Getting Research into policy and Practice (GRIPP)
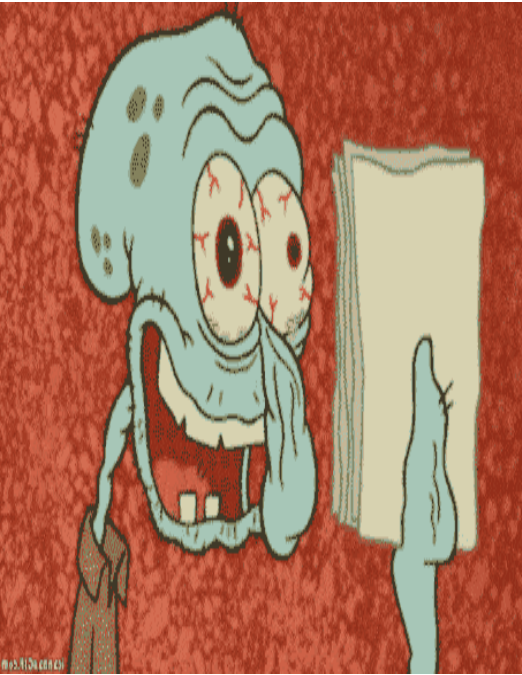
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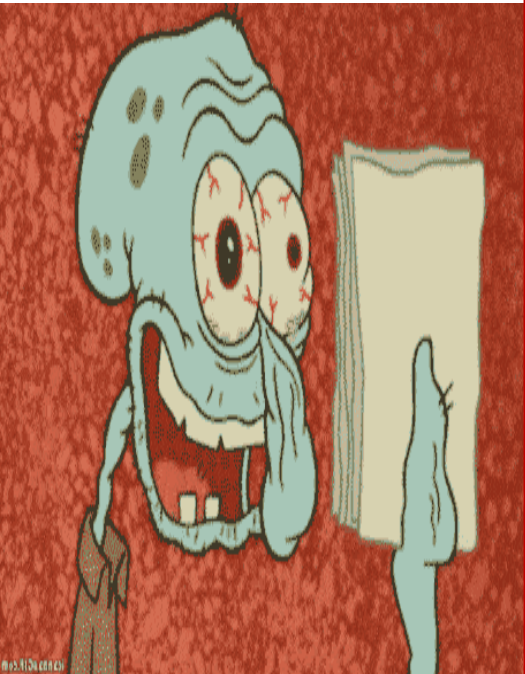College of Medicine, University of Nigeria Enugu campus

What is GRIPP

A process of going from research evidence to decisions.

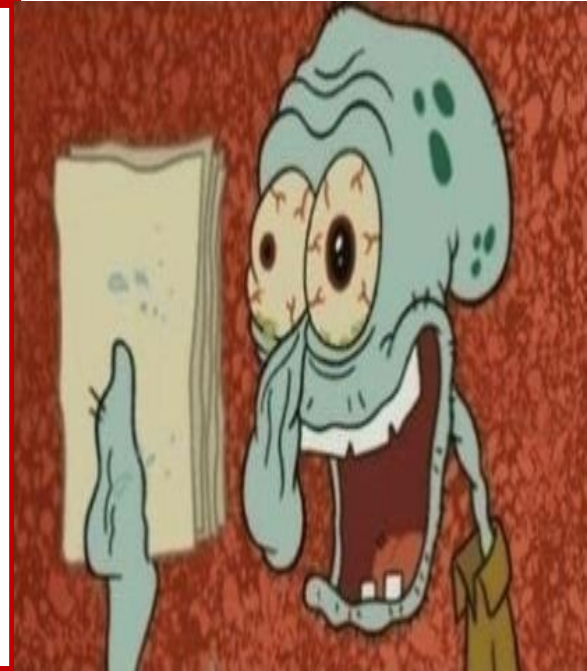**collapsing the thick wall between researchers and policy makers**

Why GRIPP?

Evidence-informed policies involve a complex interplay between evidence and policy processes.

The integration of research findings into policy and communicating research findings to Nigerian policymakers is a key challenge

It is of importance to establish and enhance linkages between **researchers, policy makers and other stakeholders** to build an environment supportive of evidence-informed health policy making.

GRIPP Process

How does research influence policy… ?

- **The engineering or problem-solving model**
  - holds that a problem could be identified by the policy makers and solved by researchers or new knowledge leads to policy change
  - The engineering model has been critiqued for adopting the linear approach
- **The enlightenment model**
  - that concepts and ideas derived from research may have indirect effect on policy process rather than an immediate, direct effect
- **Elective affinity model**
  - Overall, the model is concerned with the extent of contact between policy makers and researchers / compatibility of ideas
  - emphasizes the role of policy community in accepting research findings if :
  - **Its members have participated in the research process**
  - **if the findings are disseminated at the right time**
  - **If the implication of the findings agrees with the values and belief of policy audience**

Two communities model

- emphasizes that researchers and policy makers have different cultures with different assumptions about how the world works
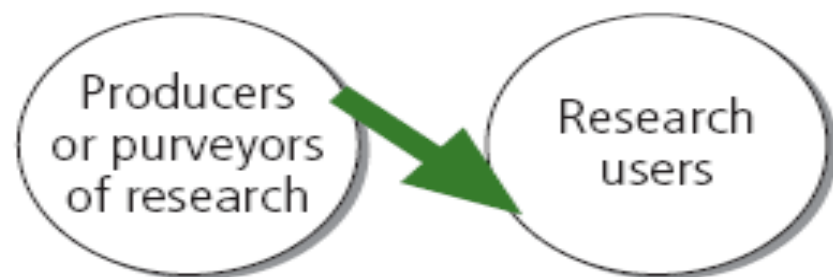
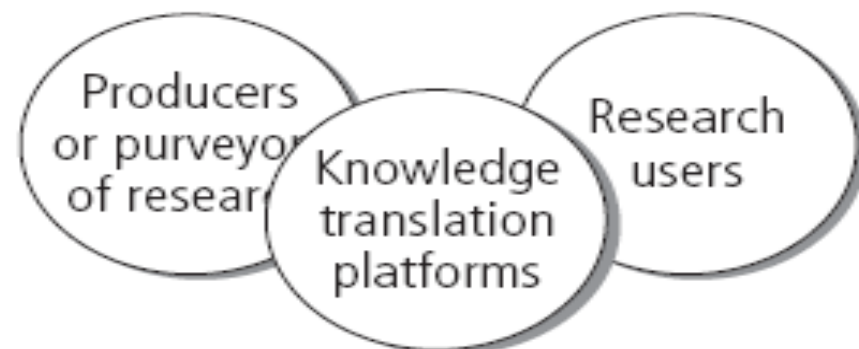| The two communities model of researchers and policy makers		
	University researchers	Government officials
Attitude to research	Justified by its contribution to knowledge; research findings lead to further investigation	Only one of many inputs to their work, justified in its relevance and practical utility e.g. in decision making; some skepticism ….
Accountability	To scientific peers primarily, but also to funders	To politicians primarily but also to public indirectly
Priorities	Expansion of research opportunities and influence of experts in the world	Maintaining a system of good governance and satisfying politicians

Bus et al, 2004

Fig. 2. **Models for linking research to action**

Model A — Push efforts by producers or purveyors

Model B — User pull efforts

Model C — Exchange efforts

Model D — Integrated efforts

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Main GRIPP Strategies

- Research Quality Assurance
- Stakeholder involvement
- Presentation and communication
- Information management systems

Barriers to the use of research

- **Political and ideological factors**

  - Research funders can be influenced by ideology in the use of research e.g. the pharmaceutical industry

- **Policy and scientific uncertainties**

  --How relevant is the research findings to a particular policy context?

- **Different conception of risk**

- **Perceived utility of research**

- **Timing**

- **Communication and reputation**

  -Dissemination of research findings remains an indispensable part of any research process

- **Environment without research culture**

  - lacks motivation to appraise research findings

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OTHERS
Comics, cartons, podcasts, films, radio phone-ins, public speaking engagements, townhall, and infographics

Improving the relationship b/w research and policy: what must we do?

What researchers have to do

- Form a core working group with all the relevant stakeholders from the beginning to the end of the study
- Design studies to maximize their policy relevance and utility
- Identify opinion leaders and innovators and make them to understand the implication of the research findings
- Call for seminars, conferences, briefings, and workshops to disseminate research findings and educate policy makers about research
- Provide a range of different type of research reports- newsletters, short policy briefs, Executive summaries,etc.

What policy makers have to do

- Ensure that all major policies and programmes have evaluation built into their budgets and implementation plans Rather than seeing evaluation as optional extra
- Set up formal communication channels and advisory mechanisms involving researchers and policy makers to identify researchable questions , develop research designs and plan dissemination and use of findings jointly
- Publish the findings of all public programme evaluations and view evaluation as an opportunity for policy learning
- Commission research and evaluation directly and consider having additional in-house research capacity

The challenge of bridging the gap between researchers and policy makers: experiences of a Health Policy Research Group in engaging
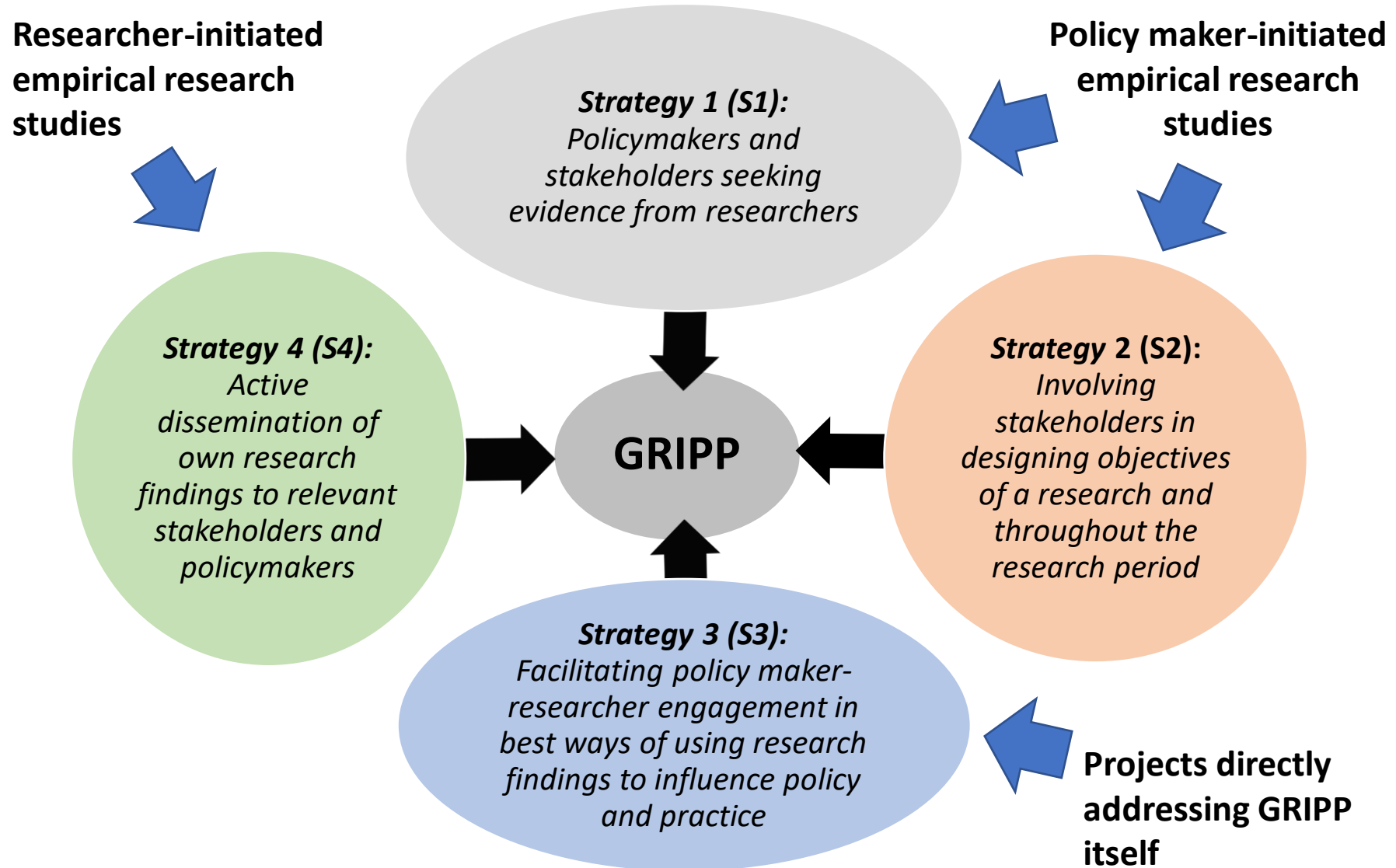
The Question???

- How as African research organisations, do we seek to engage policy makers over time and across projects and experiences?

… that we might answer by

- Documenting our experiences of being an African Health Policy Research Group (HPRG) trying to influence our domestic policy makers

Four HPRG GRIPP strategies

Researcher-initiated empirical research studies

Policy maker-initiated empirical research studies

Strategy 1 (S1): *Policymakers and stakeholders seeking evidence from researchers*

Strategy 4 (S4): *Active dissemination of own research findings to relevant stakeholders and policymakers*

GRIPP

Strategy 2 (S2): *Involving stakeholders in designing objectives of a research and throughout the research period*

Strategy 3 (S3): *Facilitating policy maker-researcher engagement in best ways of using research findings to influence policy and practice*

Projects directly addressing GRIPP itself

1. Policy maker-initiated empirical research studies, e.g.

- Examining appropriate diagnosis and treatment of malaria: availability and use of RDTs and ACTs in public and private health facilities in south east Nigeria (S1)

- Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness analysis of alternative strategies for the deployment of ACTs at community level in Enugu state, southeast Nigeria (S2)

- Accountability mechanism for implementing the BHCPF (S1)
  - Policy brief in place long before National implementation strategy was produced
  - Input into national implementation strategy

2. Researcher-initiated empirical research studies, e.g.

- CBHI Scheme in Anambra state, Nigeria: an analysis of policy development, implementation and equity effects. (S4)

- An assessment of policy development and implementation process of District Health System in Enugu state, Nigeria. (S4)

- Quality of MCH data within the HMIS in Nigeria - a post field reflection. (S4)
    - **Intervention in Anambra State to improve HMIS**

- RESYST (2014). STRATEGIC PURCHASING FACTSHEET (S4)
    - **National Health financing policy and Strategy (2017)**
    - **Lead TWG**

3. Projects directly addressing GRIPP itself

- The PREVIEW (Policy Research EVIdence for Effective Working of the Nigerian health systems) project- Concept and implementation (S3)

- Establishment of Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) systems for the Anambra Malaria Control Booster Project (S3)

Balancing technical processes with social relations in GRIPP

Research to policy processes are fundamentally social

Stakeholder engagement is the foundation – trust is everything

- Stakeholder engagement should be <u>comprehensive</u>, <u>continuous</u>, <u>cross-sectional</u>, <u>horizontal</u> across peers and <u>vertical</u> across levels.

- Interpersonal relationships and trust are key to strengthening the relationship between the researcher, policy makers and the practitioners

- Researchers should be able to understand the mind of the policy maker

Key Enablers of GRIPP

- **Credibility of researchers**

- **Embedded researcher**

- **Social and interactive skills**

- **Personality of researcher very important**

- **Understand and respond to the politics – who presents? Best timing?**

- **Linkages to academic-social Forum**

- **In-built capacity development plan in the research process to access and apply evidence –** *workshops, certificate courses etc.*

- *Mentorship*

- *Integrated knowledge translation (iKT)*

Challenges and Recommendations

- **Capacity to use evidence – in terms of decision-makers demand for and uptake of evidence is still weak**
  - **Build capacity within the research process to access & apply evidence**
- **Communication gap between researchers, donors and policymakers still exists**
  - **Policy dialogue necessary**

- **Managing the political process of GRIPP: limited engagement of researchers in policy processes**
  - **Build interest of researchers**
- **Lack of willingness of some policy makers to use research**
  - **Engage closely with policy briefs**

- GRIPP requires a deep understanding of how to interact with policymakers, what information and activities they require and in what form and with whom to establish interactions

- Necessary to educate decision makers and practitioners on the relevance of produced evidence and how to utilize findings

- **Interpersonal relationships and trust** are key to strengthening the relationship between the researcher, policy makers and the practitioners

End Note

- There is need for a new 'linkage system' between the two policy communities
- If each of the parties plays its own role well, the thick wall separating the two will collapse
- When the wall collapses, the two will become more friendly and interested in each other's activities
- 'Together we can pull the wall down'

More Information

- Benjamin Uzochukwu, Obinna Onwujekwe, Chinyere Mbachu, Chinenye Okwuosa, Enyi Etiaba, Monica E. Nyström and Lucy Gilson. The challenge of bridging the gap between researchers and policy makers: experiences of a Health Policy Research Group in engaging policy makers to support evidence informed policy making in Nigeria. Globalization and Health 2016, 12:67 DOI: 10.1186/s12992-016-0209-1