of detail and technical content than what you would create for policymakers that might not be as well versed in technical information.

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Christine Power: Other things you might consider when choosing a format is your budget and your timeline. During our webinar last week on the Communication Products section, we heard from a graphic designer who went into more detail about how to choose the right format for your product. And again, if you missed it, don't worry. You can use the link that we've added in the chat to access the recording and the slides

Step 5 will also help you select communication channels and identify windows of opportunity for disseminating messages about your research findings. It also provides guidance about the frequency with which you should share your messages.

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Christine Power: This is a helpful chart from the toolkit that lists dissemination channels—such as social media blogs, meetings—plus the frequency of outreach and the intended audiences. Of course, you don't need to use all of the channels that are listed here, though you will increase the chance that your message will be remembered and acted upon by using multiple channels.

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Christine Power: So now that you know how you plan to share your research with your stakeholders, Step 6 helps you develop a timeline to stay on track when creating your research-to-action plan timeline. It's important to consider questions like what major steps remain to be completed in the research project? What do you want to do? How much time do you need to prepare for each step? How else might this research be used, and who else might have an interest in it?

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Christine Power: As you can see on the left side of the screen here, Step 6 includes a worksheet that helps walk you through this process. This step also includes an example timeline, which is what you see on the right hand of the screen, to help illustrate what it looks like when all of the pieces are put together.

Step 6 also provides a checklist to help you make sure you've included the main components of a research-to-action plan and planned sufficient time to complete them. We think this is one of the most useful parts of this section, and maps nicely to the other worksheets. It can help you make sure you are being strategic, and that you don't miss key steps in the research-to-action process or create a disorganized research-to-action plan.

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Christine Power: So, we've reached the final step, Step 7. Once you have all of the pieces of your research-to-action plan, Step 7 guides you through how you can set up a system to regularly track your progress and measure your success. This step will help you develop outputs and outcomes to assess whether you are reaching your objectives and research-to-action goals.

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Christine Power: Outputs are the tangible and immediate products from your activity, such as the number of presentations. Whereas outcomes measure the short medium and long-term impact of your activity, such as whether your stakeholders change their opinions or shared information with others.

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Christine Power: Step 7 also includes the research-to-action progress tracking worksheet. This will help you make sure that you are following your research-to-action plan and adjusting it as necessary. As new information comes up for each activity, you will determine the expected outcome. The short, this—excuse me—the expected output, then the short-term outcome, and then medium- to long-term outcomes.

Using this chart, you might find that a specific outcome wasn't that—er—wasn't met on time, and having this information will help you to adjust your research-to-action plan to get back on track toward completing your overall objectives and goals.

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Christine Power: For each of the seven steps we just discussed, you'll be using the comprehensive research-to-action plan template included in this section to work on building each part of your plan. We think that this is one of, if not the most, important document in the toolkit because this is where you put it all together to create your step-by-step plan for communicating your research findings to influential stakeholders so that they will know how to use your data. The template very clearly states which…states which step corresponds with which part of this worksheet and each exercise builds on this step before it so that by the time you're finished working your way through this section, you will be well on your way to having a tailored research-to-action plan. Remember, the research-to-action plan is a living document, so it should be continuously updated.

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Christine Power: You should use this template with the research-to-action plan timeline, checklist and tracking worksheets we just showed you in order to adjust your research-to-action plan for any new information. And with that, you now have everything you need to create a plan for transforming your research into impact.

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Celia Laskowski: Thank you so much, Christine. That was really great, and a lot of information. I see that we are getting some questions in the Q&A feature, so we will either answer them in writing, or, if we don't, we will answer them live at the end. So, thank you for that. Also, we know that hearing examples of how others have used these tools can help users think through how to apply the tools to your own work.

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Celia Laskowski: So, we're very happy to be joined by someone who can speak about her experience using the Research-To-Action Plan Section of the toolkit. I'm very pleased to introduce Dr. Marlene Lee as our guest speaker. Marlene is associate vice president at PRB in the International Programs Department. She works with research networks, developing country governments, and non-governmental organizations to strengthen links between decision making and emerging evidence. She has been PRB's lead on the RTAC project since August 2020, providing technical assistance with research-to-action planning and coordinating development of the Research Translation Toolkit. So, welcome Marlene.

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Marlene Lee: Thank you, Celia. I'm very pleased to join the webinar today to talk about my experience using the toolkit in the Counting Women's Work project. Let me begin by describing the project and saying a little about our motivation for using the toolkit.

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Marlene Lee: The Counting Women's Work project has historically produced estimates of the time that men, women, and children spend doing unpaid work. The estimates are published in a database at www.countingwomenswork.org

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Marlene Lee: The effort has been guided by a paradigm about the effects of unpaid work on women's economic status and what needs to change. The first step towards change is recognition of this unpaid work, and the final step is action that changes the national economic context and policy.

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Marlene Lee: Saying more about the economic context and policy, multinational organizations and in-country officials now seem to have accepted that there must be changes in attitudes and social norms around education and work. A basic fact is that girls and women spend more time on unpaid work in…in the household. This work competes with time for education and time for work that must— that brings in household income. Some of the norms that need to change are gender norms around girls' education. Also, social protection policies that are centered around paid work are a disadvantage for women and girls.

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Marlene Lee: Before I talk more about the Counting Women's Work project and our use of the research translation toolkit, let me define unpaid work. Unpaid work is one of the many non-paid activities that are important to an economy. Unpaid care work done for no pay… is done for no pay to sustain households, and to care for household members and community members. This includes direct care and housework. Direct care is the care of children, the sick, and disabled, including not only care given to members of your own household, but also volunteer care that takes care of members of the community that may not be in your household.

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Marlene Lee: Housework includes activities such as cooking, cleaning, and other household maintenance tasks and household management that benefits community members.

Education includes time spent in school, university, or other educational institutions. It also includes any time spent at home on study and the homework. It is an unpaid activity that is not clear work, but it may be affected by the time spent on unpaid care, work, or paid work in…in that, if children are doing unpaid care work such as taking care of their brothers or sisters, or… or… or… getting paid to work at a time when they should be in school, then they're not benefiting from education, paid work, and employment. And the time for taking care of yourself, leisure time, are also other uses of time that can be measured.

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Marlene Lee: By measuring the time spent in unpaid care work and putting a monetary value on this time, the Counting Women's Work project has helped to raise awareness and recognition of the value of many, many of the tasks women perform in the household and in the community, and for which they are not paid. Unpaid care work helps to nurture the paid workforce. If individuals were paid to do this work that is currently unpaid, the value of…of such work would be the equivalent of more than 10% of gross domestic product in each of the African countries where this analysis was undertaken for Counting Women's Work.

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Marlene Lee: Sharing this type of measurement raises awareness. Now the challenge is to take action. Transitioning to action here, we collaborated with part— with a partner organization: Centre d’Excellence Régional en Economie Générationnelle, CREG, for short. CREG’s director is affiliated with the Centre de Recherche et Economie et Finances Appliquées de Thiès in Dakar, Sengal. CREG conducted analysis workshops. PRB facilitated the use of selected tools from the research-to-action plan, R2A plan, section of the Research Translation Toolkit, working with country team members identified by ONDD, which is the Observatoire national du dividende démographique, in each country. The countries that participated in the activities I'm going to describe are Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Sénégal, Togo. They all participated.

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Marlene Lee: This is the— a photo of the Sénégal team. CREG, actually, it led… some of the CREG staff led the Sénégal team.

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Marlene Lee: And here is photo from a news clipping of the team in Côte d’Ivoire. The analysis workshops, which were led by CREG, included experts on data used…for the… er…the data that was used, thematic experts on different sectors of the economy, and types of work. Experts in the National Time Transfer Accounts methodology. The output of the workshop—the analysis workshop—was a technical report.

I'm just going to show you some examples of the types of results produced in these analysis workshops. So our country—next slide, please.

00:42:26.840 --> 00:43:19.390

Marlene Lee: A country might have a research goal of…to integrate the monetary value of unpaid housework time into household income and GDP calculations. Some example research results would be things like: over the life cycle, the time devoted to domestic work is more important for women between the ages of 21 and 24, where it reaches 16 hours per week at age 25 compared to just under 3 hours for men. Another result: the age when the most time is spent on domestic work, is age 25 for women and age 15 for men. The annual…annual value of women's on paid work at this peak, for women, is more than 6 times the annual value for men.

00:43:20.360 --> 00:43:51.370

Marlene Lee: You can see that these research goals and research results speak mainly to the methodology use for estimating gross domestic product, and highlights what counts or does not count as productive output in technical calculations at the level of the Ministry of Finance or Ministry of Planning. These results do not address actions that might be taken by ministries specifically charged with the well-being of women or the well-being of youth.

00:43:52.470 --> 00:44:45.560

Marlene Lee: So, let's go on and see what type of re recommendations come out of these results. Recommendations here are “put in place mechanisms to measure and officially take into account on paid domestic work in national production,” “develop policies or strategies to reduce women's domestic work.” These are the research team’s recommendations before doing a research-to-action plan. They're broad. They're not targeted to a specific stakeholder.

The first one might only really be taken up by the stakeholder responsible for the official measure of GDP. It's still very technical and doesn't provide specific actions for this stakeholder to see the way forward.

00:44:45.610 --> 00:45:38.400

Marlene Lee: The second is broad, and might be taken up for many different angles, depending on the government agency. But there is no government agency in any of these countries that has a specific mandate on domestic work, unless it's paid work and regulated. They don't have a mandate on unpaid domestic work, which is what the studies looked at for research-to-action planning. Each team then, has to move on from this technical analysis to identify a topic area relevant to their research and to, also, stakeholders which who have common ground or and would be interested in this area so that they can start the conversation.

00:45:38.700 --> 00:46:51.760

Marlene Lee: Each team identified a mission that was mostly drawn from existing initiatives in their country rather than the mission of any individual organization. So, teams might have selected missions that was something like “advancing progress towards a demographic dividend” or “empowering adolescent girls to participate fully in a country's economic activity.” So, they had to think broadly, first in terms of how their research would overlap with…with other mandates in country.

The research-to-action activity that the teams participated in were three virtual meetings for research-to-action planning. The meetings were 2 to 3 weeks apart. Before the first meeting, PRB prepared an example of a completed research-to-action Plan template, the first worksheet on the slide. We used outputs from an analysis of unpaid work in Ghana, background research on the budget process, and background research on stakeholders in Ghana to help develop this example.

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Marlene Lee: During the first meeting, PRB facilitators provided an overview of the research-to-action planning process, and each team started a discussion of their research-to-action goals and objectives. Between meetings, each team worked on the… on the Research-To-Action Plan template in the virtual meeting with the team. The team discussed their work with the PRB and CREG facilitators, and finally, before our fourth and final in-person session, each team provided written feedback to another team—that was, feedback on the research-to-action template that had been completed—and a research-to-action (R2A) progress tracking worksheet.

00:47:42.050 --> 00:48:07.750

Marlene Lee: So, in order to do this in West Africa, we had to translate the worksheet into French and the teams had to work commit to working between the meetings. And that was the hardest part for the teams, because they were all very busy. The final in-person event was one where the teams participated in a World Bank supported meeting…planning meeting

00:48:07.960 --> 00:48:23.170

Marlene Lee: In this meeting, 13 countries from the World Bank Sahel Women Empowerment and Demographic Dividend project shared plans for influencing policy dialogue about women's unpaid work. Okay, Next slide, please.

00:48:27.360 --> 00:49:06.020

Marlene Lee: So, what was the result of working with these teams? It says “the outcome,” but probably I should have said “the output.” As a result of…of this process of research-to-action planning, each country team had draft components of the research-to-action plan, including goals, objectives, messages, and specific recommendations. The teams tried to make all these relevant to the intersection of the implication of their research and stakeholder priorities.

00:49:07.440 --> 00:49:53.960

Marlene Lee: Next up, they had stakeholders identified by name, and had plans to share results and gauge stakeholder interest in taking action. They had specific information, sharing events that they proposed. Some teams proposed presentations to members of their National Parliament.

Most teams also identified communication products that they would need for some teams. This was easier to do because their group included directors of government programs who were knowledgeable about stakeholder motivations.

Other teams still needed to find out more about the proposed stakeholders before deciding on activities and communication products that they would need. Next slide.

00:49:56.370 --> 00:50:45.030

Marlene Lee: I was asked to…to say why the research-to-action planning process was useful for this project. In general, the process helps in highlighting differences between research goals and research-to-action goals and actionable objectives. It also helps in framing the research results with specific stakeholder interests and influence in mind. The process helps in raising the importance of putting research results in context—somebody mentioned that in our chat. It is both the context of the country and the context of related, broader research is important to understanding how this, the results, can lead to action.

00:50:45.350 --> 00:51:53.600

Marlene Lee: The results on unpaid care work must be combined with other research and policy literature. Finally, the process helps in recognizing limitations of researchers to take action and recognizing potential contributions of program and policy staff of NGOs and government units in developing actionable recommendations. This process prepared Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Sénégal, and Togo teams to participate in a sharing event with other teams.

It focused…the event focused on how the research results might motivate policy change, and CREG, our partner, plans to use the toolkit in the future because it is, the toolkit, asked the teams to be specific. The level of specific information gather— gathered for the plan, prepares teams to…to meaningfully engage with stakeholders who influence programs and policy.

Thank you.

00:51:56.870 --> 00:52:39.160

Celia Laskowski: Thank you so much, Marlene, and it's really helpful to get these real-world examples to just put into context what we're talking about with all these steps within the toolkit. So really appreciate your expertise on that.

So, we have come to the time that we have allotted for some questions. I see some in the Q&A function already, so we'll start with those, but feel free to add any that you have that you haven't already put in, and we'll try to get to them either speaking or...or in writing, or both.

So, I wanted to—there're two similar questions in there right now, and…and, Marlene, you kind of touched on this with…during your presentation.

00:52:39.160 --> 00:53:01.160

Celia Laskowski: If you have any more guidance on outputs and outcomes to measure evidence application, as well as what are specific—any specific recommendations for using for certain metrics.

Yeah, if you can comment on that, I would say, Marlene, if you have ideas on that.

00:53:03.710 --> 00:54:28.570

Marlene Lee: Thank you, Celia. I think that this is one of the…the pieces that is…is…is…very hard. And you actually need to set your…set it up in your design when you are doing your research-to-action plan to check back in with stakeholders and/or some key informants, so that you can know if your evidence was used in key meetings, or might have showed up in a document. That, and follow up phone calls. We, PRB, actually did a little survey where we asked people if they would be willing to speak with us after we had published some results, and we found out interesting things about how the evidence was used that we would never have known in research applications, in writing speeches for ministers and those type of things. So, it does require planning follow up and work to track the application. The metric we use are instances of use of the research results in particular types of applications. Thank you.

00:54:30.930 --> 00:55:14.200

Celia Laskowski: Thank you. That's really helpful. And yeah, I think to clarify a little bit more, instances I've seen of use could be like you mentioned, if a meeting was held in terms of an output, and then further along an outcome could be this…then...this meeting that was held that influenced a specific policy. But it…it is a good reminder to keep in touch with stakeholders throughout the whole process, and that it is a circular process. It's not that linear, even though we draw a line in that diagram you're always coming back, and…and that the R2A plan itself can be changed, and we…we recommend that it be adjusted with new information. So hopefully, that is helpful.

00:55:14.330 --> 00:55:40.210

Marlene Lee: One thing here. Some of these outcomes take a while to happen, so you may only be able to track some of the near term things if your funding runs out. And hopefully, if some big impact happens, one of the stakeholders you've worked with will actually contact you very excited to tell you.

00:55:41.490 --> 00:55:57.320

Celia Laskowski: Right. And again, that's… that's kind of creating that relationship too with the… involving the stakeholders, that they hopefully will get back with you and excitedly inform you that your research is…is being used. Okay, perfect.

00:55:57.740 --> 00:56:25.370

Celia Laskowski: And this is a question, perhaps, for Christine. Is it possible to make the R2A plan template into shareable documents like Google Docs? As I understand it, it's in a PDF form that you can type into right now, but I don't think it's in Google Docs. But could you potentially speak to that?

I actually think this might be more of a Marlene question, I guess, I'm sorry.

00:56:28.200 --> 00:57:12.620

Marlene Lee: Okay. And back. So, it is possible to…to put the template up and…and make it sharable in something like Google Docs. The problem is that if you type up there and leave it, then your responses will now be publicly available. So it's…we haven't quite figured out how to make it available in the way like filling out your visa form online is. But the other thing is, when we did our pilot tests, people wanted a downloadable package. They wanted to be able to do it offline. That was the preference. Thanks.

00:57:13.160 --> 00:57:25.570

Celia Laskowski: Right. Thank you for that clarification. Sometimes there's bandwidth issues, or you want to be able to access it without Internet. So…but it…you know, we're always looking to learn as well. So any suggestions we're happy to hear.

00:57:27.550 --> 00:58:28.930

Celia Laskowski: There were a few questions that were…were answered in the chat earlier, but I think would be interesting to discuss a little bit more, since we don't have any others at the moment. But one was just the most appropriate time to present research findings. And in your experience how…how has that varied? I mean, I wrote that it depends, because I think it depends on the…on the actual context, of course, and what your goal is. If the goal is to get more funding, for example, maybe earlier in the process. But if their goal is to have the specific product use, then maybe a little bit later, and…and…and throughout. But in your experience, both Christine, you either Christine or Marlene. How…how have you seen that kind of shift? I know. Yeah. Do you have any thoughts on the most appropriate time? Or is it really just that it..it really depends on the goals?

Oh, I see, Marlene, you had it.

00:58:28.950 --> 00:59:31.540

Marlene Lee: This is a really important question, Celia. I just think it's…you can for broad dissemination, as Christine mentioned, you can do these events where…that are timed so that people will already be thinking about issues related to…to your work. But nothing will be more important than knowing that a key stakeholder in India is revising the regulations, and your new technology needs to be in those regulations if government funding is going to be spent to help people adapt to that technology. So it… there…the time spent on identifying key stakeholders and knowing the timelines and…and what's happening with those stakeholders is…is invaluable.

00:59:35.630 --> 01:00:36.150

Celia Laskowski: For sure. Thank you for that…that clarification.

The other question that was brought up that, I think is…it's an important one to highlight is the—sorry—there's one more that came in.

Okay, this…this is related. So there, there's a new question in here about balancing burden, kind of, if the stakeholders are busy. Also, the…the question I was gonna highlight mentioned like, how do you balance your own resources? If you're, kind of, translating your research findings into this more accessible format, all those formats mentioned in Step 5 of…of different packaging. How…how do we manage these resources and the limited resources, both of our own research team, and then also getting into these relationships with the stakeholders. How have you seen that manifest? And what advice do you have, either Marlene or Christine?

01:00:48.010 --> 01:01:45.800

Marlene Lee: I guess I'll answer again. I applaud this individual for thinking about this. If you're doing things like sending out a lot of surveys that…that is a burden. So, I believe you have to think about the return for the stakeholder. And, oh, are you just getting things from the stakeholder? Or are you also contributing so when you send a survey, maybe send something informational that…that's helpful.

And the other thing is, if…if you do that research and match up what you see as the next step with the right stakeholder, you will be collaborators. So you will have information coming in without a…a lot of additional burden on your stakeholder. Those are the things that I've seen.

01:01:47.480 -->01:02:21.790

Celia Laskowski: Thank you. Yeah, it's that kind of long-term thinking, which I think the R2A...all these templates, the whole plan, can help you think through. Okay, if I start with this relationship, and then you can help that, then, later on, we'll get here, and you can try to communicate that. I think, from the beginning with the stakeholder that it's this mutual benefit. And in terms of the…the other question regarding the research teams, I have seen that it is difficult with funding can run out, and there's limited time. It's not your only priority to be doing this research project. Perhaps you're teaching as well, too.

01:02:21.800 --> 01:03:22.930

Celia Laskowski: So again, I do think this can…can be helpful, and it's not just because we're…we're in this webinar. I've seen it, I…I have been participating in RTAC for a few years, and just organizing around that idea. This is what I want to get done and maybe something needs to be put on the back burner for the future when there is more funding or more time. So, it's just that planning process. I think it starts getting it all these ideas, which…and you know it's not easy. If it was easy at all we wouldn't have to have this template for you, but I just to get thinking about it.

So, I think if there are no more questions. I think we can move along. And yes, so. But thank you so much for those really thoughtful questions. I…I enjoy thinking about them.

01:03:23.190 --> 01:04:04.960

Celia Laskowski: So now that we review the Research Action Plan section of the toolkit in more detail, we want to know how you plan to incorporate the information from this section into your own work, at your institution, or either your own work or at your institution. So, as before, we're going to put a link in the chat that you can use to add your answers. You can also give a thumbs up to other participants, answers that you like. So go ahead and do that. And the question is, how will you use this section in your own work or at your institution?

01:04:35.560 --> 01:05:32.900

Celia Laskowski: Right? We got some answers coming in and apologies if you hear any weird noises—they chose today to do construction above me.

So, we've got some “training project staff.”

“I already do a lot of these steps,”—that's great to hear—“but this can help organize, right? kind of, determine where your stakeholders stand in terms of your research, and that can help guide what you do with it, and how you communicate it.” It's great.

Oh, already working on a policy brief that that's great. So we do hope this is helpful.

It looks like you've already got some great ideas about how you plan to use this Research-To-Action Plan Section. You identified “appropriate dissemination.” Great! I love to see this.

01:05:34.699 --> 01:06:05.279

Celia Laskowski: And you'll see, I mean, this is kind of the reiterated, like, the full plan brings in all those other webinars, the stakeholders, the communication products. This is kind of organizing all of that together. So, you might have similar answers to what you've said in the past webinars, if you've attended. Great.

Well, if…when you're ready, if you are, we’re still getting answers in…or…oh, yeah, I’m getting some.

01:06:10.690 --> 01:06:26.869

Celia Laskowski: So, a lot of, kind of, preparing things and also thinking strategically about your relationships with who can help you get that research used to…exactly the…kind of what we have in mind. Community, community participation. That's great. I love to see that.

01:06:28.909 --> 01:07:09.960

Celia Laskowski: Okay? Well, as you continue to do this moving forward, we'd love to hear your stories about how you do use this Research-To-Action Plan section in the future…immediate future, or maybe later on, if you think of it. Please, we'd love to hear the stories.

Those stories offer valuable lessons and guidance for us, and for others who are working to get their research disseminated and used. So, if you do have stories as they come up or experiences that you'd like to share or questions, please feel free to email us at itr.researchfeedback@usaid.gov. And that was just put into the chat. So I'd love to hear from you at any time about your stories.

01:07:11.710 --> 01:07:39.430

Celia Laskowski: And now I will pass it on to the RTAC project director, Sutherland Miller III, for a few closing thoughts. Sutherland is the Project Director/Chief of Party of RTAC, and has worked extensively with multiple donors, private clients, and U.S. and foreign agencies to improve knowledge management and organizational learning; promote trade and investment policies; and create an enabling environment for policy reform and competitiveness.

Welcome, Sutherland!

01:07:39.790 --> 01:07:54.500

Sutherland Miller: Thank you. Now that we’re at the conclusion of our webinar series on the Research Translation Toolkit, I just want to thank our partners at USAID and at PRB, as well as our external speakers, for putting this series together.

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Sutherland Miller: I found these webinars quite informative but also good at conveying a practical sense of how these tools are used by researchers in a real-world context. As noted throughout the webinars, we have an ever-growing list of resources related to the tools and techniques we use for research translation that are posted on the RTAC website.

01:08:17.630 --> 01:08:40.560

Sutherland Miller: We received positive feedback on this webinar series and our general focus on research translation from within RTAC's own research network and beyond. So, going forward, we will continue to innovate in this space and implement approaches to support USAID-funded research teams in this work, and…and to amplify the results of their research.

01:08:41.400 --> 01:09:10.830

Sutherland Miller: As more resources in this area developed under RTAC, or if future events are programmed, we may reach out to you to invite you to learn more. We also welcome future engagement with you. So, if you would like to track the project or ask any questions through us, you can also go to our website. And at the bottom, there are ways to sign up for periodic project updates or to contact us directly.

01:09:11.500 --> 01:09:33.390

Sutherland Miller: So again, thank you all again for your interest in participation. And most immediately you will hear from us again when the resources from the final webinar, including the reporting and the transcript, are publicly available on our support site. With that, thank you again, and enjoy the rest of your morning, afternoon, or evening.