

# Embedding Evaluation in VNRs

## Training in Evaluation Synthesis

23 September 2020, Virtual  
9.30-15.30 SAST



# Welcome Slide

- Welcome to the training
- Please introduce yourself on Chat; indicating your name, Organisation and Country
- Eg Good morning. Matodzi Amisi, CLEAR-AA in South Africa
- Also post your expectations on chat
- Eg I expect to learn how to use existing evaluations in VNR reporting, Matodzi





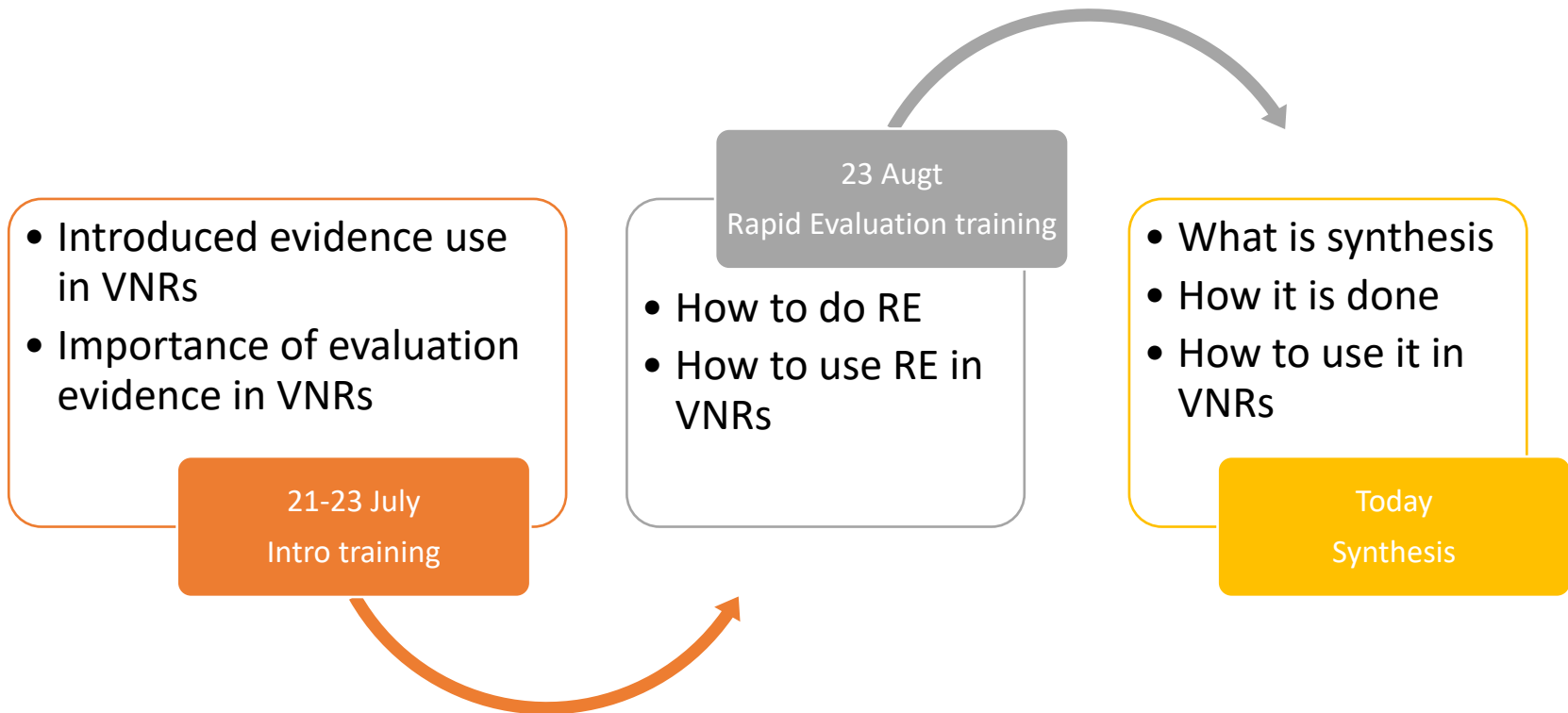
# Facilitation team

- **Matodzi Amisi, CLEAR-AA**
- **Thomas Rossmuller, UNICEF**
- **Jenean Pretorius, CLEAR-AA**
- **Ada Ocampo, UNICEF**
- Ian Goldman, CLEAR-AA
- Emmanuel David-Gnahoui, CLEAR-AA
- Grace Chisamya, UNECA

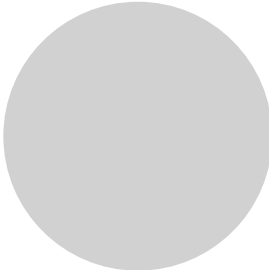
# What we aim to do today

—

# What we have done so far



# At the end of today:



Participants should understand what evaluation synthesis is, how it differs from other synthesis, when and how to use it



Participants gain insights on how to use evaluations synthesis in the VNRs

# What we asked you to do before today

1. Go through the guideline on synthesis for you to see some of the concepts which we will touch on during the course.  
<http://efundanathi.health.wits.ac.za/mod/folder/view.php?id=261>
2. Identify a topic/goal for an evaluation synthesis you would be interested to take forward, ideally where you know there are already some evaluations;
3. Revision of the slides on evaluation synthesis from the introduction course in July
4. Read/scan through the article on Moodle reporting on synthesis findings to have a feel of how findings are reported
5. It will be helpful to have someone with some research background in the country team. Potentially include a research/evaluation person in the team that is attending the course.
6. Ensure you have accessed the Moodle site for the course (if you have problems please contact [Jenean.Pretorius@wits.ac.za](mailto:Jenean.Pretorius@wits.ac.za))

# Session one: What is Evaluation Synthesis

—

# What exactly is an evaluation Synthesis?

- Evaluation synthesis **brings together existing studies**, assesses their relevance and reliability, and **draws together their data to answer specific questions** (DPME, 2014)
- An evaluation synthesis is a **systematic procedure** for organizing findings from several disparate evaluation studies. (GAO, 1992)

# Evaluation Synthesis

Systematic and transparent process

Aims to bring together what is known about a particular type of programme or a particular issue in service delivery

By answering specific policy question and applying evaluation criteria, can give new insights from primary studies

Though applying similar techniques to research synthesis, it answers questions evaluatively

Designed to be performed in a short time period, the evaluation synthesis has the important advantage of costs

# Steps involved

- Need identification
- Stakeholders consultation
- Agreeing on question & purpose
- Agree on scope

- Relevance
- Quality

- Sense making
- New insights from existing data



- Academic i.e. data bases
- websites
- Key experts

- Descriptive of studies included
- Relevant findings
- Qual and quant findings



**Note: we will go step by step to with  
some practicals**

**Table 5: Forms of evaluation synthesis, their nature and time to complete**

TYPE OF SYNTHESIS	NATURE	TIME REQUIRED TO COMPLETE
Traditional literature review (sometimes called narrative review) <sup>53</sup>	Narrative, selective review (not systematic); collates relevant studies and draws conclusions from them. Does not use a systematic method to identify studies. Often also does not have a systematic method for synthesizing or prioritizing studies and dealing with conflicting findings.	1 week to 2 months
Quick scoping review	Quick overview of research undertaken on a (constrained) topic. This could be systematic, but because it is quick, it is unlikely to be comprehensive or detailed.	1–2 weeks to 2 months
Rapid evidence assessment	Systematic search but a quick overview of existing research on a topic. Synthesis of evidence provided by these studies to answer the rapid evidence assessment question.	2–6 months (quicker than systematic review)
Full systematic review	A broad review of existing research on a topic and synthesis of the evidence provided by these studies to answer the review question.	8–12 months minimum
Multi-arm systematic review	Full map and synthesis of different types of evidence to answer the review question.	12 months minimum
Review of reviews	Same as any of the above methods but only includes reviews of other reviews.	Often quicker than other types of full systematic review

## One distinguishing feature

- Unlike research syntheses
- “...*evaluation is a judgement of interventions according to their results, impacts and needs they aim to satisfy. It is a systematic tool which provides a rigorous evidence-base to inform decision-making.*”
- There **has to be an Evaluand** (subject of evaluation i.e. policy, programme, some government intervention)
- And **criteria** (i.e. DAC, Criteria for evaluating transformation)

Evaluation  
Synthesis  
is not a  
literature  
review

**IMPORTANT  
NOTICE**



United Nations  
Economic Commission  
for Africa

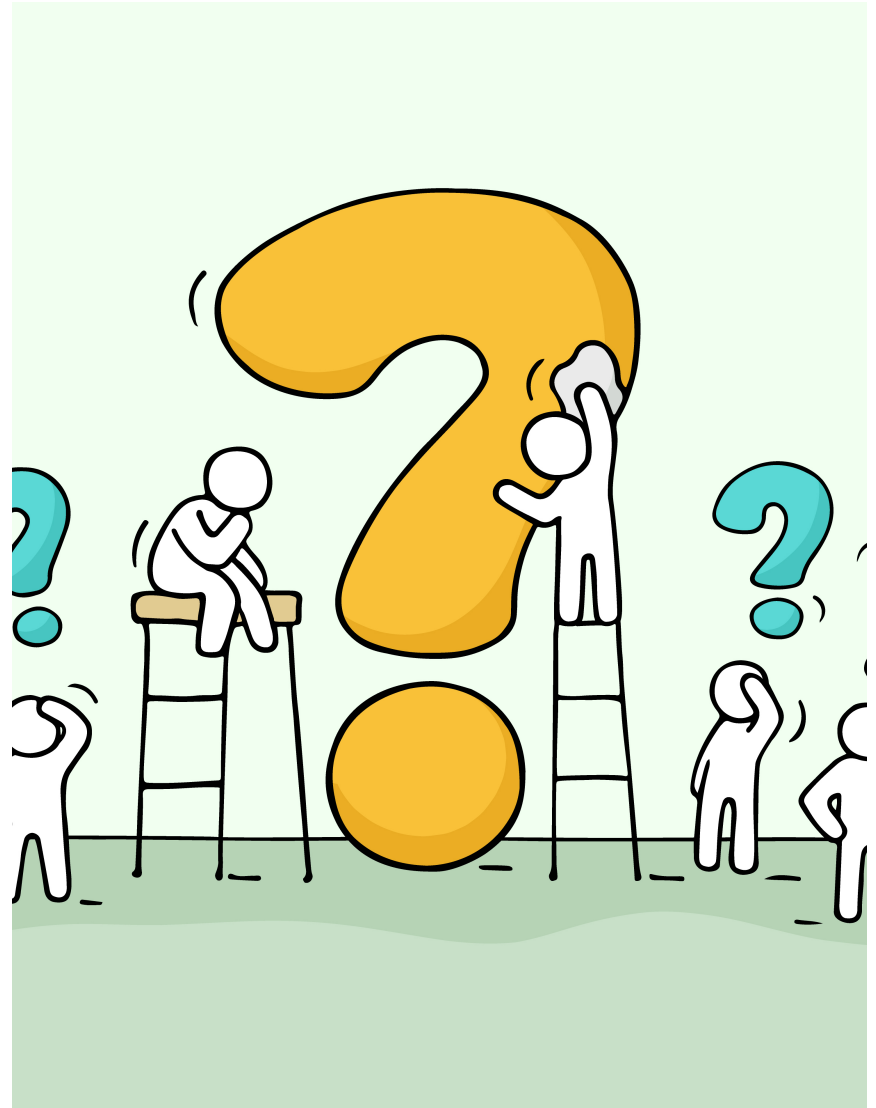
unicef   
for every child

# Defining questions

—

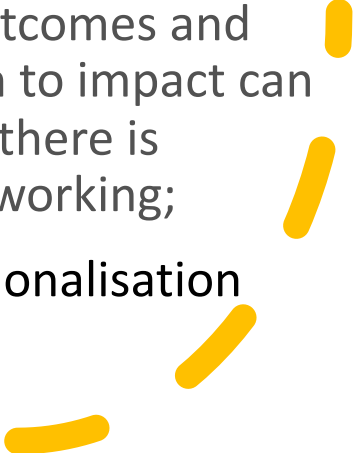
# Defining questions

- For policy relevant synthesis defining the question is an important step
- Should be done with stakeholders
- Put aside few days for consultations and refining the question
- Setting up steering committee/reference committee



# Questions may relate to DAC Criteria

Using five main DAC criteria:

- *Policy relevance and stakeholder appropriateness;*
  - *Effectiveness:* of policy/programme/project/service delivery;
  - *Efficiency:* of resource utilization, as well as management and administration;
  - *Coherence (new):* the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution;
  - *Impact* –most synthesis are on outcomes and impacts. The issue of contribution to impact can be covered in looking at whether there is evidence the theory of change is working;
  - *Sustainability:* of funding, institutionalisation and expertise.
- 

# Some examples

- Effectiveness: How has the provision of fully subsidised housing by government contributed to addressing poverty and building assets for the poor?
- Effectiveness: Does the provision of parenting programmes reduce harsh parenting and use of physical punishment in South Africa?

## Purpose

- **Important questions**
  - Why is the synthesis being done?
  - How would it be used?
- **Some examples:**
  - Inform decision about continuity of a programme/policy
  - Identify knowledge gap regarding new policy direction
  - Synthesise evidence on performance of government on particular outcome
  - Determine the impact of particular policy or set of policy interventions

# Group task- 22 min (country groups)

Note: each group has  
UNICEF/UNECA/CLEAR  
support

- Please select a facilitator to make sure group keeps to task
- Use the SDG target/goal you have identified for an evaluation synthesis
- If you have not decided on one prior to the course please choose one of the following:
- SDG 1, target 1.2, Indicator 1.2.2: Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
- SDG8, Target 8.6: By 2030, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
- Develop at least three sub-questions (use the evaluation criteria in developing sub-questions)
- Articulate the purpose of the synthesis. Answer the question “what do we want the synthesis to achieve”?

# Consolidation and conclusion

- Synthesis question (s) determines all the other steps
- Important that you have stakeholders involved from the beginning
  - Policy people (from different ministries for cross cutting policies/SDG goals/targets)
  - Research people
  - Research/evaluation institute if possible
- Remember to keep your question we will use it next steps

# Scope

Why it is important to articulate scope?

—

# Scope-inclusion criteria



**Scope gives the synthesis clear parameters**



**Defines important parameters such as:**

Population-area and population group

Intervention – policy/programme

Comparison group (Not that important here)

Outcomes-results measured



**Also important to define:**

Phenomena-defining the policy issue

Study design-which study designs will be included

Types of publication-are there publications that will be excluded?

# Population

- Who should be the population where the policy/intervention evaluated
- Consider:
  - Geography-whole country or certain areas in the country?  
Interested in what is coming from other countries?
  - Population group-entire population or specific sub groups of interest?  
i.e. Poor Households in South Africa, those who earn less than R3500 p/a

# Intervention

- What intervention should the primary evaluations/studies have evaluated?
- Consider:
  - Only evaluations of specific government policy/programme?
  - Interested in other similar programmes/interventions done by other partners?

# Comparison groups

- Most formal systematic reviews where there is synthesis of quantitative data might require specification on Comparison group
- What counterfactual should the primary evaluations have used?
- Should they have used counterfactual?
- For qualitative syntheses this is not important

# Outcomes

- Which outcomes are of interest?
- Which outcomes should the primary evaluations have measured
- Consider:
- Use what is on policy/government plans to define outcomes
- You cannot measure government interventions on outcomes it was not intended to achieve

# Example

**Question:** How has the provision of fully subsidised housing by government contributed to addressing poverty and building assets for the poor?

Concept	Definition
Population	Location-South Africa, All provinces, focused on urban areas Population group-HH defined as poor, HH earning R3500 p/m
Phenomena	State provided housing, subsidised housing, government housing, RDP housing, etc.
Interventions	Government Subsidies, land subsidies, Full subsidisation, policy, regulations, etc.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Growth in property values of subsidy and old stock houses</li><li>• Subsidy houses are incorporated in the residential property market</li><li>• Households which accessed subsidy houses move up the property ladder</li></ul>
Study design	All designs were included. The synthesis included all empirical studies where data was collected to answer a specified evaluation/research question

### Population

- Urban
- Income less than ZAR3500 per household per month

## Intervention design

### Components

- Individual level capital subsidy
- Project finance

### Activities

- Provision of municipal engineering services (water, sanitation, electricity, etc.)
- Procurement of contractor
- Construction
- NHBRC enrolment
- Township establishment
- Transfer of title deeds
- Beneficiary selection, approval and allocation
- Project design and approval
- Land assembly (buying, transfer, servicing)

### Policy and regulation

- Government procurement procedures
- Subsidy housing building standards
- The housing Act and housing Code
- Beneficiary qualification criteria
- Subsidy quantum
- Township scheme/land use management rules

### Outcomes

- Growth in property values of subsidy and old stock houses
- Subsidy houses are incorporated in the residential property market
- Households which accessed subsidy houses move up the property ladder
- The poor's share of the value of the property market increases
- The poor are able to use the workings of the property market to leverage out of poverty

## Delivery

### Delivery agents

- Municipalities
- Private contractors/builders (large and emerging)

### Regulators

- National Home Builders Registration council (consumer protection)
- South African Bureau of Standards (building standards)
- Agreement (for alternative technologies)

### Levels of delivery

- Provincial: policy, project planning and delivery
- Municipal: spatial planning, project planning and development, delivery, management of urban environment
- Local: community participation in project delivery, local variation in geography and location in relation to economic activities
- Household: individual household access to a house

### Comparison

- People living in inadequate housing (informal settlements – with no access to services)

# Group task- 40 min (country groups)

Note: each group has  
UNICEF/UNECA/CLEAR  
support

Using the question and purpose developed in step 1:

**Use the tool provided to define the following:**

- **Population:** Who should be the population where the intervention is evaluated? Define by geography/ population group i.e. are there specific sub-groups you are interested in?
- **Phenomena:** Define the issue of focus. Identify and list different concepts used in the policy area to refer to the issue where the synthesis will be done?
- **Intervention:** What kind of interventions i.e. programme, policy, strategy you want the evaluations to have focused on?
- **Outcomes:** Which outcomes you want the synthesis to focus on? Consider what is in the policy/theory of change, the NDP, SDG to identify the outcomes.
- **Study design:** do you want to restrict the kind of evaluations to be included i.e only include experimental designs, studies testing interventions, should editorials/expert opinion pieces be included or not, etc.
- **Search process:** The breadth of the searching process

# Feedback & reflection (6 Min)

1. Two groups that did not share the previous session to share their PICOS (2 min each)
2. One person to share their screen
3. Other groups please share your observation chat
4. How did you find the process? Could you see the usefulness of being systematic in thinking through the questions and the process before hand?



# Consolidate and conclude



This is a critical step in the process



If the parameters are poorly defined then can end up with evaluations that are too different and therefore difficult to synthesise



It can also make it difficult to make coherent findings

# Searching

—

# Searching

- Searching has to be systematic but pragmatic
- For qualitative evaluations, not necessary to locate all relevant studies
- Use the concepts/terms as defined in your inclusion criteria to search for evaluations that exists
- Identify institutions that might have evaluations/research you need
- International databases
- Contact researchers/evaluators in that sector for reference
- Check with evaluation/research units within government-gov evaluations tend to be unpublished

# Some of the resources we used before

- <https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/>
- <https://www.3ieimpact.org/evidence-hub/impact-evaluation-repository> ,
- <https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence.html>
- <http://uneval.org/evaluation/reports>

## Quality appraisal

- Different approaches for quant and qualitative studies
- There are tools you can use, but some is intuitive
- Important is that each primary study/evaluation is good enough quality that its findings can be trusted

### Criteria to critically appraise findings from qualitative research. Hannes K, 2011

ASPECT	QUALITATIVE TERM	QUANTITATIVE TERM
Truth value	Credibility	Internal Validity
Applicability	Transferability	External Validity or generalisibility
Consistency	Dependability	Reliability
Neutrality	Confirmability	Objectivity

# Different tools for quality appraisal

<b>Box 6.1: Appraisal tools</b>	
Popay, Rogers & Williams (1998) <sup>39</sup>	Primary question relates to the appropriateness of the methods used. This is followed by a detailed assessment of methodological soundness.
Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (1998) <sup>42</sup>	10 questions relating to rigour, credibility and relevance.
Quality Framework (2003) <sup>34</sup>	18 questions relating to 9 key areas: findings; design; sample; data collection; analysis; reporting; reflexivity and neutrality; ethics and auditability.
Prompts for appraising qualitative research (2004) <sup>33</sup>	Generic set of prompts relating to aspects of reporting and aspects of study design and execution.
Long & Godfrey (2004) <sup>38</sup>	A tool to explore descriptive and evaluative elements of a study. 34 questions across 4 key areas: phenomenon studied and context; ethics; data collection, analysis and potential researcher bias; policy and practice implications.
Walsh & Downe (2006) <sup>48</sup>	Set of prompts relating to 8 key areas: scope and purpose; design; sampling strategy; analysis; interpretation; reflexivity; ethical dimensions; relevance and transferability.

Source:



[https://www.york.ac.uk/crd/SysRev/!SSL!/WebHelp/6\\_4\\_ASSESSMENT\\_OF\\_QUALITATIVE\\_RESEARCH.htm](https://www.york.ac.uk/crd/SysRev/!SSL!/WebHelp/6_4_ASSESSMENT_OF_QUALITATIVE_RESEARCH.htm)



# What we will use

Stages	Essential Criteria	Specific prompts
Scope and purpose	Clear statement of, and rationale for, research questions/aims/purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity of focus demonstrated</li> <li>• Explicit purpose given, such as descriptive explanatory/ intent, theory building, hypothesis testing</li> <li>• Link between research and existing knowledge demonstrated</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
	Study thoroughly contextualized by existing literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of systematic <u>approach to</u> literature review , location of literature contextualize the findings or both</li> </ul>
Design	Method/design apparent, and consistent with research intent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rationale given of use of qualitative design</li> <li>• Discussion of epistemological/ontological grounding</li> <li>• <u>Rationale explored</u> for specific qualitative method (e.g ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology)</li> <li>• Discussion of why particular method chosen is most appropriate/sensitive/relevant for research questions / aims</li> <li>• Setting appropriate</li> </ul>
	Data collection strategy apparent and appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were data collection methods appropriate for the type of data required and for specific qualitative method?</li> <li>• Were they likely to capture the complexity/diversity of experience and illuminate context in sufficient detail?</li> <li>• Was triangulation of data sources used if appropriate?</li> </ul>
Sampling strategy	Sample and sampling method appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection criteria detailed, and description of how sampling was undertaken</li> <li>• Justification for sampling strategy given</li> <li>• Thickness of description likely to be achieved from sampling</li> <li>• Any disparity between planned and actual sample explained</li> </ul>

# Group task- 40 min (country groups)

Note: each group has  
UNICEF/UNECA/CLEAR  
support

- Participants search data base and find at least two evaluations
- Use one evaluation to find other evaluations that are referenced
- Identify researchers/evaluators and institutions you could check with in that policy area
- Choose one report/study to do an assessment on
- Use a tool provided to assess quality of report.
- Only do the qualitative one. Objective is not to be comprehensive but to get the feel
- Make a decision. Would you include this study in the synthesis? Is it good quality enough to be valid for its findings to be included in the synthesis?

# Feedback & questions (7 Min)

Two groups who have not yet shared share their work yet share how they did with the searching and

How did you find the exercise?

You can also share your experience on chat

# Consolidate and conclude

Important to be pragmatic

But be transparent about the process and decision taken

There are no right but there are unwise ways

Quality of studies included determine the quality and usefulness of the evaluation synthesis

Important to work with the research/evaluation units in doing the steps outlined

Not about volume but being systematic and as comprehensive as resources allow

# Extracting

How do you take findings from primary evaluations/studies?

—

# Target Population



## Remember

- In synthesis primary evaluation reports/studies are your sample
- Extracting is a process of collecting data from the primary studies
- You need to be systematic in how it is done
- Have to 'collect' similar/comparable data

# Extraction



- Can be challenging
- No standardised reporting of findings
- Descriptive data about the primary evaluations/studies
- Focus on concepts
- Quotes from respondents
- Use existing qual data analysis software NVIVO, ATLAS ti, etc.



- Descriptive data about the primary evaluations
- Participants characteristics
- Effect sizes etc.

# Some examples



## Human Settlements Synthesis

Data Extraction Tool (version 2.0)

### CHECKLIST

<b>Document details</b>	<b>Author:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Document title:</b>				
<b>Document code:</b>		<b>Document type:</b>		

**Document Types:**

1. Design & Implementation Evaluation
2. Implementation Evaluation
3. Implementation and Impact Evaluation
4. Impact Evaluation
5. Rapid Assessment / Appraisal
6. Performance & Expenditure Review
7. Research Report
8. Other

Assessment Key: ✓ = Reported ; X = Not reported; n/a = Not

Checklist	Assessment	Comments
1. Clearly stated aims & objectives		•
2. Study design adequately described		•
3. Appropriate research methods		•
4. Appropriate use of Instruments (reliability and validity)		•
5. Adequate description of source of data or sample, inclusion / exclusion criteria, response rates etc.		•
6. Appropriate analyses (statistical or qualitative)		•
7. Results clear and adequately reported		•
8. Discussion of results reported in light of study, question & relevant literature		•
9. Limitations of research & design discussed		•
10. Implications of research discussed		•
11. Any recommendations		•

Source: Adapted from Bowling 2002

Theme	Question Level 1	Question Level 2	What findings are presented?	What evidence is provided?	Quotations	Page ref	
B. Analysis of the actual programme implementation (the way in which the programme was implemented as opposed to the programme logic). Must cover context, mechanisms and outcomes	B.1 What was actually implemented?	B.1.1 Within what context was the programme implemented?					
		B.1.2 What key changes in the implementation against the original programme logic were noted?					
		B.1.3 Why did these changes occur?					
		B.1.4 What outputs were achieved (for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects and why?)					
		B.1.5 What outcomes were achieved (for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects and why?)					
	B.2 What institutional arrangements were implemented / utilised?						
	B.3 What funding structure and sources were utilised?						
	B.4 What was the role of planning in the programme?						
	B.5 What key assumptions were not evident / what other critical assumptions are noted?						
	B.6 What <u>conclusions</u> are drawn and are these justified by the evidence?						
	B.7 What <u>recommendations</u> are made and do these follow logically from the conclusions?						
	C. The role of the Programme in the overall theory of change	C.1 What is the evidence about the underlying assumptions of the overall theory of change					
			C.2 Does the proposed overall theory of change capture the essential elements of the programme as implemented, and if not, should it be refined?				
C.3 On the basis of the conclusions and recommendations how should the overall theory of change be revised?							

# Managing extracted data

Details about the study

Questions

How violence against women and children are framed in research: implications for policy, practice and gender equality in South Africa

File name	Main author (surname)	Year published	Title of the research paper	Abstract	VAW/VAC	Type of publication	What is the problem represented to be (key themes)	Type of publication	What is the problem represented to be (key themes)	What presuppositions/assumptions underpin representation of the problem	How has this representation of the problem come about	What is left unproblematic in the problem representation, where are the silences?	What effects are produced by this representation of the problem	How/where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated, de
VAWC1	abrahams	2006	Intersections of sanitation, sexual coercion and girls' safety in schools	Objective: To explore safety for girls in schools, particularly how girls perceive and negotiate dangers and risks associated with the use of toilets. methods Participatory action research over a period of 3 days at three schools in South Africa. Informants were 81 girls 16 years and older, teachers and other relevant school personnel. Data were collected through focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, participant observation, mapping and photography. results Toilets had inadequate or no sanitation. Both their use and their avoidance were risky for female students and discouraged hygienic practices. Experience of sexual violence from male students and teachers was a major theme, but unrelated to school toilets. Male teachers used various strategies and opportunities to gain sexual access to the girls and previous experience of victimization prevented the girls from reporting them. conclusion To ensure a healthy school environment that promotes gender equality, all threats to safety, including the physical and social environment, must be considered.	VAW&VAC	Academic Journal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sexual exploitation (as a common problem in educational institutions);</li> <li>Violence (in South African schools, especially in school toilets);</li> <li>Sexual harassment,</li> <li>Sexual bullying;</li> <li>Sanitation;</li> <li>Privacy</li> </ul>	Academic Journal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sexual exploitation (as a common problem in educational institutions);</li> <li>Violence (in South African schools, especially in school toilets);</li> <li>Sexual harassment,</li> <li>Sexual bullying;</li> <li>Sanitation;</li> <li>Privacy</li> </ul>	The question how do girls perceive and negotiate both danger in schools and the risks of using school toilets assumes that there is a relation between gender-based violence and sanitation infrastructure, environment and amenities such as toilet paper, sanitary towels in schools.	Causes of VAWC are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infrastructural; environmental/related to poor design, planning and development of schools that led to lack of privacy</li> <li>Inequitable power relationships between male teachers and girls who do not report harassment for fear of victimisation and reprisal</li> <li>Economic as poverty meant girls could not afford sanitary towels and schools were not providing sanitary amenities</li> <li>Lack of reports about harassment</li> <li>At the health level</li> <li>Pull to the lucid use of the 'intersections'</li> </ul>	The sampling frame suggests that Geography and Race are	school policies can ensure a healthy and safe learning environment that promotes gender equality; projects led by girls can maintain toilet hygiene as well as promote respect and dignity among students and teachers; sexual harassment can be addressed by separating boys from girls;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The research team supported school management initiating disciplinary pro</li> <li>At another school findings encouraged the of school building plan safety and toilet place key factors in the new</li> <li>At the school where girls feared victimisation researchers worked with Department of Education to develop and implement programmes disguised training for all the girls in school. This included awareness training</li> <li>Resolving, in the en</li> </ul>
VAWC2	abrahams	2017	a rapidappraisal of the status of mental health support in post-rape care services in western cape	Background Despite the well-known impact of rape on mental health and the widespread problem of rape in South Africa, mental health services for rape victims are scant and not a priority for acute-phase services. Survivors encounter multiple mental health struggles in this period including adherence to the post-exposure prophylaxis drugs in prevent HIV and	VAW&VAC	Academic Journal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sexual violence;</li> <li>Rape;</li> <li>Mental health;</li> </ul>	Academic Journal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sexual violence;</li> <li>Rape;</li> <li>Mental health;</li> </ul>	There is an assumption that providing mental healthcare and support during the initial services is essential to begin the process of recovery and building adaptive coping and resilience methods among survivors, stated explicitly on page 6.	Causes of VAWC are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutional as the poor mental health support in health care facilities is a result of mental healthcare not being well integrated into the care provided immediately after rape but mostly provided as an add-on service</li> </ul>	The position of most providers on mental health and their understanding of it is problematised while that of lay counsellors who understood the problem better is accepted; The study problematises the view of the DoH and NPA on the issue of	The study suggest that the problem can be addressed by; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providers better understanding their own mental health and vicarious trauma and receiving better support in self-care and regular support or detriehing activities, to enable</li> </ul>	

Findings from individual studies

# Group task- 40 min (country groups)

Note: each group has  
UNICEF/UNECA/CLEAR  
support

## Using the study you found in previous session:

- Each country has a google sheet to work from. An example will be provided to guide the group work
- In your country group take the study you assessed in the last session and read through it to extract data that might be useful for the synthesis
- Use the sub-questions and outcomes you defined in session two and three to determine which findings you will extract from each study
- Focus on qualitative findings since we will not do quantitative meta analysis in the course
- Extract at least a finding using sub - questions or outcome areas



# Consolidate and conclude

Extraction might not be so straightforward because the primary studies would have reported their data in keeping with their study purpose

Requires good understanding of the sector and research methods

These steps are often done by researchers/evaluators

Important to know what you expect them to do

# Synthesising findings and reporting

—

# Remember

Synthesis is not a summary



## Summary

Basic reading technique

Pulls together information to highlight important points

Restates/re articulates findings from different studies

Shows what original authors wrote

Addresses one set of information at a time, and each study/source remains distinct

Presents overview

Focuses on overall findings from primary studies

## Synthesis

Advanced research process

In addition to highlighting important findings, synthesis adds evaluator's own conclusions

Combines and contrasts findings from different studies

In addition to reflecting original findings, in synthesis evaluators also make new findings/discovering

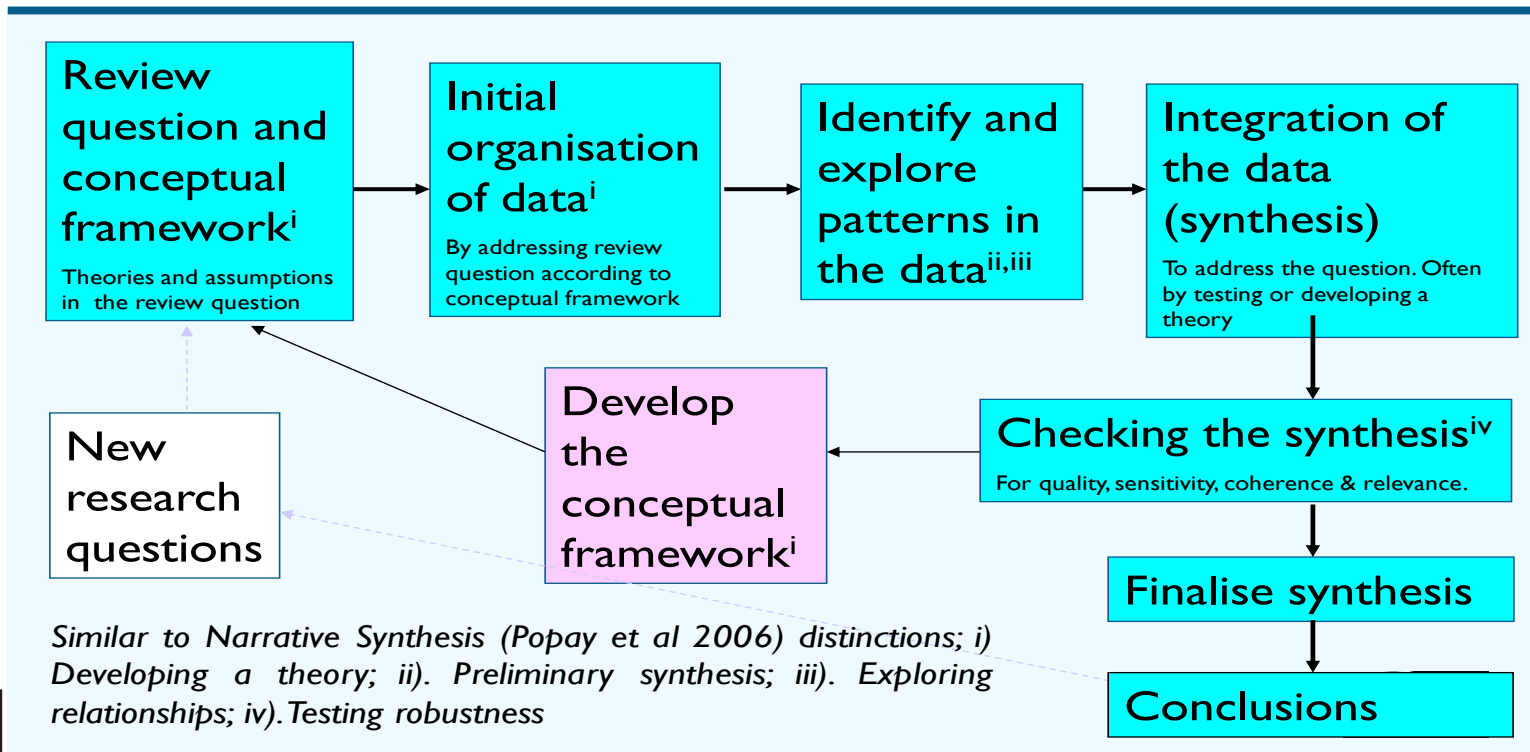
Involves combining parts and elements from different studies. The evaluator combines findings from different studies. The primary studies do not always remain distinct

Focuses on main ideas, details, findings and also new meanings

Will examine the data in primary studies

# Stages of synthesis

## Stages of synthesis



Similar to Narrative Synthesis (Popay et al 2006) distinctions; i) Developing a theory; ii). Preliminary synthesis; iii). Exploring relationships; iv). Testing robustness

# Different ways to synthesis

## Meta-analysis

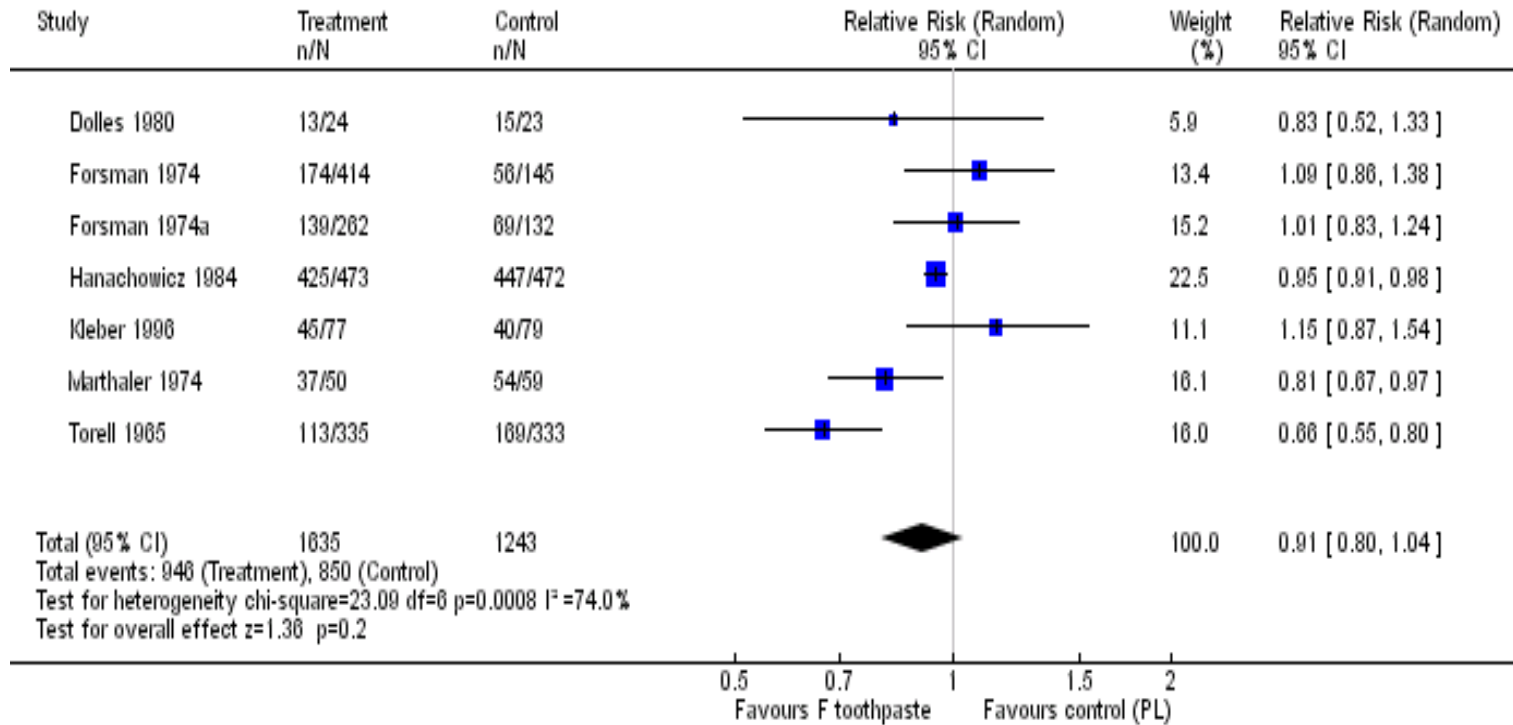
- Statistical
- Combines quant data from primary studies
- Data is reanalyzed

## Narrative synthesis

- Focuses on qualitative data
- Findings that are in text form
- Similar to thematic analysis
- Focuses on coding common themes emerging from primary studies

Review: Fluoride toothpastes for preventing dental caries in children and adolescents  
 Comparison: 01 Fluoride Toothpaste versus Placebo  
 Outcome: 05 Developing one or more new caries (8 trials)

# meta analysis



A meta-analysis is “a statistical procedure that integrates the results of several independent studies considered to be combinable.” Egger et al, BMJ 1997

Combines results of studies addressing the same question.

# For qualitative data



Coding descriptive themes  
from primary studies-  
closest to what is in  
primary studies



Developing analytical  
themes-new themes  
emerging from reading  
across studies



Generating new  
insight/meanings-  
interpretation in line with  
the synthesis question

## What if the results differ/conflict?



Strength of synthesis is being able to show these differences



Can show in one report when and why policy or programmes under one policy are having different outcomes



Can also help policy makers see the impact of context

# What if there are too few primary studies



This is a reality in most cases (mostly if looking at policy impact)



Doing evaluation synthesis can help identify gaps in knowledge

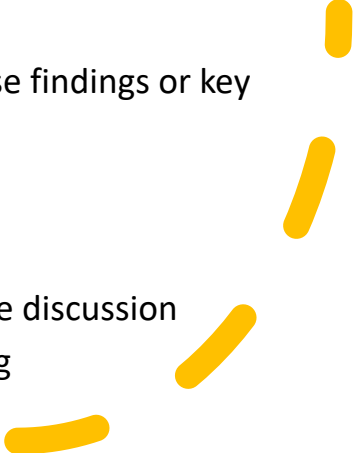


In some cases you can work with small number of studies

# How to report the findings

—

# Reporting Synthesis findings

- **Introduction**
  - **Background to the synthesis**
  - **Understanding the intervention**
    - Background to the intervention (policy/programme)
    - Situating it within the SDG
    - Theory of change
  - **Methods followed**
    - Evaluation questions
    - Scope
    - Search process
    - Screening and appraisal
    - Extraction process
    - Team roles
    - Analytical framework
  - **Findings**
    - Could use the evaluation criteria to organise findings or key questions asked
  - **Discussion**
    - Present new insights from synthesis
    - Could use the theory of change to structure discussion
    - Consider implications for the SDG reporting
  - **Conclusion**
- 

## Synthesis for VNRs: Final thoughts

- Synthesising existing research and evaluations very **useful & cost effective** way to incorporate evaluation findings in VNR
- It increases the strength of individual evaluations and empirical research
- **Using theory of change and/or evaluation criteria** can make disparate individual studies useful and useable in policy decision
- **Involve stakeholders earlier** in the definition of questions and inclusion criteria
- Be **transparent and pragmatic**
- It is **not about breadth but depth** and generating new insights
- **Quality in, quality out**
- **Requires support of evaluators** and if possible, information specialist (Most if you want to do a formal synthesis)
- There are many ways to do evaluation synthesis

# Process if you outsourcing

Note-  
must be closely  
managed and  
involve  
stakeholders  
through out

- **Stakeholder consultation and establishing reference team/steering committee**
- **Agreement on questions, purpose and scope**
- **Developing ToRs**
- **Appointing team-** ideally made up of evaluator, some time for information speciality (If formal synthesis)
- **Confirmation of scope-**the team might have additional suggestions on the inclusion criteria, in some cases they could develop it based on ToRs
- **Searching-**expansive/narrow
- **Screening and appraisal-**excluding irrelevant studies, checking quality. Should be pragmatic.
- **Extraction-**ideally some of the government researchers get involved
- **Analysis-** important that the project manager gets involved in some of this work. Ideally team should also present to the steering committee their emerging analysis
- **Report writing-** policy relevant findings and clear policy implications, not a retelling of primary studies

## Some limitations

- Quality dependent on quality and reporting in primary studies
- Can also be limited by methods and approach
- Relies on insights of evaluators, important to have more than one evaluator working on it, mostly for complex public sector interventions



# Concluding the training

—

# Update

- Where countries are at on VNR – have they thought of doing a rapid evaluation?
- Any support they know they need
- Next steps outlined including date of evaluative workshop training in October.

# Evaluation

