**Overview and Applications of USAID’s Research Translation Toolkit – Webinar Transcript**

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Welcome everyone, my name is Julie MacCartee, and I'm a program officer with the Research Division within the Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub at the US Agency for International Development for today's webinar is part of the US Agency Learning and Evidence Month which features a whole suite of events over the course of April. I'm going to paste the link to the Agency Learning and Evidence Month agenda- or full month scope- in the chat. It's a great chance to see what the programs have been happening- we have a bunch of webinars still coming up next week if you're interested in joining. And the recordings of past webinars will over time be pasted into this document as well.

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So we're delighted to have you all joining us today for a webinar to provide an overview and discuss applications of USAID’s Research Translation Toolkit to increase the reach and impact of more research. The Research Translation Toolkit was 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 NORC at the University of Chicago, with PRB as a core partner.

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Today's webinar will offer a broad overview of the research translation toolkit. We'll show how it's 3 sections can be used together to help you package research backed recommendations into accessible formats that can easily be used by your target audiences to improve policies, programs, and practices. The webinar will also share an overview of the research to action process, providing examples and testimonials from previous research teams. If you are a USAID staff member attending today we hope that you'll look for ways to use this toolkit as you design and support projects that focus on research and or evidence use.

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We also encourage you to share this toolkit with your implementing partners, and if you are yourself a research scientist or another development practitioner, we hope that you will use these tools to increase the impact of your work. These tools, they were recently completed, and they are open for use, and you can use them in whatever way you find them most helpful to you.

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Before we get started. Just a couple of logistical points we've turned off your videos in microphones, but we will be using and monitoring the chat box throughout the webinar. And, as I said before, we invite you to introduce yourself in the chat box to let us know where you're joining from, what interested you about the webinar today, and also to share any resources or the links that you think would be helpful to the community. However, if you have a question for our speakers, our panelists today, we encourage you to actually use Zoom's Q&A feature, which is at the bottom of the screen. You'll see a little couple of bubbles that say Q%A under that, and that will just help us track all of the questions we can use it to answer some throughout the webinar, and we'll also answer some verbally, both, perhaps in the middle and at the end of the webinar.

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On that note. Here is a brief agenda for today's webinar. We will begin with an audience activity to start thinking about research uptake in your own experiences. We will then move into an overview of the research translation toolkit and then pivot to the overall research to action process which will include a testimonial video from a team in Kenya who successfully used the toolkit to advance their work. And then we'll end with the brief discussion of research utilization under RTAC while answering your questions along the way. One last thing to note is that today's webinar is adapted from a four-part webinar series hosted by USAID and RTAC just this past February and March, that provided an overview of our research translation toolkit and a deep dive into its 3 sections. That webinar series highlighted what the toolkit is, why it's important for work, and how you can use it in the research process. And so we'll provide some highlights from this today, but the slides recording and additional materials from that webinar series are all available on the Webinar Series landing page, which we will share in the chat. So if you want more information or a different dive in the how to for using the whole toolkit, we have those resources available to you.

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Okay, so just briefly, I want to lead us through a quick exercise to frame where we're all coming from before we move on to the main part of the webinar. We want to hear from you about what factors influence research uptake. By research uptake, we mean that people who did not conduct the research are now using the evidence to inform their decisions. This might also be referred to as research utilization or research to practice. So we've shared a link in the chat that you can use to respond to this question: “In your experience, what factors influence research uptake?”

Your answers are going to form a word cloud, and the bigger or bolder words are the words that are mentioned. Most often, since you're limited to one word or short phrase, you're also welcome to the library in the chat box if you have additional responses.

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Well- what factors influence research uptake? I see that the biggest word so far is “relevance”. So decision makers need to feel that that research is relevant to whatever they are working on at the moment. That's a great one. Similarly, “useful”. We’ve got “cultural sensitivity”! That's a great consideration. “Practicality”…”politics” -Yeah, politics may influence what is paid attention to or not different types of incentives. I see “funds” and “economics”. Yup. Absolutely “the quality of the research”, whether it truly is high quality research or whether it's perceived to be high quality. “Context”, yes. “Timeliness”- Time is a big one. Right? That the timing of when that research information is available matches up with the timing of when a decision maker might need it, right? It has to feel recent, or perfectly timed sometimes. perfectly time sometimes. “Applicability”, “reliability”. These are great. Oh, I see “accessibility” very important, both in terms of maybe being simple to understand, but also accessible to people who may have different needs, different ways of processing information.

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Great. Thank you all. Well, so these are all very important factors that influence whether and to what degree research findings are seen and used by stakeholders to inform policies, programs, and practices. These factors influence the degree to which research findings are translated to become more accessible to a wider audience than the scientific research community. Great. Well, thank you all for participating in that activity. Now I'm going to turn things over to Christine Power from PRB for the next section of our webinar. Christine is a Senior Policy Adviser at PRB and the Communications Manager for RTAC. She has more than 10 years of experience in research and policy analysis and translation, strategic communication, and developing advocacy strategies to support policy change. She's also worked extensively with research teams to use sections of this research translation toolkit. And she'll now provide an overview of the toolkit and how it may be relevant to your work. Welcome, Christine, over to you.

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Great. Thank you, Julie. Now we're going to walk through the ways in which the research translation toolkit can be used to address some of these factors that were raised in the word cloud exercise. So first, Let's take a step back and look at what the toolkit is. 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. Each section includes exercises, fillable forms, and templates to help you apply the information in the toolkit to your own work in order to influence decisions and achieve development impact. For your reference after the webinar, we have shared a link to the research translation toolkit in the chat box.

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The toolkit is divided into 3 sections. The stakeholder analysis section, a communication product section and a Research to Action plan section. When used together, these 3 sections can help you craft strategies and messages to help influence decisions and achieve development impact more effectively throughout the research process.

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You can use the toolkit, no matter where you are in your research process. While we recommend using the entire toolkit throughout the research process, it can be most effective when used at multiple points. As you can see from this graphic, there are certain sections of the toolkit that are most suited to each phase of the research process. Using specific toolkit sections at critical points in the research process will allow you to get the most impact from the toolkit.

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Together we will walk through each section and discuss when it is best to use, and why. And it's important to remember that the research process is cyclical, so these stages and the various toolkit sections may be revisited throughout the life of your research.

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Before we dive into each of the 3 toolkit sections, we wanted to share a couple examples of real research teams that have used the process provided in the toolkit to develop their own stakeholder analysis, communication products, and research to action plan as they moved throughout the research process. First we'll take a look at a team who use the stakeholder analysis section, a research team at the Institut Pasteur de Tunis was working on cutaneous leishmaniasis- a skin in section transmitted by sand flies- and they conducted a stakeholder analysis to help them develop a research to action plan.

First, they brainstormed and identified an initial set of 20 stakeholders they thought could help them achieve their research utilization goals. That initial list consisted of a diverse group of individuals, from government offices, multilateral organizations, foundations, universities, hospitals, and businesses, all who are operating at various spheres of influence, ranging from sub-national to global levels. Next, they systematically considered stakeholders’ level of influence over the field to determine which stakeholders should be prioritized for engagement. Stakeholders with a high level of influence were generally prioritized over others.

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Our second example here shows how our research team used the communication product section of the toolkit to develop products to share their findings and recommendations. A research team in the Philippines analyzed data that confirmed that contact tracing for childhood tuberculosis cases is not consistently performed to standard. Their research identified barriers to better contact tracing. The team felt in urgency to share their findings, so that healthcare workers could identify a much larger number of affected children than they were under the current approach. The team wanted to reach the decision makers at both the National and sub-national levels. They also wanted to provide specific recommended action to the 3 Northern Philippine provinces in which they conducted their research.

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They recommended that the national, regional, and local governments establish guidance on contact tracing and provide health care workers with the resources and tools to improve contact. And then, based on the information they received through interviews about stakeholders communication preferences in the health sector, the team decided to develop a fact sheet that’s tailored for national, regional and local decision makers with photos and relevant research and data findings.

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And finally, onto a team using the R2A Plan section. A research team at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute designed and evaluated a clean energy cooling system for low-income farmers. During a research translation workshop, the research team set research to action goals focused on reaching national and subnational stakeholders to ensure that farmer groups have access to financing for the cooling system. The team identified several immediate actionable next steps that they could use to work towards their goals, including drafting technical guidelines to help farmers obtain funding from the agriculture infrastructure fund, meeting with decision makers responsible for setting implementation guidelines based on policy decisions in agriculture and banking, and conducting demonstrations of the cold storage structure for farmers. The team focused on influential stakeholders who could address the problem of a farmer's lack of access to affordable cold storage which had resulted in wasted food.

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So now that we've looked at a couple of real-world examples of research teams using each of the 3 sections, we want to take a deeper look at each of the 3 sections now, and how these sections help guide a research team. So again, we will begin with the stakeholder analysis section.

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So, who are stakeholders? As many of you know, stakeholders are individuals or groups who are influenced by the research, either directly or indirectly, and those who have an interest in research. So a stakeholder might be a funder, a policymaker, another researcher, or a civil society organization. The stakeholder analysis section can help you identify those influential individuals or groups who might use your research and then plan effective engagement with them. By enhancing stakeholder engagement during your research, you can increase the overall impact of your research insights or technical innovations.

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You can use the stakeholder analysis section when you want to understand your stakeholder's interests, influences, motivations, and knowledge of the subject matter. You can use it to determine which stakeholders are the most important to engage in the research process, and when and how to engage them. And then this section is also useful to learn tips about how to interview these stakeholders in order to get more information.

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The stakeholder analysis section has 5 steps that leads you through, with a set of worksheets that turn the theoretical information into hands-on learning. We won't go through each of these steps, but again, these materials are available on the website. For example, 1 one of the stakeholder analysis worksheets helps you organize what you already know about stakeholder knowledge and views on your topic. It helps you understand their preferred communication methods and their motivation and capacity to engage with you. The stakeholder prioritization worksheet will help you determine which stakeholders you want to put the most effort into engaging according to their level of interest and influence. And the stakeholder interview guide helps you plan and prepare for stakeholder interviews, to maximize the information that you gather and the impact you achieve.

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So, looking back at the graphic, you can see that the stakeholder analysis section is very important at the beginning of the research process, when you are developing your research questions. Using this section as early as possible gives stakeholders an opportunity to give their input before your research questions and approach are finalized, which can help establish strong engagement and support from the very beginning. And since stakeholder roles may vary at each stage of the research process, the stakeholder analysis section will be useful at each step to ensure that engagement is an ongoing and iterative process that continues throughout the lifetime of the project.

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So now we are going to take a look at the communication products section. The communication products section helps you craft main messages and choose the right format to share your research insights or technical innovation with stakeholders in a way that motivates them to use your evidence to inform policies, programs, or practices. Because all of the toolkit sections work together, you'll find that completing the stakeholder analysis section will provide you with essential information about your target audience to then inform your choice and development of communication products in this section. The R2A plan section - which we will discuss in a moment- will then help you strategically plan how to use your communication products and will be part of tracking their use.

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You should use the communication products section when you want to tell a story using your data and information. This section can also show you how to tailor your main messages to your audiences’ interests. And this section can also help also help you package your research results in the format that is most likely to capture stakeholders’ attention, so that the results will be used.

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As with the stakeholder analysis section, the communication product section has worksheets, templates, and examples that will help you move from concept to concrete communication products. The worksheets in this section help you develop communication objectives, craft main messages, and create an outline for an appropriate product type to help reach your audience. The communication products section is most relevant later in the research process - during the analysis and right up stage and the dissemination and follow-up. This is because you need to have sufficient data to support your claims and your key messages. Clear results and actionable evidence-based recommendations will be required before you develop a strong communications product.

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Now let's take a look at the third and final section which covers the research to action plan or R2A plan. The R2A plan section helps you develop a step-by-step plan to communicate your research findings, attract influential stakeholders, and ensure that your research leads to action. You should revisit and update your R2A Plan over time, as things evolve over the course of your research project.

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You can use the R2A plan section when you want to create a strategic path from research generation to research utilization by drawing from your stakeholder analysis and effectively sharing any communication products that you have developed. You can also use this section to identify the types of changes or decisions that could be made based on your research evidence. So, for example, can your findings inform program planning design and messaging? Or can it spur policy change? It may even be able to influence strategic investments. The R2A Plan section can also help you ensure that your messages are clearly communicated, compelling, and credible to your audio. Poor communication can obviously be a barrier to research uptake, for example, using technical or academic jargon and not providing clear, actionable recommendations for your audience can actually prevent them from understanding and using your research findings and innovation. And finally, this section can help you identify opportunities to highlight your research findings and generate interest in their use. For example, are there budget or policy processes that you can take advantage of? What about strategic or programmatic planning? When would it be strategic to share your research or innovation. The R2A plan section helps you think about and address these questions.

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Similar to the other 2 sections, the R2A plan section includes multiple steps with accompanying templates and worksheets that walk you through the process of creating, implementing, and measuring the success of your own research to action plan. The comprehensive templates included in the toolkit has exercises for each of the 7 steps in the development process working through that template will help you develop and refine tailored research to action plan that will enable you to effectively transform your research into impact. The comprehensive R2A plan template that you see on the screen here highlights where in the R2A planning process, you can pull from your stakeholder analysis and your communication product.

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As the graphic here shows, the R2A plan section is most relevant at the very start when you're starting to develop your research questions and then at the later stages of analysis, write-up, dissemination, and tracking. As you begin planning your research, you can use the R2A Plan section to help you think about how you want your results to be used and how to involve and inform stakeholders throughout each stage of the research process. Later, this section can then be used to help you assess your results, determine who needs to hear about them, and then develop a plan to convey significant implications to these stakeholders. It's a really good idea to revisit your R2A plan throughout the research process and make updates to it, thereby using it to guide your work.

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So we're going to return for a moment to the full graphic of the toolkit sections mapped onto the research process because we want to emphasize that the 3 sections of the toolkit are complementary rather than standalone components of the research translation process. Though you may give more attention to one component at specific stages, each section will inform and draw from the other section over the course of the whole process. For example, completing the stakeholder analysis section will provide you with essential information about your target audience that will inform your choice and development of communication products and your strategy through reaching those audiences via your R2A plan. The communication products section in turn draws from the stakeholder analysis section and helps shape the R2A plan. And the R2A plan section supports effective sharing of your communication products and draws from the stakeholder analysis to create a strategic path from research generation to research utilization. Revisiting your stakeholder analysis and R2A plan in tandem can help you strengthen each of those tools.

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Much of the information about the toolkit today, including the research process graphic is available in a fact sheet that you can access on the RTAC website. And we've also shared the link in the chat for easy reference. This fact sheet is a great item to share with your partners or colleagues who might be interested in the toolkit because the fact sheet provides a concise overview of it and contains links to the different sections.

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So now that we've gone through the 3 sets of the research translation toolkit, we're going to delve a bit deeper into the research action process with more examples from previous partners. And so to do so. I'd like to introduce my colleague Gorrety Parmu. Gorrety is a policy advisor at PRB, based in our Nairobi Kenya office, and she's going to walk us through this next segment of looking at research to action, to practice.

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Thank you, Christine. So once you're ready to start your research to action planning, there are a few key steps that you should take to make sure that your research results are actually input into practice.

As Christine has mentioned, 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 of your direct research community, but who have the power to make changes based on your findings. So ultimately, you want them to know how to use your data to improve programs and policies. There are a few key steps you want to take into consideration to make sure that your research results are actually used- the first one is to set a research to action goal. This is where you ask yourself what sort of actions or changes you would like your research to influence. You will identify stakeholders who have the power or position to help you get to where you want to go, and then engage these stakeholders throughout the research process by building relationships with them and involving them at each stage. You will then assess the policy environment to coordinate your plan with other critical timelines and happenings that could help highlight your research. Your fifth step will be to craft key messages from your research findings that will specifically inspire action among your stakeholders. This is also where you want to use your data to tell a compelling story, and then you will package and designate your research in formats that are compelling to your task audience. Lastly, you will continue to foster evidence use by providing end-users with the skills and knowledge they need to integrate your findings into their work. Remember that throughout this process you will continue to track and measure success by making adjustments to your plan as needed, and then learning what works best.

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Now let's take a look at what it looks like when you put all of these pieces by walking through a research to action plan created by a real research team in Nepal.

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RTAC previously worked with the research team based at the Kathmandu Institute of a Applied Sciences in the Nepal. The research activities are focused on developing a paper based analytical device - known as PAD - for measuring pesticide rescue on vegetable and fruit samples and a smartphone-based microscopy system for detecting the ineffective stages of parasitic organisms. First, the Nepal team set the research to action goal, which was 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 2 things: the first was to get approval of the PesticidePAD from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, and the second was to adapt PesticidePAD based on effective feedback based on feedback from the stakeholders.

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This team decided to develop a timeline of activities that could help them reach their goal. Some of these activities included holding meetings with primary stakeholders and developing a validation study in collaboration with the Nepal Agricultural Research Council to compare this PesticidePAD technology with 3 other methods of pesticide detection. One thing that I want highlight here is that the Research to Action Plan section of the toolkit includes all of the same steps that this team took to make sure that that findings could be effectively used to support food security strategies in Nepal.

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Another example of a team who successfully used the research to action process is the Counting Women's Work project. As a bit of background, the counting Women's Work Project has historically produced estimates of the time that women, men, and children spend doing unpaid work. 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 being recognition of work walk, and then, the final step being actions that changes national 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 the household. This work, often competes with the time for education and time for work that brings in household income.

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Some of the norms that need to change are gender norms around girls’ education but also social protection policies that are centered around paid work tend to disadvantage women and girls. So 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 of the value of unpaid work. Unpaid work helps to nurture the paid work force- that means if individuals were paid to do this work that is currently unpaid, the value of this work would be equivalent to more than 10 percent of the GDP of each of the African countries where this analysis was been done. Sharing this type of measurement has raised awareness, but now the challenge for the team was to take action. So PRB collaborated with a partner organization Centre d'Excellence Régional de Recherche en Economie Générationnelle (CREG). CREG’s director is affiliated with the Research Center for Economy and Applied Finances in Senegal. CREG conducted analysis workshop, while PRB facilitated the use of selected tools from the R2A plan section of the toolkit, and then worked with country team members identified by the National Observatory for the Demographic Dividend in each of these countries identified.

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The individuals who participated in the analysis workshops included experts of data use, thematic experts on different sectors of the economy and types of work, and experts in the national time transfer accounts methodology. The output of the workshop was a technical report as you can see.

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Now, let's take a look at the type of results a country might produce after the analysis workshop. So the research goal would be to integrate the monetary value of unpaid work into household income and GDP calculations. The research results would be that over the life cycle, the time devoted to domestic work is more important for women between the ages of 21 and 44, where it reaches up to 16 h per week, at age 25, compared to just 3 h men of the same age. Similarly, the age at when the most time is spent on domestic work is 25 years for women and 15 years for men. The annual value of women’s unpaid work at this peak is more than six times the value for men.

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So, from here, the recommendations were to put in place mechanisms to measure and officially take into account unpaid domestic work in national production and to develop policies or strategies to reduce women’s domestic work. These recommendations from the research analysis are broad and not targeted to specific stakeholder, but each team and country would have this common ground for starting the conversation to make this recommendation more specific in the research to action process.

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Following the research and analysis section, the project held 3 virtual meetings for research to action planning. Before the first meeting, PRB prepared an example of a completed research to action template worksheet. We used outputs from an analysis of unpaid work in Ghana, research on budget process, and research on stakeholders in Ghana to develop this example. During the first meeting, PRB facilitators provided an overview, and each team started the discussion of research to action goals and objectives. Between meetings, each team worked on the worksheets and in the virtual meetings, teams discussed their work with facilitators. Before the fourth and final in-person session, each team provided feedback to another team. Before the final session, each team had draft components of the research to action plan, including goals, objectives, and messages with specific recommendations. The teams tried to make all this relevant to the intersection of the implications of their research and priorities of stakeholders. They had stakeholders identified by name and plans to share results and gauge stakeholder interest in taking action. They also had specific information-sharing events that they proposed. Some teams had proposed presentations to members of the national parliaments and they also identified communication products needed. For some teams, groups included directors of government programs who are knowledgeable about stakeholder motivations, but for other country teams, they still needed to find out more about the proposed stakeholders.

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The R2A planning process was useful in that it helped the teams with highlighting the differences between research goals, research to action goals, and actionable objectives. It also helped them to frame the research results with specific stakeholders’ interests and influence in mind. It helped them to raise awareness on the importance of putting research results in context by combining countries circumstances with broader research and policy literature. Lastly, it helps them to recognize the limitations of researchers in taking action and the potential contributions of program and policy staff of NGOs and government units in developing actionable recommendations.

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I will now turn over to RTAC’s project director, Sutherland Miller III for a few closing thoughts. Sutherland is the Project Director and Chief of Party of RTAC and has worked extensively with multiple donors, private clients, and US and foreign agencies, to improve knowledge management and organizational learning, promote trade and investment policies, and create an enabling environment for policy reform. Welcome Sutherland.

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Thank you, Gorrety. To give you a sense of how we've worked with USAID to apply these tools and techniques, I'd like to say just a few words about the context of this work and to describe some of the partnerships that we've developed with research teams from around the world under RTAC.

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Overall, our goal has to been adaptive and responsive to evolving needs over the 5 years that we've been doing this work with USAID. As you can see from the examples, the research to action approach is designed to be agnostic in regard to the type of research being conducted as well as the country and language in which the work is being done. In many cases the research teams are comprised of faculty and staff from both an overseas institution and a US university partner. So, there are many examples of some very interesting and relevant research teams that have developed R2A plans – we’ll put a link to our website with a full accounting of this work if you want to see more of the details. But again, I think the range is instructive. So, some examples that we, some of which we cited, some of which we didn't, working with the team on land management in the DRC, maternal health issues in Indonesia, scaling up evacuated cooling technologies in Mali, and we mentioned the mapping of pesticide use in Nepal.

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The methodology has changed over time, in part due to circumstances. Some changes, I think, are interesting to think about it. One is in response to COVID. Here we adapted what was an intensive and compact field-based interest into the entirely virtual approach. This so that we could get this work in a time when travel and face-to-face interaction with our research partners became impractical. We've also tested an adaptive methodology to engage multiple research teams at the same time, the examples that we saw today are all derived from our team working directly with a single research team. The one example of trying to adapt this methodology was done under the theme of research teams around the world, addressing one aspect or another, of getting over COVID. So, in this case, we worked with 12 different teams that were USAID-funded research teams, and then some of the some of the examples, again, are quite diverse. Two different teams – one in Indonesia and one in Senegal were looking at the feasibility of analyzing wastewater to assess the spread of COVID. Two different teams were looking at the effects of the pandemic on specific economic sectors, one in Brazil and one of Serbia. And three African teams were measuring COVID impact on big range of topics, including gender based violence, mental health among students, and transnational wildlife.

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And similarly, we had another adaptation of this to work with Malawian and US institutions all implementing one aspect or another of an innovation scholars’ book. Similarly, our work in communications products has been diverse in their geographic and technical scope. For example, we've done some work with a team that was looking at forest health in Columbia, measuring power grid reliability in Ghana and improving education for employability in Morocco.

To give you a flavor of this work from the perspective of one of our partners, we’re going to play a short video, in which you'll hear from Dr. Mary Baaru whose research was focused on spreading information on approaches to maximize soil moisture for farmers, in arid and semi-arid parts of Kenya. And while we watch this video, I'd like to invite you to share with the group some guidance for you on how you do this work. So in the chat, as we watch the video, please feel free to name any resources or institutions that you found helpful in doing work in research translation, research communications, science communication, or similar.

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I'm Dr. Mary Baaru, a lecturer at Kenyatta University in Kenya. My team’s research focused on enhancing efficient utilization of soil moisture for improved smallholder farm productivity in the semi-arid areas of Kenya. This we did by assessing the effectiveness of terracing in conserving water. The team was able to demonstrate that properly constructed terraces harvest and conserve rainwater that increases crop performance. I developing our R2A Plan, we were helped to develop communication objectives, classify and engage stakeholders that would use our findings, construct key messages that the stakeholders could use, and also identify the different communication channels that we can use to disseminate our information. We were therefore able to select two R2A activities. These are dissemination workshop for extension agents and meat farmers, which enabled us to get some funding to reach one of the most critical stakeholders who, because of their position, are able to broadcast our results to the larger farming community for greater impact.

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Our experience in developing Research to Action plan has taught us how important it is to identify the end users of the research findings and their communication needs so that you can plan early in advance.

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Alright. Well, thank you. We have come to the point where we'd like to hear directly from you. As my colleague Julie mentioned. Please put any of your questions in the Q&A part of the Zoom function, and we will address what we can live. Julie, would you like to lead us through the Q&A?

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Great thanks so much. Yes, we have. Let's see, we have one question that came in from Andrew Goldbaum, which I will first toss to Christine, and that question is “The incentives, formats, and even the language of academic research don't always do well to align research and practitioner needs. How does this toolkit address or work within these structural differences to improve practical use in the field without sacrificing things like impacts or likelihood of being published and cited and other factors that researchers have to consider?”

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Thanks, Julie and Andrew for that question. I think the first thing to think about is how the communication products aren't necessarily a research article. And so the oftentimes some of these concerns that you have raised and around impact scoring likelihood of being published, that is somewhat separate from the communication products we reference here because the audiences are very different if not separate. The toolkit walks you through using accessible language so that you can target people outside of your direct research community. And these people who you are targeting are the ones who can take action.

So I find it helpful to think of the products for these audiences almost separate from each other. Many of the research teams we work with will publish their own research findings where they can use what we would consider jargon for other audiences but would be considered the correct academic language in their field. Then when they try to take this research into action and share with practitioners, they are able to tease out the language and don't have to worry as much about some of the concerns that you raised. So the toolkit section – specifically the Communication products section - will help researchers sort of like step out of that academic mindset and think about ways to share your findings with different audiences outside of your field, in accessible or compelling ways. So, I'm not sure if that directly answers your question. I know there are other PRB Staff on the call, who have worked extensively in communication products as well as colleagues from USAID and NORC. But I'm hoping that addressed the question at least on a peripheral level.

00:50:42.000

This is Marlene Lee at PRB- and I typed this in the response- but one of the most direct ways in which the toolkit addresses, that is, in the communication section. We talk about using professionals to do develop some of your materials as opposed to doing it yourself. Of course, the researchers’ knowledge is important and requires their time to review and guide. But at least this doesn't require the researcher themselves to do the writing. And the other point that I'd like to raise is that in terms of incentives, at least in the US and universities in Africa where I've worked with other people, there are -for researchers - incentives to provide public service, and that does count towards your evaluation. Thank you.

00:52:02.000

Great. Thank you so much, Marlene. Great to hear from you as well. Please do continue putting your questions and thoughts into our Q&A pod, but I also have a few questions that I'd love to pose to our panelists. One is to zoom in a little tighter on the issue of timing right? As we saw in the Wordpad at the beginning of the session, timing is extremely important, for when to communicate, and so, you know, based on your experience with the toolkit, what is the most appropriate time for a researcher to present research findings to stakeholders. Not just in terms of calendar flows, but also just when are stakeholders the most open to receiving the information they need.

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I'll start off initially, and then I know I can pass it on to others on the call. I think obviously, a lot of this depends on the specific type of research, the field that you're in, and which stakeholders you are targeting. In terms of timing, we talked throughout the Webinar today, about starting to create this research to action plan early on before you start your research. So, the plan could be extended beyond, you know it could be years long, depending on the length of time your research takes, in addition to how long analysis would take. But by being engaged with stakeholders early on in the process, hopefully, you can revisit those conversations with stakeholders throughout, and then at the completion of your analysis, so that it's you are sort of maintaining a direct line of communication about this information. It is hard to give specifics on a timeline for everyone best to reach stakeholders, because I think that really does depend on what you're asking them or who they are. But I'll pass that on. Maybe I don't know, Sutherland, if you had anything to add?

00:54:20.000

Yeah, I mean, I think, yeah. The timing also, in some ways is driven externally by when stakeholders are prepared to make decisions. In previous work, you find out, for example, from trade in Southern Africa you have to be prepared for the annual meeting of the customs, regional customs services for anything to happen. So in terms of sequencing, when you engage how you engage in the most effective way to engage some of that just practical- this is when these stakeholders make decisions (i.e. An annual regional meeting)- things are kind of important. So, yeah, I think part of the process in the stakeholder engagement piece is understanding when decisions are made, how they're made, and how to communicate to those people. So whether that's a written piece, getting on a meeting agenda, or whatever. Looking at a very practical approach to getting good people where they are, and when they're ready to make a decision.

00:55:44.000

Thank you so much. I think Madonna has also added in a response to this question in the Q&A section saying “in my opinion, it depends on the skill and the knowledge of the researcher on the topic we're addressing. The stakeholder’s involvement in the research process is very important.”

And I agree. To me, the word that always shines so large is ownership, feeling, a sense of ownership, or buy into the to the research makes a huge difference, I think, on stakeholders a lot in that time that's needed to digest it and utilize it. So, yeah, always the question of how do we create and build that ownership and early communication in the process is an important piece of that.

00:56:36.000

Great. Alright. Well, perhaps you know, maybe just one more question that I'll first direct to Sutherland. But Gorrety or anyone else wants to chime in as well, please do. Recognizing that research to action skills and thought processes can be very important for scientific researchers who want their research to have an impact, do you know of any universities that include coursework on research utilization as part of a general STEM PhD program or do you have kind of thoughts or suggestions about how and if scientists should have a chance to bolster these skills in their training?

00:57:22.000

Gorrety, do you want to talk about that, or are there resources in the countries that you are working on Africa, that you think are used for researchers to be aware of?

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Ok we’ve had a little problem with Gorrety’s line. That question is part of why I wanted to have our assembles group of self-interested experts to share resources. I've had conversations with some people within RTAC’s research network, which is over a 1,000 university affiliated researchers from around the globe, and that issue has come up about where, if you are a PhD graduate student in a STEM field, where would you find this in the curriculum - particularly in US institutions? And the answer is, people think about it, but I don't think it's quite formalized. There are some schools in - some may not be obvious ones- that do some of this. Long Island has a program on science Communications. I think that is sort of where you may see some of this. I think the approach that we're talking about today is a little broader and get to broader policy implications. Not just as granular as communicating certain types of technical scientific research. But I think that's an evolving question, and I believe some people may have some ideas for us to take a look at. Marlene or anybody else on the call to what's your experience with mainstreaming this in an academic context?

00:59:27.000

Sutherland, well at 1 point over a decade ago, PRB had helped a university in Vietnam put together a course as part of a master's program on communicating about social science research. The East West Institute at Hawaii has had a summer program. Sometimes, the University of Michigan in the US will include it in their Summer Institute. And you mentioned the science communication program in upstate university but I forget which university. In Africa, PRB has been collaborating with partners in Kenya, and also in West Africa. We've been collaborating with programs such as E. Ford and the ISSP program in Burkina Faso. And we have been doing training of trainers on how to communicate about social science research or public health research. Thanks.

01:01:01.000

Thank you. That's useful.

01:01:04.000

Great. Thank you both so much and I've also seen some great suggestions and thoughts in the chat, and a few links to additional courses. It sounds like, yeah, some examples of courses that are out there and using evidence and practice, and the like. I think what we can all acknowledge is that it's being strategic about research to action. It's so much more than just say reducing jargon right? That's an important part. But I feel like often that kind of boils down to oh, we just need to communicate this in simpler terms. But there's so many more steps and thought processes about when in the research process to share information, how to engage with stakeholders, just knowing what your goals are, right? It's not just about communicating what research you've done, but what you hope that those next steps are. Just thinking that through will shape how and when you communicate. So it sounds like, you know, a lot of attendees here are definitely on the same page with all of this and we're excited to be engaging in this conversation with you. Recognizing that it is Friday afternoon, and many people might have some work to squeeze in before the end of the day, I think we can move ahead to start wrapping up.

01:02:19.000

I just wanted to note that, moving forward we would love to hear your stories about using their Research to Action Plan section of our toolkit or other sections of the toolkit, if you do indeed use it. These stories offer valuable lessons and guidance for others who are working to get their research disseminated and used. So, if you do have stories or experiences to share, or if you have further requests or questions, or critiques of the toolkit, please do feel free to email u itr.researchfeedback@usaid.gov. We’re always hoping to make this toolkit as useful as possible, and to collect and share your story as a reminder.

All of the materials that we discussed during today's webinar, including the toolkit, the supporting webinar series, the associated fact sheets, and testimonial videos are all available on the research translation toolkit website which has also been added to the chat. We also will send a post event email to those of you who are registered for this webinar today to make sure you have all of that at your fingertips.

01:03:29.000

So, on that note I would like to say thank you very much to all of you who joined and participated today, and thank you to our speakers: Sutherland, Christine, Gorrety and Marlene for joining in as well. And to Jill for providing some important behind the scenes work, and of course, our whole RTAC team for making this webinar happen. So thank you all, have a great weekend, and let us know if you use the toolkit. Thank you all for joining.