
THE KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION TOOLKIT

A RESOURCE FOR RESEARCHERS



GOVERNANCE, EQUITY AND HEALTH PROGRAMME INITIATIVE

Sandy Campbell

Anne-Marie Schryer-Roy

Nasreen Jessani

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This toolkit was created by Sandy Campbell*, with Anne-Marie Schryer-Roy and Nasreen Jessani. All correspondence should be directed to Sandy Campbell at scampbell@idrc.ca.

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Chapter

1

Knowledge Translation: An Introduction

Knowledge Translation. Knowledge Exchange. Knowledge Transfer. Knowledge Transfer and Exchange. Research-to-action, knowledge-to-action, research-to-policy...the terms to describe the (dis)connection between how we produce and how we use knowledge are endless. Knowledge Translation (KT) – our chosen term for this toolkit – may mean different things to different people, but it is fundamentally about researchers and research-users engaging in a collective act of *story*. While the issue for this story is always the same – health – the characters, the conflicts, and the resolutions rarely are.

Researchers themselves are story-tellers. They are audiences too, but for far too long their stories – as reflected in such terms as the “know-do” gap – have not been heard or understood or used. In response to this, practitioners of KT have developed a range of tools and strategies designed to simplify, amplify and ultimately transform both the research story and the very act of story-telling itself. KT’s intended legacy is a society in which stories – information – knowledge – are demanded, created, told and used, with researchers and research-users interacting at a variety of stages throughout the research cycle.

KT is iterative. It is experimental. It requires an open-mind and a willingness to change old habits. If the goal of any researcher is to have results used and understood; if the goal of any research-user is to make more informed choices, then we must illuminate the grey area where these actors intersect. KT is, above all, a process that seeks to transform the core business and habits of researchers and research-users. If we translate or reduce the various technical definitions of the term,

we find that KT is little more than a means of *informing* action in a system that requests, creates, refines, supplies, uses, and reuses knowledge.

The audience for this toolkit is researchers in health. It draws from academic sources but is itself not an academic document. We do not dwell upon or create new models or theories here, but rather seek to explain some of KT's key concepts and then make them operational through a variety of practical examples and "hands-on" guides. This toolkit is far from the last word on KT, but rather a space to discuss and dissect tested approaches and solutions, drawing in many cases on the experience of *Research Matters*.¹ Like any good two-page brief, this toolkit is like the dust-jacket to a book of knowledge and insight, short lines of information that will hopefully encourage the reader to open the book and learn more. It does not have all the answers, but will ideally point the interested reader to further resources.

Knowledge Translation at Work: Bringing Research Alive



These cartoons are outstanding examples of KT at work, telling the story of a study into corruption in the Senegalese health system. The cartoonist has, at a glance, reduced complex research findings into something that is easily understood by the study's key target groups – doctors and other healthcare workers, ministry officials, and health-seeking citizens. These cartoons are perfectly pitched towards their audience: their power is in their simplicity. By no means do these cartoons explain the complex science that underscored the research project. They do not present any

¹ Research Matters (RM) is a KT-inspired collaboration of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

findings, they do not discuss methodology or design. These cartoons are meant to provoke – *what do you mean midwives are extorting payment!* – and to create, ultimately, a desire to read the project’s actual findings. With these cartoons added to some well-written media releases – and with a healthy dose of luck and good timing – the Senegalese researchers caused a media storm that put their findings front-and-centre on the Senegalese stage, and ultimately resulted in the President of Senegal issuing a letter congratulating the researchers and promising a full investigation into their results.

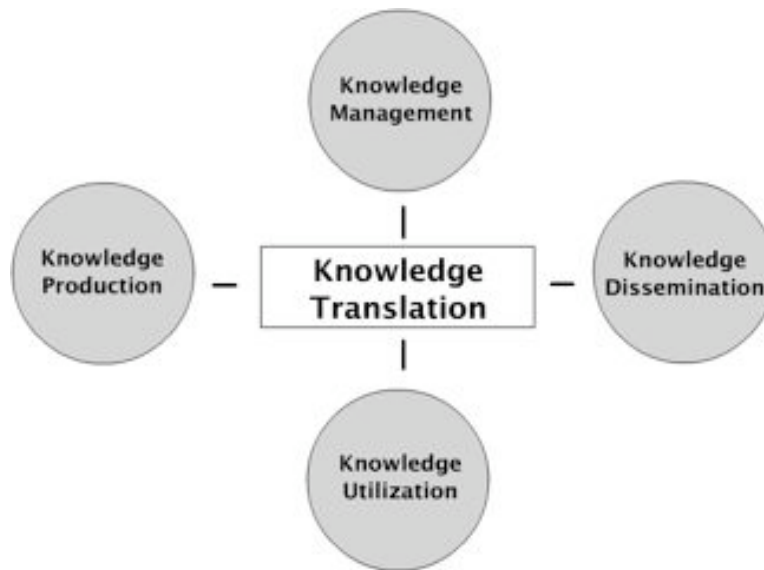
While the Senegalese cartoons represent using effective KT tools at the end of a research project, we must always bear in mind how we might use these tools at the beginning or mid-point of our project. Cartoons may not have been at all necessary had the researchers been working directly and in cooperation with medical groups and the government from the outset – if their audience didn’t need to be shocked into action – using, for instance, research as an on-going and iterative policy and planning tool, as constant feedback on the progress of a program or a policy. This is clearly not always possible, and highly unlikely for any study that, for instance, investigates an issue like corruption. But this example reveals how, in addition to our primary consideration of our audience and its story-needs, we must always know the *context* of our work. If we know that we want to influence government policy on our particular issue, exactly who in government needs to know or participate or listen? Will they be hostile to our results or processes? Welcoming? How politicized is our issue? And who is ultimately making decisions? In the above corruption example, is there any one entity that will influence and even stop corrupt practices? *Who needs to know our story and what is the environment surrounding our story?* The better the answers we have to these questions, and the sooner in the process we have them, the better we will be able to influence the actors we must for our project to succeed.

Of course, every research project is markedly different; and thus the tools that tell the story of each project must also be different. A study on competing health financing modalities in rural Tanzanian communities may not lend itself to cartoons – but may be ideally placed for radio spots or some focus group work with communities and local officials. A study on ARVs in South Africa may well become a cutting-edge model whose experiences and knowledge ought to be packaged not only for local and national audiences, but international and global ones too. Researchers are not only telling their stories to their own particular audiences; they are also contributing to the universal pool of knowledge and best-practice. This too is the context of research: every researcher is both an audience and a story-teller. We have much to share and learn from each other.

Knowledge, after all, is not static. It is always moving and growing and spawning vital nuance. KT is a mode of recognizing this and profiting from it. In this toolkit we will discuss a full suite of tools and approaches designed to challenge, to alter the way we work and think, and to have our results better told and understood and demanded.

This toolkit is but one small contribution to the wealth of information, experience and expertise out there that can help both researchers and research-users become better consumers and producers of the knowledge required to keep systems robust and innovative.

The Four “Spheres” of Knowledge Translation



It can be argued that KT would be largely unnecessary if there were a direct and dynamic two-way connection between the production of knowledge and the utilization of it. Along these lines, better management and dissemination of knowledge may be the “missing links” that can nurture and foster these direct ties between the production of knowledge and its ultimate consumption. Each of these KT “Spheres” does not stand alone; each shapes and is shaped by the others.

The above diagram gives us a useful starting point for understanding this toolkit. We will not concentrate on either knowledge production or utilization outright, but instead on how the two can be brought together, principally through attention to the management and the dissemination of knowledge. For if we know what we have, if we know who is doing what, and if we have reliable and focused means of both circulating this *and* creating active linkages between producers with utilizers, then the challenge of knowledge informing – and being appreciated by – key research users becomes that much easier.

Overview of this Toolkit

This toolkit has been divided into eleven different chapters. All may be read together, or each chapter may be considered on its own.

In *Chapter Two*, we discuss the concept of **Knowledge Management** (KM). Though, like KT, KM has been defined and analyzed in many different ways, at its core KM is about creating, identifying, capturing and sharing knowledge. It envisions a world where we as individuals or organizations will be able, smoothly and effortlessly, to access the knowledge we need when we need it. This chapter focuses on a few straightforward and practical KM tools and techniques that can be of immediate use – in some ways, a starter’s kit to KM. It discusses: knowledge inventories; identifying and sharing good/best practice; knowledge harvesting; storytelling; communities of practice; and the peer assist. Very specifically, in this chapter we examine two types of knowledge – *tacit* and *explicit* – and ways in which we can understand and capture these and maximize their impact.

In *Chapter Three*, we examine the art of **Context Mapping**, where we ask ourselves the key questions of: who might support our work? Who might hinder it? Who must know about its policy implications? How do policies in our field become formulated? At bottom: *who and what are we trying to influence?* The more complete our answers to these questions, the more likely we will be able to plug our design, processes and findings into the policy process. The more we know about our context (actors, competitors, the policy environment), the better our chances of moving our agenda forward. This chapter is divided into four separate sections: understanding and mapping target audiences; an overview of theoretical tools; an overview of the policy cycle and policy-making theories; and research design. To illustrate many of these concepts grounded, we use a case study on a fictional researcher working on a highly contentious subject.

Chapter Four builds upon Context Mapping by walking us through the development of a **Communications Strategy**. In this section, we pose *The Big Eleven Questions* that every organization should ask itself when developing a communications strategy to get a better picture of where it is, what it has to say to the world, and how it intends to go about saying that. As in other chapters, we use a fictional example to help illustrate the key concepts. And we argue throughout that we need to focus less on tools – a video documentary, for instance, or a policy brief – and more on how communications will help us achieve our core goals. How will communications knit together and support everything we do?

Chapter Five is the first of several chapters examining specific communications tools. Entitled **Communicating Research Findings: Print Media**, this chapter discusses – in the context of an overall strategy – a range of print tools we might use to reach specific audiences. Print media is only one of the many tools we can use to communicate, but they remain the “industry-standard” and as a result are extremely important. Discussed tools include peer-reviewed articles; newspaper articles and editorials; press releases; policy briefs; newsletters; brochures and leaflets; and cartoons. While print media tools are typically employed at the end of the research

cycle (when we have results that we want to share), this chapter demonstrates how they might be used *during* the course of any research project.

Chapter Six is a hands-on guide to reducing a paper, findings or argument into **Two-pagers**, whether a policy brief, a briefing note, a press release, or something for our website. Here, we take the complex example of male circumcision and HIV-prevention and watch, step-by-step, as purely scientific findings are reduced, discussed, operationalized, and distilled into a two-pager that concludes with viable policy options. Writing an effective two-pager is an extremely difficult task. It is a simple story, an entry-point, an appetizer that, if crafted well and targeted appropriately, will leave the reader wanting more.

Chapter Seven is dedicated to the **Systematic Review**, a unique and powerful KT tool that seeks to detail – fairly and objectively – all relevant knowledge on the subject at hand. This pre-eminent KT tool is, however, only for a very particular and specialized audience, targeted very exclusively to researchers and medical practitioners. This section will *not* show us how to do a systematic review – which can take years of study and practice – but instead where they can be accessed and how they might be used to contextualize our work or inform our thinking on a particular subject.

Chapter Eight is another chapter dedicated to communications, in this case **Desktop Publishing**. While there are a range of desktop publishing tools available and a number of outputs such tools might create, here our focus is on creating a two-page newsletter using software we already have – MS Word (chosen for ubiquity as opposed to utility). In this chapter, we will make some content decisions by reviewing our materials; perform some “reverse engineering” on a newsletter we’d like to borrow from; develop a logo and a banner; crop, resize and shrink photographs; use text boxes; download photographs from the internet; and create a listserv or distribution list.

In *Chapter Nine*, we discuss the communications tool of **Video**. While this chapter does not discuss using a video camera, or, more importantly *when* to use video in the research process – as clearly not all projects are suited to video, and not all audiences will want their research information visually – this chapter provides an in-depth step-by-step guide to **Editing Video**. Here, we use Windows Movie Maker (WMM) to *capture* our footage, manipulate *video clips*, eventually stitching these together with *transitions*, *effects*, *titles* and *credits* into a short movie. WMM is a simple piece of computer software – while it does not give us the range of options available in other video editing software, it does give us easy-to-learn tools to bring our story alive.

Chapter Ten offers us a window into **Open Access**, explaining what it is and how it can best be used, first in giving our work a higher profile, and second in deepening global bodies of knowledge. Through a structured analysis, this chapter outlines the logic behind Open Access (OA), the history, the various “routes” to OA, and then

explains how researchers can both access and contribute to open access repositories and journals. The chapter concludes with a myth-debunking *Frequently Asked Questions* and then a Glossary of key terms.

Chapter Eleven is entitled **Computer Tips & Tricks** and provides a wealth of information on various tasks that we use in our every-day computing endeavours. We discuss how researchers might better organize their electronic files and folders, use a search function like Google Desktop, use email as an effective communications tool, browse and surf the Internet more efficiently, set up a blog, use Open Source software, design better budgets and spreadsheets, and incorporate PowerPoint more effectively into presentations.

Chapter Twelve discusses **Monitoring & Evaluation**, again deconstructing the terms and providing some helpful advice and further resources for research teams interested in developing M&E systems or revisiting and refining their current M&E approach. The chapter discusses both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and suggests key ways for knitting these two approaches together so that every project can get a comprehensive picture of its impact and influence – beyond numbers and descriptions towards a “snapshot” that incorporates both.

In many of these chapters, we’ve used a particular case study to illustrate some of our key concepts. The case centres around some *purely fictitious* research on Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS), a topic chosen for its delicacy: promoting IRS, bringing together stakeholders, even understanding the context around IRS is difficult and not without controversy. *While absolutely fictional*, and in no way representative of the views of Research Matters, IDRC or SDC, this case is highly useful in keeping our concepts grounded. A word of warning, though: let’s not get distracted by what the research is about. Let’s stay focused on how we can use KT techniques to get the most out of it.

Like KT itself, this toolkit is iterative and experimental. By no means does it cover all available topics, and it certainly is not exhaustive on the subjects it does cover. Above all, its success is dependent upon your active comments and criticisms. Is there anything we’ve missed? Anything you sharply disagree with? Topics we should devote chapters to in the future?



Chapter

2

Knowledge Management

A Brief Overview

“The scaling up of knowledge management efforts in public health will be important for translating research and evidence into policy, practice and social transformation.”¹

Knowledge Management is one of those terms we hear with regularity. One of those terms we know is important, suspect has many different shapes, and don't know where to begin. A quick web search on knowledge management brings up such daunting titles as “Knowledge Management and Learning Styles: prescriptions for the future,” and “Business Technology Management and Knowledge Management Research”. It is, by turn, a learning system, a business application, and material for a ten-week training course; it has borne an “intellectual capital movement” and various “complexity approaches”.

Yet on the surface it seems so simple. An intuitive look at the term, breaking it into its component parts, shows that it's little more than managing our knowledge: our documents, our outputs, our files. However, when we step back from the term and think through the word “knowledge,” we realize that we're talking not only about what we've written down, but what we know in our heads. And this is where managing our knowledge becomes extremely tricky: how can we manage something that exists only in our minds?

If our aim, at bottom, is to bring our knowledge to bear on policy and practice, then we must *know what we know* – as an organization and as an individual. We must be able to access that knowledge quickly and easily. And to do that we must ask ourselves basic questions like: do we know where to locate a particular file or output? Do we know whom to contact if we require a specific piece of information? *Do we know what our colleagues know?*

Clearly, much has been said and written about Knowledge Management (KM), and to this day there remains a great deal of confusion about the exact meaning of the term and its practical implications. At its core, KM is about creating, identifying, capturing and sharing knowledge. It is about getting “the **right knowledge**, in the **right place**, at the **right time**.”² In other words, we as individuals or organizations will be able, smoothly and effortlessly, to access the knowledge we need when we need it – particularly in influencing an action or a decision. An organization’s most valuable resource and the basis for its competitiveness is its knowledge: we live, after all, in an increasingly knowledge-based economy. As researchers, taking this idea to heart will involve rethinking the way we do things and how we carry out simple every day tasks.

This chapter will focus on a few straightforward and practical KM tools and techniques that can be of immediate use – in some ways, a starter’s kit to KM. To that end, this chapter will discuss, and offer concrete tools on: knowledge inventories; identifying and sharing good/best practice; knowledge harvesting; storytelling; communities of practice; and the peer assist. Very specifically, we will examine two types of knowledge – **tacit** and **explicit** – and ways in which we can understand and capture these and maximize their impact.

Organic Knowledge Management...

In the words of Steven Denning, KM can be seen as “a more organic and holistic way of understanding and exploiting the role of knowledge in the processes of managing and doing work, and an authentic guide for individuals and organizations in coping with the increasingly complex and shifting environment of the modern economy.”

Source: Steve Denning. *What is knowledge management? Definitions.* www.stevedenning.com

Tacit vs. Explicit: what do we mean by knowledge?

Knowledge and information – or “data arranged in meaningful patterns”³ – are not synonymous. While knowledge is a type of information, its value comes from its *interpretation of information* within a certain context. As Davenport and Prusak explain, transforming information into knowledge involves making comparisons, thinking about consequences and connections, and engaging in conversations with others.⁴ According to *Wikipedia*, “knowledge” can be defined as “awareness or familiarity

gained by experience of a fact or situation”; Plato formulated it as “justified true belief”.⁵ Put differently, we might best describe knowledge as “know how” or “applied action.”⁶

Here, knowledge can be divided into two categories: *explicit* or *tacit*. In the case of the explicit sense, knowledge is something that we can put our hands on, capture and document – knowledge whose existence we are aware of and of which we can keep a record. This includes, for example, research findings, lessons learned, toolkits, and more. We can easily resort to our computer and various information technologies to assist us in organizing our explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, cannot be documented as easily; it is subconscious – we are generally not even aware that we possess it. Tacit knowledge is context-specific and includes, among other things, insights, intuitions and experiences.⁷ Capturing this particular type of knowledge is obviously much more difficult and involves more time and personal interaction.

Knowledge

“Each of us is a personal store of knowledge with training, experiences, and informal networks of friends and colleagues, whom we seek out when we want to solve a problem or explore an opportunity. Essentially, we get things done and succeed by knowing an answer or knowing someone who does.”

Source: *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 3.

What does KM involve in practice?

When thinking through KM, there is no “one size fits all” or “ready to use,” pre-made strategy. In fact, one can easily become overwhelmed and confused when going through the KM literature and attempting to understand what it all means in very practical terms. Under such circumstances, it might be tempting to simply ‘copy’ a strategy that was successfully used by others. This would be a mistake, as KM should be closely linked to our own assets, needs, mandate, mission, and goals, taking into account our values and ways of working – in fact, these should be the starting point of any KM strategy. In other words, our KM strategy should be tailored to our specific circumstances and specialization, and should not simply be imitated from a success story.

But what do we mean by a KM strategy? *What is a KM strategy?* Simply put, any KM strategy should lay out how we intend to manage our knowledge in order to become a more organized and responsive organization, one that is committed to documenting and learning from its own experience. In its most basic form, our KM strategy should include answers to three questions: where are we now, where do we want to be, and how do we get there?⁸

Basic Elements of a KM strategy

- 1) **Where are we now?** What knowledge do we possess? What outputs have we created? How is our information and knowledge currently managed? How does our current knowledge management practice affect our organization's ability to meet our goals? To what extent does our organization's culture, processes and systems serve or hinder good knowledge management practices?
- 2) **Where do we want to be?** In five years' time, how will a good KM strategy change or streamline our organization? How will it help our organization and the people in it meet their objectives? What might "good knowledge management practice" look like for our organization? How will we know when we are there? How will we measure the progress and value of our efforts?
- 3) **How do we get there?** Taking steps 1) and 2) into account, what specific actions ought we adopt to get where we want to be? We need an action plan outlining the three key elements of **people, processes and technology**. What specific knowledge management tools and processes will we use? How will we motivate people and realign our organizational culture to a "knowledge friendly" one? And how will we develop the supporting technological infrastructure? Here we also need to include details of resources required, deliverables, timescales and responsibilities.

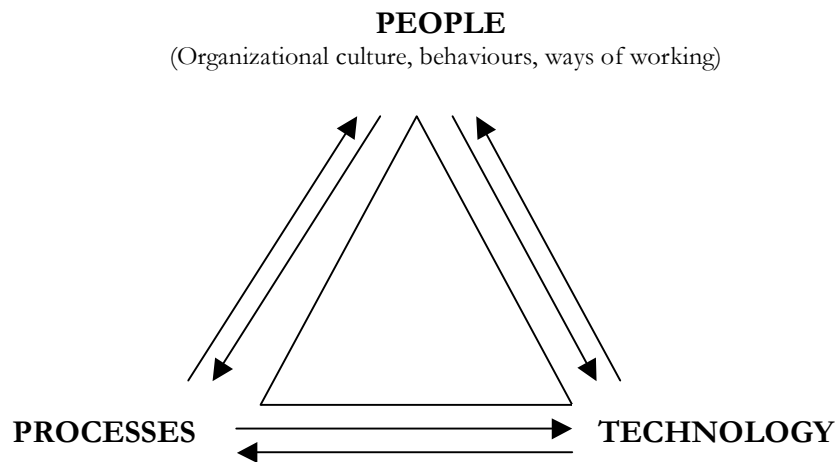
Source: Adapted from *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 25

In a slightly different formulation, Steve Denning advises that our knowledge strategy should ask the following questions: *What* knowledge do we want to share (type and quality)? *With whom* do we want to share it (audience)? *How* will our knowledge actually *be* shared (channels)? And *why* will this knowledge be shared (motivations and objectives)?⁹

Granted, devising a KM strategy, in concrete terms, is difficult and complex. While there may be a range of ways to do this, a useful way to conceptualize of the task is through the lenses of *people, processes, and technology*. "These three components are often compared to the legs of a three-legged stool – if one is missing then the stool will collapse."¹⁰ While there is some argument as to which of the three components is the most important, a consensus seems to be emerging in favour of the first – people. It is people – human resources – who are now often seen as the vanguard of any KM strategy. They, after all, are the ones that create, share and use knowledge; without people, and without taking into account the role people play in generating and sharing knowledge, most KM attempts are likely to fail.

Following these lines, a successful KM strategy generally requires a change in culture and behaviour within an organization – a change towards recognizing the importance of knowledge and the need to make a conscious effort to better create, capture, share and use it.

The KM Environment



Processes, for their part, “are the activities or initiatives that [we] put in place to enable and facilitate the creation, sharing and use of knowledge for the benefit of the organization.”¹¹ Processes are clearly vital in the sense that they will either work towards or ultimately impede our KM efforts. Finally, and although it is often tempting to see technology as the “knowledge saviour,” its proper role is more as an *enabler* of KM. Technology is a methodology, not a strategy. Various technological tools can indeed assist us in organizing, storing and accessing our explicit knowledge as well as helping to connect people and furthering their abilities to share their tacit knowledge.¹² Our challenge is finding the proper level for technology within our broader KM strategy.

How does KM apply to us?

How can we become better knowledge managers? If we are to communicate our knowledge – in a timely fashion – to those who need it and are in a position to act upon it, we must have the tools and practices at hand to act quickly and effectively, especially in locating that knowledge. In this sense, KM should be seen as an intrinsic component of knowledge translation – without it, we might lose track of crucial knowledge and miss golden opportunities to have an impact.

A number of tools, techniques and technologies have been developed to assist us in carrying out KM-related activities. These, obviously, will vary depending on our needs and the type of knowledge we have at hand. As mentioned earlier, this chapter will look, in turn, at tacit and explicit knowledge and identify key resources that we can use to better create, capture and share each type of knowledge. We will not, however, review the whole spectrum of tools and techniques that can be used for KM purposes (a more exhaustive list is however offered in the text box below; further information can be found in the *Resources* section at the end of this chapter).

KM Tools and Techniques

After Action Reviews (AARs): A tool pioneered by the US army and now widely used in a range of organizations to capture lessons learned both during and after an activity or project.

Communities of Practice: Widely regarded as “the killer KM application,” communities of practice link people together to develop and share knowledge around specific themes.

Conducting a knowledge audit: A systematic process to identify an organization’s knowledge needs, resources and flows, as a basis for understanding where and how better knowledge management can add value.

Developing a knowledge management strategy: Approaches to developing a formal knowledge management plan that is closely aligned with an organization’s overall strategy and goals.

Exit interviews: A tool used to capture the knowledge of departing employees.

Identifying and sharing best practices: Approaches to capturing best practices discovered in one part of the organization and sharing them for the benefit of all.

Knowledge centers: Similar to libraries but with a broader remit including connecting people with each other as well as with information in documents and databases.

Knowledge harvesting: A tool used to capture the knowledge of “experts,” making it widely available to others.

Peer assists: A tool developed at BP-Amoco used to learn from the experiences of others, especially within an organization, before embarking on an activity or project.

Social network analysis: Mapping relationships between people, groups and organizations to understand how these relationships either facilitate or impede knowledge flows.

Storytelling: Using the ancient art of storytelling to share knowledge in a more meaningful and interesting way.

White pages: A step-up from the usual staff directory, this is an online resource that allows people to find colleagues with specific knowledge and expertise.

Source: *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management, July 2005, 14. See p.15-50 for a detailed overview of each tool/technique.

Knowledge Inventory

Often referred to as a knowledge audit, a knowledge inventory means exactly what it implies: assessing the state of an organization’s knowledge resources, assets, and flows. In that sense, it is a critical component of any KM strategy, and often the very first step. If we do not know what knowledge we already have, what our knowledge gaps are and how that knowledge flows within our organization, how can we devise an effective KM strategy? Knowledge inventories “reveal the organization’s knowledge management needs, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and risks.”¹³ In other words, they provide an overview of the status quo, allowing us to

determine what steps we need to take to improve upon our current practices. What do we have, what do we need, and what are the gaps between the two?

Why conduct a knowledge inventory?

Knowledge inventories can assist us in identifying a number of things, including:

- Information glut or scarcity;
- Lack of awareness of information elsewhere in the organization;
- Inability to keep abreast of relevant information;
- Continual “reinvention” of the wheel;
- Common use of out-of-date information; and,
- Not knowing where to go for expertise in a specific area.

Source: Wiig K. *Knowledge Management Methods*. Arlington, TX: Schema Press, 1993.

What does a knowledge inventory involve?

While different approaches can be taken to carry out a knowledge audit, the methodology adopted by the NHS National Library for Health is briefly presented here.¹⁴

- 1) **Identify our knowledge needs.** We must be clear about what knowledge our organization needs. Tools to collect such information include questionnaire-based surveys, interviews and/or facilitated group discussions, all designed to answer the key question of: *what knowledge does our organization need to be successful?*
- 2) **Conduct a knowledge inventory.** Here we must locate the knowledge assets and resources available within our organization, for both tacit and explicit knowledge. In the case of tacit knowledge, we will look at things such as the people we have, where they are located, what they do, what they know, and what they may be learning. In the case of explicit knowledge, we will attempt to quantify the knowledge we have (in terms of papers, reports, databases, etc.) by locating it, understanding how it is organized and accessed, analyzing how appropriate it is, and finally determining whether the resources available are in fact being used. When compared against our needs, this inventory will in turn allow us to identify our knowledge gaps.
- 3) **Analyze knowledge flows.** We must understand how the knowledge that we have moves within our organization – “from where it is to where it is needed”.¹⁵ How do people find what the knowledge they need to carry out their tasks? This type of analysis will include both tacit and explicit knowledge and focus on people, processes and technologies.
- 4) **Create a knowledge map.** Though slightly abstract, we might be well served by drawing a visual representation of our organization’s knowledge – how it moves, how it is accessed, where it is created and how it is shared. This can be done by

mapping out knowledge resources and assets or, more comprehensively, by adding in the details of how it flows from one point to the next.

At the end of it all, our audit should allow us to come to some important conclusions. Most importantly, we should be able to devise some recommendations for addressing our knowledge gaps, both in terms of content and in flow.

Resources:

- *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 25. Available at: www.library.nhs.uk/knowledgemanagement
- Ramalingam, B. *Implementing Knowledge Strategies: From Policy to Practice in Development Agencies*. ODI Working Paper 244. London: ODI, 2005.

Managing our tacit knowledge

Determining the tacit knowledge that we possess is easier said than done. Tacit knowledge is, after all, the knowledge that lives within the minds of our organization. As around eighty percent of any organization's knowledge is said to be tacit, we must find ways to become better at capturing and sharing it. Below are five key techniques that we can use to assist us in our efforts.

1) Identifying and sharing best practice

The term “best practice” has been used extensively in the world of health and development, and often means different things to different people. The adjective “best” also raises some issues, as who can determine what a “best” practice really is? And doesn't context dictate what the “best” approach might be? For our purposes here, let us use “best practice” as a way of illustrating approaches that have had some past success and that we can learn from in shaping our future activities. As always, though, “best practice” is not a template that should be unflinchingly replicated in other situations. Instead, “best practice” must adapt to every context; it is little more than a road map, a guide, and not a model to be copied in its entirety.

As best practice generally involves both tacit and explicit knowledge, the approach we must take to identify and share these will be two-fold. On the one hand we will capture explicit knowledge through tools such as databases and on the other we will share tacit knowledge through, for instance, a community of practice.¹⁶

One useful way of identifying and sharing best practice has been developed by David Skyrme and is presented below.¹⁷

- 1) **Identify the users' requirements.** Where can we really add value? Do we need a database of best practices or should we instead be sharing select aspects of this knowledge through storytelling and face-to-face interactions?
- 2) **Discover best practices.** Tools to do this include: identifying those individuals who are performing well and understanding how they work; communities of practice; after action reviews; knowledge harvesting and exit interviews.
- 3) **Document good practices.** Databases are typically used to store best practices in a standard format. Items to be entered in the database include: title; profile; context; resources; description; improvement measures; lessons learned; and links to resources.
- 4) **Validate best practices.** Review identified best practices to ensure that it is indeed advisable to use them as a model. This can be done by a panel of subject experts and peers. We may also wish to ensure that these practices are evidence-based.
- 5) **Disseminate and apply.** We must go beyond the use of a database to ensure face-to-face dissemination of best practices. Ways to do this include: communities of practice; improvement groups or quality circles; visits to other departments or organizations with good performance; organized learning events; job secondments or exchanges, etc.
- 6) **Develop supporting infrastructure.** This will provide the needed support to our best practice programme. This infrastructure includes human as well as physical resources.

Resources:

- David Skyrme. Best Practices in Best Practices. Guide on Developing a Sharing best Practices Programme. <http://www.skyrme.com/kshop/kguides.htm>.
- *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 31. Available at: www.library.nhs.uk/knowledgemanagement.

2) Knowledge Harvesting

How do we capitalize on the knowledge of our organization's experts? How do we capture what is their heads and then share it with others in an accessible and understandable user-friendly format? Put differently, how do we facilitate the transformation of tacit into explicit knowledge? While it might not provide us with a catch-all solution, knowledge harvesting is designed to contribute towards this conversion. At its core, it is about capturing, documenting and subsequently sharing the knowledge of experts and top performers. As Mary Eisenhart explains, "the ultimate goal of knowledge harvesting is to capture an individual's decision-making process with enough clarity that someone else guided by it could repeat the steps of the process and achieve the same result."¹⁸

What does knowledge harvesting involve?

While not all approaches to knowledge harvesting are identical, most follow a set of careful steps. Here, we adapt an eight-step process as presented by Knowledge Harvesting Inc.¹⁹

- 1) **Focus.** What specific knowledge and expertise are we looking for? The answer to this question will in turn affect our overall strategy for capturing that information.
- 2) **Find.** Locate the experts whose knowledge we want to harvest. Here, we can go through a staff directory, look at key documents and find out who authored them, or simply ask around.²⁰
- 3) **Elicit.** Here, we will use harvesters, or interviewers, to get experts to talk about their knowledge – even when they are not aware that they possess it. It is important that we use skilled harvesters that can get people talking.
- 4) **Organize.** Now that we have gathered the knowledge we were looking for, we must arrange it in a coherent and systematic form that is easy to access.
- 5) **Package.** As discussed in several other chapters of this Toolkit, here we must think about our audience and its needs. What will be the best format to present them with the knowledge we have elicited?
- 6) **Share.** Connected to 5) is the question of: what is the ultimate purpose of sharing this knowledge? Why and for whom have we packaged what we know? Again, the exact means for doing all of this will depend on a careful appreciation of our audience. Generally speaking, however, we start by making our knowledge available in an on-line repository.
- 7) **Apply.** This will be done by members of our organization in their every-day work. It is important for us to keep track of whether, and *how*, that knowledge is being applied and to record any feedback we receive.
- 8) **Evaluate and adapt.** Based on the information gathered from users, we can now evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts and adapt it to the changing needs of our organization.

Sample questions for our experts

- Describe a time when...?
- What's the first thing you do?
- How do you know to do that?
- How do you know when to do it?
- What do you do next? Why?
- What usually happens?
- What happens if something else is done?
- What would happen if...?
- Who else is involved?

- What are some common mistakes or misconceptions?
- What is the most important thing to remember when you're doing this?
- Describe how you currently help others learn how to do this?
- What are the main obstacles that prevent them from achieving the same results as you?
- What would make this process easier to understand?
- What would make this process easier to achieve?

Source: *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 38.

3) Storytelling

Storytelling has always been used as a means to communicate and share knowledge and experiences. The importance of storytelling as a tool to share knowledge within organizations is increasingly being recognized and deliberately used. It is indeed a very useful technique when attempting to share our tacit knowledge.

The Strengths and Benefits of Storytelling

- Storytelling allows us to communicate: quickly; naturally; clearly; truthfully; collaboratively; persuasively; accurately; intuitively; entertainingly; movingly; feelingly; and interactively.¹
- Stories are funny, interesting and memorable. Their language is real and personal. Stories simplify complex things. Stories are concrete and accessible. The audience readily identifies with the story. Stories inspire us to take action. Stories foster a sense of community. They promote the development of human relationships.²
- “First is that it enables articulation of emotional aspects as well as factual content, and thus allows expression of tacit knowledge that might otherwise be difficult to share. Secondly, in providing the broader context in which knowledge arises, storytelling can increase the potential for meaningful knowledge sharing. By grounding facts in a narrative structure, learning is more likely to take place, and be passed on.”³
- “Stories communicate ideas holistically, conveying a rich yet clear message, and so they are an excellent way of communicating complicated ideas and concepts in an easy-to-understand form. Stories therefore allow people to convey tacit knowledge that might otherwise be difficult to articulate; in addition, because stories are told with feeling, they can allow people to communicate more than they realize they know.”⁴

¹ Katalina Groh. *What are the potential benefits of storytelling?* www.creating21stcentury.org

² *Knowledge Sharing: Methods, Meetings and Tools*. Ottawa: Canadian International Development Agency, November 2003.

³ Ben Ramalingam. *Tools for Knowledge and Learning: A Guide for Development and Humanitarian Organisations*. London: ODI, July 2006.

⁴ *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 44.

For many years now, Steven Denning – a renowned expert in the field of knowledge management – has used stories as a KM tool, and more specifically as a way to effect change within organization. Specifically, he uses what he calls *springboard stories*, defined as stories that enable “a leap in understanding by the audience so as to grasp how an organization or community or complex system may change.”

When Denning realized, after having worked at the World Bank for nearly 20 years, that it was not efficiently capturing and sharing its own internal knowledge with an outside audience, he used the following springboard story to trigger change in how the organization viewed itself:

“In June 1995, a health worker in Kamana, Zambia, logged in to the Center for Disease Control website and got the answer to a question on how to treat malaria. This happened, not in June 2015, but in June 1995. This is not a rich country, it is Zambia, one of the least developed countries in the world. It is not even the capital of the country; it is six hundred kilometers away. But the most striking aspect of the picture is this: our organization isn’t in it. Our organization doesn’t have its know-how and expertise organized in such a way that someone like the health worker in Zambia can have access to it. But just imagine if it had! We could get ourselves organized so that professionals have access to the resources needed. Just in time and just enough.”²¹

Denning used a story that was short and illustrative and that involved real-world individuals. He also formulated it in an interactive way, involving the audience and prompting it to take action. As an indirect consequence of his storytelling, the Bank, in 1996, redefined itself as a ‘knowledge bank’.²²

Beyond triggering change, storytelling can also be used for a variety of other knowledge-related purposes, including: communications; capturing tacit knowledge; embodying and transferring knowledge; innovation; building community; enhancing technology; and, finally, individual growth.²³

A good story

Not just any story will have the impact Denning’s had on the future direction of the World Bank. For a story to be compelling, it must have certain attributes. According to Larry Prusak, a good story should possess the following four attributes:²⁴

- **Endurance.** While stories are likely to change over time, the lessons they are meant to convey should stay the same.
- **Salience.** Good stories should appeal to their audience, be witty, pithy and touch an emotional chord. The story must be short enough for people to remember it.
- **Coherence.** Stories should explain something and make sense. They must also be believable – avoid exaggeration.

In addition, stories should also be simple and concise but with sufficient background information; involve a character people can easily identify with; be plausible, lively and exciting; be told with conviction; and, always end on a positive note.²⁵

When not to use a story

While stories are certainly useful, they should not be seen as a panacea that can be applied to any and all situations. Steve Denning identifies some situations where they are particularly inappropriate:

- When the audience doesn't want a story.
- Where analysis would be better.
- Where the story isn't ready.
- Where a story would be deceptive.

Source: Steve Denning. *Where you shouldn't use a story... Storytelling: Passport for the 21 century.* www.creatingthe21stcentury.org

Resources:

- www.stevedenning.com
- www.creatingthe21stcentury.org
- *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 44.

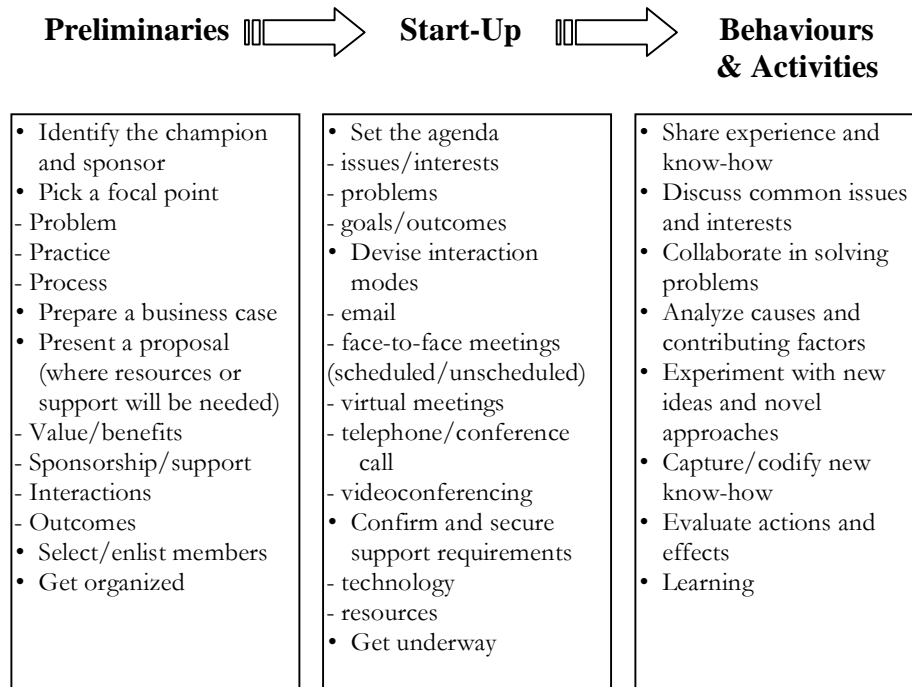
4) Communities of Practice

In the course of our career, each one of us has probably learned how to solve a particular problem or perform a specific task not from a manual or text book, but from talking to a colleague. Face-to-face discussions and exchanges are obvious and effective ways to share existing knowledge, often leading to new innovations and the creation of more knowledge. Communities of practice (CoP) – “groups of practitioners who share a common interest or passion in an area of competence and are willing to share the experiences of their practice”²⁶ – are ways of formalizing such exchanges. They are based on the assumption that the acquisition of knowledge is a social process²⁷, and that knowledge and information can best be shared and learned within communities. As opposed to working groups or task forces, CoP are not formed around a specific assignment and are not time-bound: they exist “indefinitely for the promotion of the issue or issues around which the community is formed.”²⁸ In addition, membership in a CoP is entirely voluntarily and the group's composition and mission are meant to be fluid, flexible and informal. Their mandate can include stimulating interaction, fostering learning, creating new knowledge, and identifying and sharing best practices.²⁹ They can be an extremely useful way of capturing and sharing the slippery but essential tacit knowledge of our colleagues.

How do we get started?

We can form a CoP within our own organization – if it is a large one – or we can form one across organizations, and even continents. Whatever the case, our CoP must focus on a single specific issue or area of expertise around which people are willing to share ideas, find solutions, and innovate. Their exact format and modes of operation will in turn depend upon what kind of knowledge people need to share, how tightly bonded the community is, and how closely new knowledge needs to be linked with people’s everyday work.³⁰ The first questions we should be asking ourselves when setting up a CoP include: what is the knowledge focus? who can contribute? what are the common needs and interests of the group? and what is the group’s ultimate purpose?³¹ In his CoP start-up kit, Fred Nickols provides a very useful step-by-step view of the process, as reproduced below.

Steps in starting up a Community of Practice



Source: Fred Nickols. *Communities of Practice: A Start-Up Kit*. Distance Consulting, 2003.

Resources:

- Fred Nickols. *Communities of Practice: A Start-Up Kit*. Distance Consulting, 2003. <http://home.att.net/~discon/KM/CoPStartUpKit.pdf>
- Steve Denning. “Communities for knowledge management.” www.stevedenning.com

- Ben Ramalingam. *Tools for Knowledge and Learning: A Guide for Development and Humanitarian Organisations*. London: ODI, 2006, 45. www.odi.org.uk/rapid/publications/Tools_KM.html

5) Peer Assist

When starting a new project or working through an ongoing one, we often struggle to find solutions to what we think are new problems. In most cases, however, these problems are not new, and somebody, somewhere – likely within our own organization – has had to deal with similar issues in the past. By turning to them for assistance and advice, and putting the problem into its context, we can often find solutions, or at least good starting points, in a timely fashion. The Peer Assist methodology was developed to address such situations and resolve problems by tapping into our peers' experience and expertise. Pioneered by BP Amoco in 1994, this technique allowed the company to save over US\$750 million over the first three years of using it.³²

When is Peer Assist useful?

- You are starting a new assignment. You want to benefit from the advice of more experienced people.
- You face a problem that another group has faced in the past.
- You have not had to deal with a given situation for a long time. You are no longer sure what procedures to follow.
- You are planning a project that is similar to a project another group has completed.

Source: *Knowledge Sharing: Methods, Meetings and Tools*. Ottawa: Canadian International Development Agency, November 2003, 6.

What does a Peer Assist involve?

A Peer Assist takes the form of a half-day to two-day meeting where a group of peers come together to discuss a particular problem related to a certain project or activity. The meeting should take place prior to the launch of a new project, though it may also prove useful throughout the project's lifecycle. The project's leading individuals are typically the ones to convene the meeting, carefully selecting the participants whose advice and knowledge is particularly sought. The project leaders must manage the entire meeting (or set of meetings).

Steps in conducting a Peer Assist

- 1) **Clarify our purpose:** We need to clearly define the problem we are seeking assistance with and ensure that our aim is to learn something.
- 2) **Do some background research:** Find out whether others have previously tackled a similar problem.
- 3) **Get a facilitator:** Getting someone from outside the team will ensure the process runs smoothly.
- 4) **Pay attention to timing:** Make sure that the results of our peer assist will be available in time and on time.
- 5) **Select the participants:** Invite between four to eight people who have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience. Avoid hierarchies within the selected group to avoid any tensions and ensure that people feel free to share their views.
- 6) **Get clear about the deliverables:** Know what we are planning to achieve and plan accordingly. Deliverables should be options and insights as opposed to answers.
- 7) **Allow time for socializing:** People will work better together if they get to know each other before and during the meeting.
- 8) **Define the purpose and set the ground rules:** At the start of the meeting, make sure that everyone is on the same footing and is clear about the purpose and individual roles.
- 9) **Start by sharing information and context:** The host team should present the context, history and future plans with regard to the problem being presented.
- 10) **Encourage the visitors to ask questions and give feedback:** At this point, the host team should take a back seat and allow the visitors to discuss what they have heard and share ideas.
- 11) **Analyze what we have heard:** The visiting team should now analyze and reflect on what they have learned and look at different options.
- 12) **Present the feedback and agree on actions:** The visitors present their feedback to the host team. Time should be allowed for questions and clarifications. The host team should agree on a timeline to implement the agreed-upon actions.

Source: Adapted from *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 39.

Resources:

- *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 39.
- Nancy M. Dixon. *Peer Assist: Guidelines for Practice*. 2000. www.commonknowledge.org/userimages/resources_peer_assist_guidelines+.pdf
- Ben Ramalingam. *Tools for Knowledge and Learning: A Guide for Development and Humanitarian Organisations*. London: ODI, 2006, 60. www.odi.org.uk/rapid/publications/Tools_KM.html

Key KM Resources

- NHS National Library for Health. 2005. *ABC of Knowledge Management*. www.library.nhs.uk/knowledgemanagement/
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- www.knowledgeharvesting.com
- www.creating21stcentury.org.
- J Lave and E Wenger. 1991. *Situated Learning – Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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- Richard McDermott. 1999. “Nurturing Three Dimensional Communities of Practice: How to get the most out of human networks.” *Knowledge Management Review*.
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- Nancy Dixon. 2000. *Peer Assist: Guidelines for Practice*. http://www.commonknowledge.org/userimages/resources_peer_assist_guidelines+.pdf
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Endnotes

¹ “Strengthening Health Research Systems,” in *World Report on Knowledge for Better Health*. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2004.

² *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 6.

³ Steve Denning. *What is knowledge? Definitions of knowledge*. Steve Denning Website. www.stevedenning.com

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- ⁴ Davenport, T.H. and Prusak, L. *Working Knowledge, How Organizations Manage What They Know*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1998.
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- ⁶ *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 3.
- ⁷ Ram Babu Nepal. Knowledge Management: Concept, Elements and Process, 2.
- ⁸ *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 4.
- ⁹ Stephen Denning. *The Springboard: How Storytelling Ignites Action in Knowledge-Era Organizations*. Boston, London: Butterworth Heinemann, October 2002.
- ¹⁰ *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 25.
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, 57.
- ¹² *Ibid*, 59.
- ¹³ *Ibid*, 22.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, 22.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, 24
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*, 31.
- ¹⁷ David Skyrme. Best Practices in Best Practices. Guide on Developing a Sharing best Practices Programme. <http://www.skyrme.com/kshop/kguides.htm>
- ¹⁸ Mary Eisenhart. "Gathering Knowledge While it's Ripe." *Knowledge Management Magazine*, April 2001.
- ¹⁹ *Approach*. Knowledge Harvesting. <http://www.knowledgeharvesting.com/approach.htm>
- ²⁰ *ABC of Knowledge Management*. NHS National Library for Health: Specialist Library Knowledge Management. July 2005, 37.
- ²¹ Stephen Denning. *The Springboard: How Storytelling Ignites Action in Knowledge-Era Organizations*. Boston, London: Butterworth Heinemann, October 2002.
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- ²³ Steve Denning. *Where to use storytelling - Practical uses of ancient art – Business uses of storytelling*. Steve Denning Web site. www.stevedenning.com
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- ²⁵ *Knowledge Sharing: Methods, Meetings and Tools*. Ottawa: Canadian International Development Agency, November 2003, 7.
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- ²⁹ Fred Nickols. *Communities of Practice: An Overview*. Distance Consulting, 2003.
- ³⁰ Richard McDermott. "Nurturing Three Dimensional Communities of Practice: How to get the most out of human networks." *Knowledge Management Review*, Fall 1999.
- ³¹ Ben Ramalingam. *Tools for Knowledge and Learning: A Guide for Development and Humanitarian Organisations*. London: ODI, 2006, 45.
- ³² Nathaniel Welch. *Peer Assist Overview*. MORE



Context Mapping

I. Understanding the Context: The Dynamics of the Policy and Political Environment

Context Mapping. Political Mapping. Power Mapping. Stakeholder analysis. Whatever we call the term, the fundamental idea to be explored in this chapter is understanding the situation that surrounds our research. Before we even begin our research, we must ask ourselves: who are the major actors that might participate in our project's design? As it unfolds? Who might ultimately implement our findings? Who might support our work, who hinder it? Who must know about its policy implications? How do policies in our field become formulated? At bottom: *who and what are we trying to influence?* The more complete our answers to these questions, the more likely we will be able to plug our design, processes and findings into the policy process. The more we know about our context (actors, competitors, the policy environment), the better our chances of moving our agenda forward.

Much has already been written on the subject of context mapping (our preferred term as it carries none of the “are you mapping out who belongs to which political party?” implications that political mapping might). This chapter will focus on four separate sections: target audiences; an overview of theoretical tools; an overview of the policy cycle and policy-making theories; and research design. However, to keep these concepts grounded, we will use a case study on a DDT researcher throughout this section. *While absolutely fictional*, it is useful in illustrating how the various theories being discussed might play themselves out in practice. We have chosen a complex and contested subject to better understand and evaluate the different approaches to understanding the context and situation that surrounds research. Please note

however, that this example is for illustrative purposes only; it is not based on any research and does not represent the views of *Research Matters*.

Indoor residual spraying of DDT for malaria vector control

In November 2006, Dr. Bight concluded a two-year research study in M----- which assessed the cost-effectiveness of DDT when used for malaria control. Specifically, his research team compared the cost – in terms of money spent and lives saved – of indoor residual spraying of DDT with the costs associated with insecticide treated bed nets (ITNs), two alternative insecticides, and a combination treatment based on artemisinin. The study concentrated on 15 villages in three districts of M----- where malaria transmission rates are high and have remained constant for the past decade. The three districts were located in highland areas and are also characterized with marked seasonal transmission peaks and disease outbreaks. The study found that, in light of the specific geographical location of the villages, the type and habits of the mosquitoes found there, as well as the habits of the population, DDT residual spraying was the most cost-effective malaria-control strategy. The government’s current policy, however, focused on the use of ITNs subsidized through the distribution of vouchers in antenatal clinics.

Target Audiences

What are we trying to achieve?

Before setting out to identify our target audience, we must be quite clear about our desired objectives. We’ll start by asking ourselves what change we wish our information or evidence to bring about. For instance, do we hope to cause a policy-shift within the Ministry of Health? Are we trying to influence the behavior of a certain segment of the population? Or are we simply trying to transfer information or raise awareness within the general public? Obviously, our desired objective affects, in every sense, how we will try to position our work. *Our objective clarifies our target audience.* And once we have a good – if rough – idea of our target audience, then we can work to define that audience further and eventually decide upon the relevant message, tool and channel to reach it.

Getting to know our audience

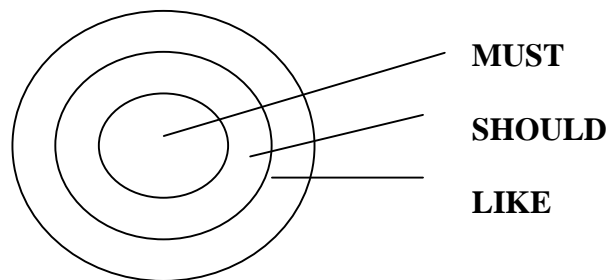
The identification and understanding of our target audience is not a side-bar to our research project, or something we would do if only we had more time. Rather, *understanding our audience is an essential part of our research from the very outset.* We have already identified our overall objective for undertaking our work, and we must now identify exactly *who* our strategy will target. If, for instance, we’re hoping to effect a change in behavior, we’ll be more likely to target the end-users of our research – for

example local communities. On the other hand, if we're aiming to change public policy, then our audience will be composed of voters, key constituents, and decision-makers, among others.¹ In turn, we will need to understand where these actors stand on our particular issue, and how decisions are typically made within the broader policy environment.

Who is our target audience?

In some cases, our answer to this question will be entirely straightforward, particularly when there is only one group of actors we're seeking to address. In most cases though, there may well be a broad spectrum of individuals or groups who might be affected or have an interest in (or be convinced to have an interest in) our processes, findings and proposed policy changes.² Not all of them, however, hold the same importance and influence: we must begin by *desegregating our audience*. Who is better placed to act on our findings or recommendations? Which group is in a position to influence others?

When prioritizing our audience, it might be useful to divide them into three categories: 1) those that we **MUST** interact/communicate with; 2) those that we **SHOULD** interact/communicate with; 3) and those that we would **LIKE** to interact/communicate with.³ Think about this as a three-ring circle. Focus first on the group forming the inner ring; we can then move on to other groups as time and resources permit.



Influencing policy, changing behavior

Dr. Bight has two clear objectives. First, he wants to change public policy by convincing the government to promote and subsidize indoor residual spraying in the three districts under study. Second, he wishes to influence the behavior of local communities to ensure that they accept, and comply with, the use of DDT.

In order to influence public policy, Dr. Bight might target a range of actors, including voters, key constituents, and decision-makers at various levels of government. In effect, however, he decides that he **MUST**, above all, concentrate his efforts on actors within the Ministry of Health. To influence the behaviour of communities – and especially in light of his limited time and resources – he decides to focus principally on community leaders and women's associations, which, he then hopes, will effectively transmit the message to other members of the community.

Dr. Bight would also like to engage with the local media in the three targeted districts and, again if time and resources permit, with the national media. Engaging with the latter, he hopes, would serve to raise awareness around his issues and pressure the government into adopting his proposed policy change, but at this point in time he believes that his energies would be better spent elsewhere.

Who are the important actors within our target group?

Now that we've isolated relatively broad target groups, it's time to break those groups down even further. We need to be able to answer the question: on our particular issue, who really makes the decisions? If, for instance, our target is the national Ministry of Health, should we try to contact and inform the Permanent Secretary, a Director, a mid-level actor, or perhaps outsiders who have the ear of any one of those important actors? This is where context mapping can get muddy and confused. The Ministry is often the easy and logical target: it sets health policy. But of course it does not exist in a vacuum. Say, for instance, it receives much of its AIDS-fighting budget from bilateral and multilateral donors, and it also has a National AIDS Committee (NAC). How many actors are setting policy here? Who has the last word – the MoH, the NAC or donors? Are they harmonized or do they act separately? Are there advisory committees of researchers and NGOs that work with the Ministry on policy issues? All of this is an illustrative way of saying: how do ideas and evidence move towards those who have the final say?

Policymaking is clearly huge and complex. Not only must we disaggregate as much as possible the many different actors within and without of government, we must also do as much as we can to identify our likely supporters as well as opponents. As Daniel Start and Ingie Hovland suggest, we must ask ourselves: “Where are the supporters, entry points and policy hooks and opportunities [we] can hang [our] proposal on in a timely and focused manner? Where are [our] detractors?”⁴

While all of this certainly poses difficult challenges, we can simplify by now aggregating these actors into categories that reflect their position towards what we will propose. In a simplified manner, we can categorize these actors as supporters, detractors and fence-sitters.⁵

DDT's Friends and Foes

To identify his supporters and opponents, Dr. Bight carried out some intensive groundwork that included desk research, informal meetings and interviews. At the end of this process, his investigations led him to conclude:

Supporters: Having met with various staff members and policy advisers, Dr. Bight was delighted to discover that the Ministry's Director of Research was highly receptive to his proposal and might be willing to champion it within government. Similarly, various public health NGOs, academics and select members of the press were prepared to support publicly the proposed policy change. At the international level, he was further encouraged by the fact that, in September 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) had announced that it would promote indoor spraying as one of three main interventions to fight malaria. Soon thereafter, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) announced that it would fund the use of DDT in specific cases.

Detractors: On Dr. Bight's issue, the main detractors he identified were environmental groups within the country, as well as abroad. The latter include, among others, Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund, and Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Fence-sitters: Thanks to data collected by his field researchers, Dr. Bight realized that while most community members were not opposed to indoor spraying, the majority were apprehensive of its possibly harmful effects.

What level are we trying to influence?

There is a marked difference between proposing changes of national health policies and suggesting changes in the way services are implemented at a local level. Each level has by definition its own challenges and opportunities, and thus it is essential to conceptualize all of this – which level of government/district/NGO/donor – to target in order to achieve our stated objective.

How politicized is our issue?

Speaking of essentials, it goes without saying that we must also be aware of the political climate surrounding our issue. Is our proposal even politically feasible? No matter how sound or pressing our research is, if the political climate means that our findings are extremely unlikely to be implemented, then we might want to reconsider our research project – or commit ourselves to spending a huge part of our budget and time in advocacy work, in an effort to change the climate wholesale. However, by a savvy understanding of the climate, we do not need to discard a badly timed or contentious topic: there might be ways to refocus it and approach it from an angle much less politicized.

The History of DDT spraying

When Dr. Bight first initiated his research in November 2004, he was well aware of the high level of politicization surrounding DDT. Indeed, DDT has over the years been the subject of much discussion and controversy. In 1955, the WHO championed DDT's use in disease vector control when it launched a program to eradicate malaria. While it was at

the time highly effective in reducing mortality rates, doubts began to emerge as to the negative environmental consequences of its use and the risk that mosquitoes would develop resistance to the chemical. During the 1970s and 1980s, its agricultural use was banned in most countries. Even when using it for public health purposes, countries often came under heavy criticism from international health and environmental agencies and were not always able to secure funding. In 2001, 98 countries signed the Stockholm Convention which came into effect in 2004 and called for the total elimination of DDT and other persistent organic pollutants. Although the use of DDT for public health purposes is currently exempt from the ban, the treaty nonetheless aims to completely phase out its use on a global scale.

Having done his background research, Dr. Bight knew what opposition he was likely to face. At the same time, he also knew that countries such as South Africa (in KwaZulu Natal), Uganda, Mozambique, Swaziland and Ecuador, among others, had successfully reduced malaria infection rates using DDT. He therefore knew that while this was a complicated issue, the adoption of a pro-DDT policy in *M-----* was not impossible. Dr. Bight's position was further reinforced by the support given to DDT by the WHO and USAID in late 2006, just before his own results were made available.

What are the information needs of our target audience?

The ways in which our target audience receives and absorbs information is shaped by a variety of factors, including their personal preferences and habits, literacy and education levels, degree of access to various media formats, and their level of understanding of the issue at hand. When it comes to communicating with them, we must consider their needs and not our abilities or desires. How does our target usually absorb information? Will they be receptive to our message? As we discuss in *Chapters Four, Five, Seven and Eight* of this Toolkit, there are a number of tools at our disposal to 'package' information in a format well suited for our particular audience. These include policy briefs, newspaper articles, newsletters, brochures, emails, radio spots, short video clips, and more.

To each her own...

Having decided to target individuals within the Ministry of Health, community members, as well as the media, Dr. Bight then had to stop and think about how best to share his results and recommendations with these three distinct groups.

In light of his previous interactions with various officials within the Ministry of Health, Dr. Bight knew that they were already aware of the potential benefits of the use of DDT for malaria control. He also discovered, however, that they were reluctant to endorse its use for fear of being attacked by environmental groups and of losing the support of various international donors. They were also concerned about the potential costs of such

a policy. Dr. Bight and his team therefore devised a two-page policy brief, weighing the pros and cons of various alternative policies. To make a case in favor of DDT, the document outlined the cost-effectiveness of the strategy as well as emphasized the backing that it had recently received from WHO and USAID. It also highlighted the experience of neighboring African countries that had successfully used DDT without facing negative consequences. As they were dealing with policy makers, the team knew that their message had to be clear, concise, well-structured and with digestible scientific jargon and acronyms. This policy brief was distributed to key officials and their staff; Dr. Bight and his team then followed-up with personal visits to explain further its ideas.

The team's strategy towards community leaders and women's associations was markedly different, as the concerns of the population were different from those of policy makers. Their main fear was that indoor residual spraying of DDT would be dangerous to their own health and that of their family. Additionally, this information needed to be packaged in a format other than a policy brief. Dr. Bight and his team decided to embark upon a three-pronged strategy. First, they would organize village-level meetings with community leaders and women's associations to explain the benefits of DDT spraying, in the hopes of having an open discussion that would ultimately allay their fears. Second, they would assist local supporters in organizing "town-hall" meetings and provide them with lively posters that could be used to support their claims. And, finally, they created radio spots that would be aired on a regular basis on local radio stations.

In terms of approaching the media, Dr. Bight and his team used the pre-existing contacts they had with specific journalists to generate discussion of their findings in community and national newspapers. They successfully published a feature story in *M-----'s* leading newspaper and, by preparing and distributing a concise press release, their story was carried in a number of community newspapers, all discussing the many positive benefits of DDT.

II. Overview of Context Mapping Tools

As we've just seen in our discussion and in Dr. Bight's strategies, determining the environment around an issue and then thinking through the ways in which our information and evidence can inform both the policy process and general levels of understanding are not straight-forward endeavours. While there is no magic formula, over the years a set of theoretical techniques has been developed to facilitate this process. These can assist us in analyzing the many different political actors in any given policy environment, by assessing the power and position of key actors, by breaking down the supporters, opponents and actors that must be factored into the equation, and creating a political "map" or environment surrounding our issue.

The following brief section provides you with an overview of some of the major techniques available. By no means does it cover all tools at our disposal, nor does this overview go into much detail about each tool. Instead, this is meant to introduce some of the available mapping tools, with more information contained in the provided links.

Mapping the political context in Zambia

In many cases, a number of different steps are required to get a full sense of the context. Sometimes, more ad-hoc and informal methods can be quite useful. In Zambia, for example, a group of researchers and practitioners – under the coordination of the Zambia Forum for Health Research (ZAMFOHR) – recently conducted a number of political mapping exercises to better understand the overall context of health research, specifically focusing on who was producing it, and how it had or had not been utilized. Several documents were commissioned and produced to explore specific research, policy and political dynamics: *who is researching what? Who is funding what? How does research move to the policy arena? Who are the key actors within that arena? And, how could a Knowledge Translation institute such as ZAMFOHR help to fill the gaps separating knowledge production, management, translation and utilization?*

Today, these various documents are available as a resource to any interested party, and are specifically targeted at Zambian researchers that are carrying out, or are planning to carry out, research in the country.

For more information on the mapping exercise and on ZAMFOHR, visit: www.research-matters.net

1. Stakeholder Analysis

When performing a stakeholder analysis, qualitative data is used to determine the interests, behavior, intentions, agendas, interrelations, and influence or power of different actors in relation to a particular issue, policy or reform. Such a technique was developed out of a “recognition among managers, policy makers and researchers of the central role of stakeholders (individuals, groups and organizations) who have an interest (stake) and the potential to influence the actions and aims of an organization, project or policy direction.”⁶

Stakeholder analysis is particularly useful in determining whose support should be sought throughout the project’s lifecycle in order to ensure its success and eventual impact. Once results are available, as Start and Hovland explain, this tool can be used to determine “who needs to know about the research, what their positions and interests are and how the research should be presented and framed to appeal to them.”⁷

What is actually being mapped?

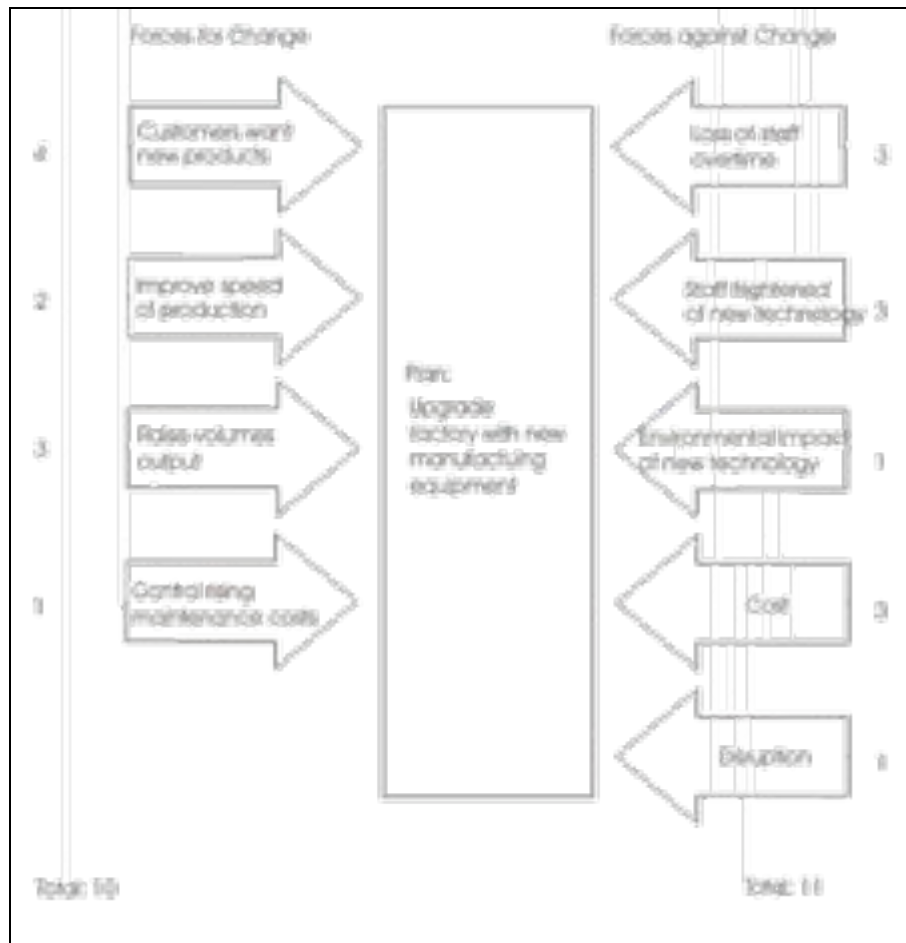
- Nature of stakeholders’ interests;
- Extent to which stakeholders’ interests converge or overlap;
- The stakeholders’ importance with regards to the issue/policy/reform at hand;
- The stakeholders’ influence with regards to the issue/policy/reform at hand.

Resources:

- For an in-depth discussion of the method's origins and uses, see: Ruairi Brugha and Zsusa Varvasovsky, "Stakeholder analysis: a review," *Health Policy and Planning*, 2000, 15(3): 239-246.
- Andreas Wimmer explains the basics of the tool and provides an illustrative example: *Political Science Tools for Assessing Feasibility and Sustainability of Reforms*. A Research Paper prepared for the Independent Evaluation Office of the International Monetary Fund. Bonn: Center for Development Research: 2002. Available at: <https://www.internationalmonetaryfund.com/External/NP/ieo/2002/pu/052902.pdf>
- Ingie Hovland, *Successful Communication: A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations*, London: ODI, 2005, p. 8. Available at: <http://www.odi.org.uk/Rapid/Tools/Toolkits/Communication/Index.html>
- The World Bank's Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA) Source Book provides an overview of various Stakeholder Analysis Tools. Available at: <http://go.worldbank.org/GZ9TK1W7R0>
- Schmeer, Kammi. *Guidelines for Conducting a Stakeholder Analysis*. Bethesda, MD: Partnerships for Health Reform, Abt Associates Inc, 1999. Available at: <http://www.phrplus.org/Pubs/hts3.pdf>

2. Force-Field Analysis

Force-field analysis, while bearing some similarities with the previous tool, looks beyond actors to identify the different *forces* influencing or impacting upon a particular issue or policy. Specifically, it seeks to identify the pressures for and against a proposed change in policy. To gather the required data for this, we can undertake informant interviews, literature reviews and stakeholder workshops. This tool is particularly useful before we initiate our project to determine whether or not it is feasible. If the balance is in favour of those that are opposed to any change, it is perhaps advisable to reconsider our objectives – or commit ourselves to long and indepth advocacy work. Once the project is underway, this technique can assist us in improving our chances of success by understanding who our supporters and opponents are likely to be.



Source: *Force Field Analysis: Understanding the Pressures for and Against Change*, Mind Tools, available at: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_06.htm

Resources:

- ❑ Ingie Hovland, 2005, *Successful Communication: A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations*, p. 14. Available at : <http://www.odi.org.uk/Rapid/Tools/Toolkits/Communication/Index.html>
- ❑ The Mind Tools website provides a good overview of the tool and provides a free worksheet to assist you in carrying out your own analysis. See “Force Field Analysis: Understanding the Pressures For and Against Change,” available at: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_06.htm
- ❑ The Eureka Program of the Ohio Literacy Resource Center provides a concise 2-page brief on the topic. Available at: http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/force_field_analysis.pdf
- ❑ An in-depth description of the tool is provided in Section 2 of *Tools for Development: A Handbook for those engaged in development activity*. Version 15. London: Department for International Development, 2002. Available at: www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/toolsfordevelopment.pdf
- ❑ For a discussion of Force Field Analysis by its creator see Lewin, K. *Field Theory in Social Science*, New York: Harper and Row, 1951.

3. Policy Network Mapping

This particular tool can be very useful when we want to remove from consideration the unimportant or irrelevant actors and focus on those that are really concerned by, or can influence, our proposals. Policy Network Mapping can in turn assist us in mapping the relationships between ourselves (and members of your team) and individuals who yield political influence.

*Elements to consider include:*⁸

- What are the different points through which a project or policy passes to become approved and implemented?
- Who are the actors in charge of each step?
- How can officials gain access to these actors?
- Are there other actors – not officially part of the process – that have substantial influence over those who decide?
- In which ways can officials exercise influence over this process? Do they have particular skills or contacts that might help in this process?

Resources:

- Crosby, Benjamin. “Management and the Environment for Implementation of Policy Change: Part Two, Policy Environment Mapping Techniques,” *Implementing Policy Change: Technical Notes No.5*, April 1992. Available at: http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/publications/ipc/tn-5.pdf
- Mikkelsen, Margaret. “Policy network analysis as a strategic tool for the voluntary sector.” *Policy Studies*, Volume 27, 1: 17-26.

4. Influence Mapping

This tool, also known as *Stakeholder Influence Mapping*, *Power Mapping* or *Arena of Influence*, allows us to identify “the individuals and groups with the power to effect a key decision.” It also allows us to investigate “the position and motive of each player and the best channels to communicate with them.”⁹

Influence Mapping is particularly useful in that it allows us to differentiate between decision-makers and those that can influence them (opinion-leaders). The latter, in turn, are likely to be more accessible, opening a channel through which we might influence policy.

Resources:

- Daniel Start and Ingie Hovland, 2004, p. 26. *Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers*. Available at:

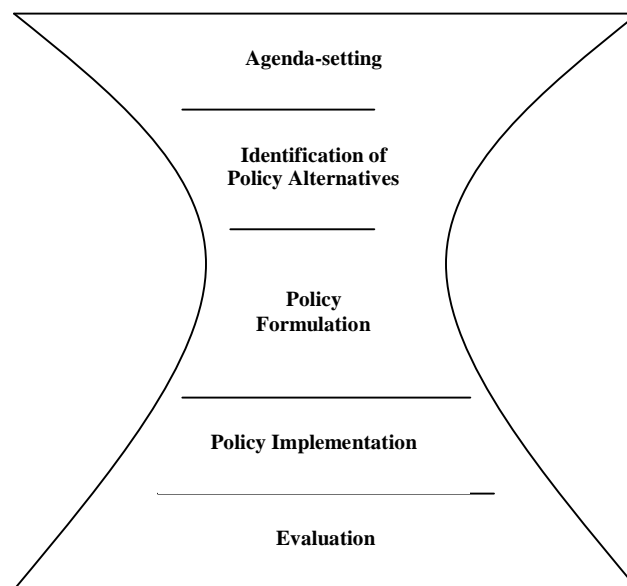
www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Publications/Documents/Tools_handbook_final_web.pdf

- Mayers, J. and Vermeulen, S. 2005 *Stakeholder influence mapping*. Power tools series. London: International Institute for Environment and Development. Available at: <http://www.policypowertools.org/Tools/Understanding/SIM.html>

III. The Policy Cycle and Policy-Making Theories: An Overview

Over the years, various scholars have studied the policy-making cycle in the hopes that a better understanding of its functioning would allow them to have a firmer grasp on how to influence the process and its different stages. While it is important to recognize that in practice policy making does not comply perfectly with the models that have been developed to explain it, such models are nonetheless useful in that they allow us to separate the process into different stages and understand the influences that act upon each these stages. For the purposes of this toolkit, and while some divide the process into many more components, five main stages are identified and discussed below.

The policy making process



Such a model, by disaggregating the decision-making process into separate parts, can help us better target our attempts to influence policy. The hour-glass figure is used here to illustrate the *potential degree of influence* that we might have on each stage of the

process, from greatest at the agenda-setting and evaluation stages to least at the policy formulation stage. While many stakeholders are involved in and can influence the agenda-setting stage, a limited and select group of actors are usually involved in the formulation of policy. This is not to say that researchers do not have a potential role to play at each one of these stages, but rather that we should be aware of the challenges involved in doing so.

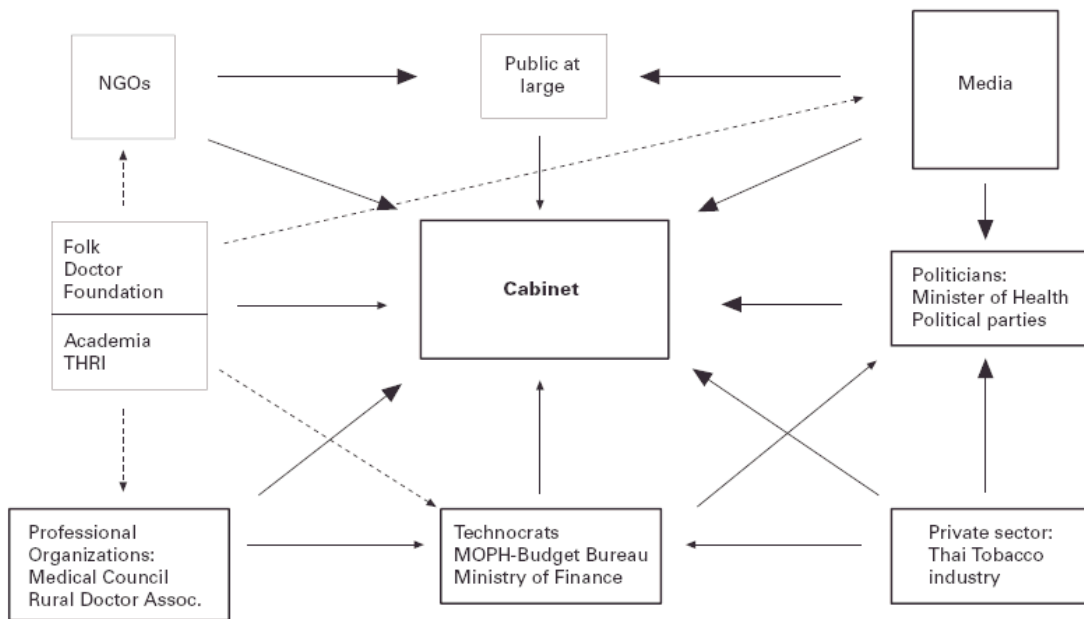
1. Agenda-setting

Here, issues or problems are brought to the attention of decision-makers, providing us with an opportunity to bring our ideas and information forward. However, because these do not exist in a vacuum and not all problems will successfully catch the attention of decision-makers, we will undoubtedly be competing for the ear of the relevant policy actors. The importance of properly presenting our ideas and information in order to convince them that *our ideas and our proposals* warrant immediate consideration can therefore not be overstated.

In most cases, as control of the agenda yields tremendous power over eventual policy outcomes, governments will often attempt to be in command of the set of items that are placed on the agenda. As such, the general public or individuals frequently have little direct influence over the policy-making process, unless they are highly organized. Organized groups, be they cause groups, lobby groups, networks, etc., can indeed play a significant role in placing issues on the agenda if they play their cards right. Here, the media can become a very useful tool to publicize an issue, rally larger public support, and effectively put pressure on government.

Tobacco legislation in Thailand

In the 1990s, the Folk Doctor Foundation and the Thailand Health Research Institute (THRI) were successful in bringing forward an antismoking policy that led to an increase in the tobacco excise tax. Scientifically, they based their efforts on a study which showed that, in light of the price elasticity of tobacco consumption, a tax increase of 8% – or 3 Baht (or around US\$0.10) per cigarette – would dissuade a significant amount of teenagers (320, 000) from smoking. The research alone, however, would not have sufficed if the two organizations hadn't shared it widely with NGOs and the media as well as professional medical organizations that came on board with the campaign and lobbied the government. As such, “this case study illustrates that even stakeholders with low political power (here: the THRI and the Folk Doctor Association) can influence the policy-making process by sending the data to stronger stakeholders (here: the media, NGOs, professional organizations).”



Source: R. Sauerborn, S., S. Nitayarumphong and A. Gerhardus. 1999. “Strategies to enhance the use of health systems research in health sector reform.” *Tropical Medicine and International Health*, 4(12):830.

Typical tools that can be used to raise the profile of a given issue include public education and outreach, media campaigns, coalition building, and stakeholder meetings.

Raising DDT's profile

As DDT is not a newly introduced insecticide and is instead one that has been discussed at lengths in various fora, the citizens of *M-----* were not completely alien to its use in malaria control. At the same time, it was not a pressing issue within government circles nor among the general public as other methods of controlling malaria were currently being used in the country. The challenge facing Dr. Bight was therefore to raise awareness surrounding the issue as well as convince the relevant actors that urgent action was needed on the matter. In order to achieve this, Dr. Bight and his team framed the issue in terms of a problem that needed urgent action and attention. Specifically, they emphasized the fact that malaria mortality rates were still unacceptably high in the country and that the status-quo situation – i.e. sole reliance on the use of ITNs – was therefore no longer a sufficient response.

The team created an alliance with various public health NGOs and academics within the country that then lobbied the government, using their own channels and contacts. In addition, they used the media to raise public awareness and personally briefed officials within the Ministry of Health. Through a combination of methods, they successfully brought the issue to the attention of the government and convinced them of the need to revisit their current policy.

2) Identification of Alternatives and Policy Formulation

Once specific issues or problems have been selected for action, decision-makers, under ideal conditions, typically examine a variety of possible solutions before selecting their preferred one, leading in turn either to the formulation of a new policy or, more often than not, the amendment of an existing one. According to a purely rational model of decision-making, actors are expected to identify alternatives, gather information on each and every one of these, analyze this information against a predefined set of criteria, and select the most efficient and effective option. As was made evident in the discussion above, however, decision-making processes are rarely so straightforward and a variety of factors can interfere with this ideal-type model. These include time-constraints, the personal interests of decision-makers, lobby-group pressures, and more. As such, decision-makers might not always consider all the possible options or weigh all the information provided to them.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, as researchers we can play a pivotal role in pushing our preferred solution forward, especially in helping policymakers understand and use very specialized knowledge. To do so, we will need to package our information in such a way that it is not overly technical and dry, and instead presented in an easy-to-understand format (for more on ways in which to best communicate your research findings, please refer to *Chapter Four* of this toolkit).

Making a strong case for DDT

In order to convince government officials to change its policy in regard to malaria control, Dr. Bight had to present them with a strong argument in favor of indoor residual DDT spraying. As mentioned earlier, he did so through the use of the media as well as a two-page policy brief distributed to officials within the Ministry of Health. In that document, he presented the problem, made a case for why urgent action was needed, provided an overview of alternative policy responses, and presented a strong and compelling argument justifying why his recommended policy response was the most appropriate one. In other words, he provided a solution to a problem. In this particular case, his policy alternatives were the following: the status quo; coupling ITNs with a combination treatment based on artemisinin; the use of one of two alternative insecticides; and, finally, the use of indoor residual DDT spraying. Having studied the concerns and preferences of the relevant policy makers, he focused his argument on the *cost-effectiveness* of DDT as opposed to other alternatives – an essential ingredient in any attempt to influence policy. By strategically ‘packaging’ and targeting the information, and by using the support given to his policy by the ministry’s Director of Research, Dr. Bight was able to convince officials of the superior value of his recommended policy option.

* For a step-by-step guide to creating a policy brief, please refer to Chapter Six of this Toolkit.

3) Policy Implementation

While neglected by many who believe that the work is done once a policy is agreed upon, *policy implementation* is in fact a crucial stage of the policy-making process. It is indeed at this stage that crucial decisions will be made which will affect the strength and effectiveness of a specific policy. While administrative bodies are the ones that usually undertake actual policy implementation, we, as researchers, can certainly assist them in the process. As Anderson explains, these bodies “constitute a governmental habitat in which expertise finds a wealth of opportunity to exert itself and influence policy... Technical considerations and professional advice play an important part in most administrative decision making.”¹⁰ Specifically, as an expert we can assist administrative agents in setting standards and criteria that will be used to ensure that the policy is properly implemented. In addition, regulatory and issue advocacy as well as litigation can be used to ensure that what is implemented is compliant with the policy decision that was made in the previous stage.

Beyond policy formulation

Having studied DDT and its applications at lengths, Dr. Bight and his team were well aware of the technical resources and expertise that would need to go into any indoor spraying program. They knew that unless the formulation of the policy was coupled with the training and hiring of staff, the purchase of the proper equipment, the proper financial resources, good management, and more, the policy would be ineffective.

As experts in their field, they therefore offered their advising services to the government to assist them in implementing the newly formulated program. They worked closely with officials within the Ministry of Health and supervised the hiring and training of technicians as well as ensured that they understood the local context. Finally, Dr. Bight and his team monitored the implementation of the program throughout its first-year to ensure that it was successful and to attend to any problems or unfolding considerations.

4) Monitoring & Evaluation

Once a policy has been implemented, monitoring and evaluation can be used to determine its effectiveness and capture the lessons learned that will inform future policy decisions and their subsequent implementation. Research is highly useful here to evaluate the extent to which the policy has attained its initial goal and objectives and whether the desired outcomes were reached. As researchers, we further benefit from a certain degree of autonomy from decision-makers, allowing us to provide them with an objective assessment of the degree of success or failure of a given policy. For an indepth discussion of different M&E techniques, please refer to *Chapter Twelve* of this toolkit.

IV. Research Design

While the policy-making model described above can be of clear use, it is important that, as researchers attempting to influence policy, we are aware that “decision making is not as much an event as it is a diffuse, haphazard, and somewhat volatile process.”¹¹ As such, there is a need for us to consider and understand policy dynamics as well as connect with decision-makers and various other stakeholders early on in the design of our research project. We should not wait until our results are available before considering the various issues discussed in this toolkit. Instead, we should undertake some comprehensive context mapping, and involve those vital end-users of our research in the design of our project or program from the very outset. Evaluations have indeed shown that where decision-makers are involved early on in

the research process, utilization of the research results tends to be high. The question that now remains is how best to go about doing this. As Jonathan Lomas explains, “better links between research and decision making depend, therefore, on the two communities finding points of exchange at more than the “product” stages of each of their processes.”¹²

Consult decision-makers and relevant stakeholders before we design our research.

On the one hand, discussions and consultations with relevant actors will allow us to identify issues and problems that are of concern to them and that you might not have otherwise considered. Timing is key when seeking to influence policy, and being in close contact with decision-makers can allow us to work on issues that are in line with their needs and also take advantage of specific windows of opportunity. On the other hand, such discussions and consultations will also enhance the likelihood that decision-makers will be interested in the eventual findings of our research and consider them when making policy decisions.

Involve decision-makers and intended beneficiaries throughout the project's life cycle.

We must be in constant dialogue with decision-makers in order to exchange ideas and avoid future misunderstandings as well as unrealistic expectations.

Teasdale Corti Team Grants

Increasingly, agencies that fund research are starting to realize the importance of encouraging research teams to partner with decision-makers in both the design and the implementation of their research. As a result, such partnerships are, in some cases, becoming pre-requisites to funding approvals.

The Teasdale Corti Global Health Research Partnership Program is an innovative new collaborative health research program developed by CIHR, IDRC, Health Canada and CIDA, with input from the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation and Canadian and developing country partners. One of the program's objectives is “to support active collaboration between researchers and research-users...to address health priorities of LMICs.” In October 2005, it launched the inaugural call for Letters of Intent for its Team Grants. One of the key requirements of the Grants is that the international teams be composed not only of Canadian and LMIC researchers but also of research-users. The latter were expected to actively participate in the formulation of the proposed program of work as well as its subsequent implementation. The aim is to enable the teams to “develop, test and implement innovative approaches to making research matter for health and development.”

For more on the Teasdale Corti program, see: www.idrc.ca/geh

Endnotes

¹ “Crafting a Communications Strategy”, Biodiversity Project: Getting on Message/Communication Tips, available at www.biodiversityproject.org

² Ingie Hovland, *Successful Communication : A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations*, October 2005, 5.

³ Adapted from notes written by Jenni Metcalfe, “Communication Planning for Scientists and Engineers,” *Workbook on Communication and Medial Skills for Scientists and Engineers*, Australia: Foundation for Education, Science and Technology, 2002. Available at: www.saasta.ac.za/scicom/pdfs/comm_planning.pdf

⁴ Daniel Start and Ingie Hovland, *Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers*, October 2004, 19.

⁵ Meltsner, “Political Feasibility and Policy Analysis,” *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 32, No. 6. (Nov. - Dec., 1972): 859-867.

⁶ Ruairi Brughra and Zsusa Varvasovsky, “Stakeholder analysis: a review,” *Health Policy and Planning*, 15(3):239-246.

⁷ Start and Hovland, 1994.

⁸ Benjamin Crosby, “Management and the Environment for Implementation of Policy Change: Part Two, Policy Environment Mapping Techniques,” *Implementing Policy Change: Technical Notes No.5*, April 1992.

⁹ Start and Hovland, 2004, 26.

¹⁰ James Anderson. *Public Policy-Making*. New York: Praeger Publishing, 1972.

¹¹ Jonathan Lomas. “Connecting Research and Policy,” *Isuma*, Spring 2000: 140.

¹² Ibid, 142.



Chapter

4

Designing a Communications Strategy

A Brief Overview

Every day, if we stop to think about it, we walk or browse or sit through someone else's communications strategy. There are communications strategies unfolding all around us. If we walk down any city's main street, we'll see billboards advertising particular products and signs hanging over storefronts, we'll see countless logos and slogans, we'll hear catchy radio jingles and the cries of vendors.

We live, after all, in an age of unparalleled choice, where there is often so very little to distinguish or separate one item or idea from another. *Communicating that difference* has become an activity no organization can afford to ignore. Communications has become a principal factor in influencing how we as consumers make our choices – whether choosing between two similar pairs of shoes or two similar policy options.

Quite clearly, as researchers we need to understand how to separate our message from the others. If we fail to do this, if we fail to convince our audience of the value and need for our work, then we're destined to have very little impact indeed. Much as we may loathe doing so, we must spend time communicating, and we must learn how to strategize effectively about the many communications approaches available to us. Imagine, for example, how popular a new consumer product would be if it were

introduced without any communications or advertising – no sign, no logo, no commercials – no means of differentiating itself from the many competing products. It has been estimated that every year the private sector in the USA spends over a quarter of a trillion dollars in advertising their products.¹ We must take communications very seriously, budgeting for it in both time and resources.

While it may be easier to think about communications in terms of products – a good video documentary, for example – it’s much more constructive to think about communications in terms of an ongoing and iterative *process*. As an organization, we need to start talking about how the act and process of communications will help us achieve our goals. We must envision communications as an element that knits together everything we do. And we need to kick-start this process by asking ourselves a number of probing questions.

To that end, this chapter has been arranged around **The Big Eleven Questions**, which every organization would do well to answer before embarking upon any communications strategizing. These are big-picture questions designed to give us a precise snapshot of who we are, what we have to say, whom we want to influence, and how to create messages that will not only reach our audience but make them a satisfied customer. They will walk us through the means of ultimately making our ideas more known and thus more influential. And this influence is, after all, the heart of knowledge translation and the *raison d’être* of our research. Because we want our work to confirm or challenge or throttle. We want our research to matter.

The Big Eleven Questions

When it comes to designing a communications strategy for an external audience (i.e. one beyond our own organization), we would do well to think through the following questions regarding our communications desires, needs and abilities.

1. How have we been communicating in the past? How effective has that been?
2. In the best case, what do we want our communications to achieve?
3. Who is our audience and what do they need to understand about our work in order to act? What is our audience’s cultural context?
4. What is our message? Do we have one message for multiple audiences or different messages for different audiences?
5. Given our budget and human resources, what kinds of communications products would best capture and present our messages?
6. How will we promote our products? What channels will we use?
7. What special opportunities for disseminating our message might arise?
8. What kind of budget do we have for this? Will our budget change in the future?
9. What is our timeline? Would a *staged strategy* be the most appropriate?
10. Are all of our communications products “on brand”? How can we ensure that we are broadcasting the right message?
11. Did our communications ultimately influence our audiences?

Expressed another way, these eleven questions try to illustrate some core truths of communications:

- We can only communicate what we know.
- We can only be effective communicators when we know what our audience needs to know.
- We should develop tools that fit the channels available for our message.
- We must develop messages that respect the cultural context of our audiences.
- We must respect our abilities and limits, our time and resources.
- We must learn from our mistakes and our successes to improve upon our future communications.

Above all else, communications is a process. It is an approach with many different angles and hooks all designed to frame and advance our core messages. A communications strategy needn't be expensive or intimidating. Designing one is merely another way of understanding where we are, what we have to say to the world, and how we intend to go about saying that. That's it, that's all.

The Big Eleven Questions

If we all took some time – an hour, say, or an afternoon – and sat down to answer these eleven questions, we would have the rudiments of a strategy and a greater understanding of our own place and perspective. The remainder of this chapter will walk through the eleven questions, illustrating the process through the example of a fictitious NGO called National Health = National Development (NH=ND). This NGO was discussed extensively in *Chapter Three's* discussion of Context Mapping – a chapter that serves as an essential complement to this one, and which overlaps significantly with some of the material here.

The brushstrokes of NH=ND are: we are a small research organization with a staff of five. There is Dr. Bight, the executive director and principal investigator; a new senior researcher hired for NH=ND's latest project; a research assistant; an IT/KT/KM officer; and an office manager. We've existed for about five years and have undertaken four different research projects in that time. We've contributed papers to a regional network, and have published several in different international journals. Supported by two large foreign donors, we're three-quarters through a massive new project that examines the effectiveness of indoor residual spraying of DDT for malaria vector control. Realizing the significance of our work (and chastising ourselves for not thinking this through at the beginning of our project!), we know that we must get our results out there. We must tell the world about what we're doing – and, given the delicacy and even controversial nature of our research, we need to do this carefully and appropriately.

The bottom line is, we must develop a strategy that will send our messages to a range of audiences. And we need to do this on a small and already stretched budget.

1. The Background

How have we been communicating in the past? How effective has that been?

The past must, by default, be the place where our communications strategizing begins: how do we know where we are or where we want to go if we haven't assessed where we've been? In less philosophical terms, we need to determine where we are in communications and how effective our previous efforts at communications have (or have not) been. Only then will we see the road ahead.

Evaluating and understanding our prior communications is sometimes usefully conceived in terms of an **audit** – which, by definition, is a rigorous and structured review or assessment. For our purposes, we would be wise to consider auditing three things in particular: the state of our organization in general; the ways our organization has communicated in the past – both internally and externally; and then, to unify these two, how outsiders have come to perceive our organization.¹ After some team discussion, we've decided to focus on this last type of audit and get a sense of what the outside world thinks of our organization. We feel that this may well be a useful shortcut, assessing both the state of our organization and how well we tend to communicate our objectives and goals to our desired audiences.

To gauge how we're perceived among our key audiences, let's devise a survey for an external audience. This will give us some information on the strength of our previous communications efforts, and perhaps generate some initial reactions for how we wish to proceed with our communications strategizing. As with all products that will be used to communicate directly with our stakeholders, before distributing this survey we must think through:

- *the audience to receive this survey.* Who really knows about our past communications efforts? What audiences are we chiefly interested in reaching? And who would take the time to complete the survey? Note that we do not want to send this survey to everyone we interact with. We want to ensure the highest quality of our correspondence with our key and treasured recipients (like Ministry officials and other policymakers) and thus may decide not to send them this survey.
- *the channel by which we will distribute our survey.* Should we send out an email with our survey questions to all of our contacts? Should we use an easy but for-fee website like www.surveymonkey.com? Our dissemination choices

¹ The issue of internal vs. external communications is an important one. For reasons of space, this chapter we will mostly focus on external communications strategies.

will shape the quality and quantity of our responses, and thus need to be closely considered.

Let's think now about some questions we would like to ask our stakeholders. Our objective is to get a nuanced sense of how the world-at-large perceives us with the ultimate goal of having this feedback influence our future communications strategy. Every organization must design its own questions, but a sampling of very generalized questions for this survey might well include the following set:

NH=ND: Eleven Sample Survey Questions

1. How have you come to learn about NH=ND in the past?
2. What sense do you have of NH=ND's work and reputation?
3. In your opinion, what do you think is most unique about NH=ND?
4. What is your general opinion and attitude of NH=ND?
5. What is NH=ND best known for?
6. What is the most compelling reason for supporting NH=ND?
7. What are strong reasons for *not* supporting NH=ND?
8. Do you find that NH=ND's papers, ideas or products stand out from those of other research organizations?
9. Is NH=ND's work clearly identifiable?
10. What could NH=ND improve about its communications?
11. Are there any other issues regarding NH=ND and its plans that you would like to comment upon?

Source: adapted from Christine Hershey, *Communications Toolkit: A guide to navigating communications for the nonprofit world*. 2005: p. 5; and "Report on Communication Strategies and Information Technology". 2001

Getting truthful answers to such a survey will often rest upon granting our respondents clear confidentiality. We're asking for opinions some may not want to deliver directly to us. To this end, a web-based survey tool could be useful. Also valuable here could be contracting an outside and independent consultant or firm.

One last issue here that Hershey (2005) raises is the idea of a competitive analysis, which is another means of understanding our mission and place through analyzing our closest competitors. As she rightly observes, "A big part of the 'who are you' question is determining what makes you unique. What do you do that no one else can do? And one of the best ways to answer that crucial question is to look at how you compare with institutions that serve the same core constituency." She cites the work of Tom Peters and his suggestion that every organization initiate such a competitive analysis by asking itself: who are we? (in one page, then in 25 words); how do we uniquely serve our constituents (again in one page, then in 25 words); and what are three distinct differences between our organization and our competition?

2. Communications Objectives

In the best case, what do we want our communications to achieve?

What, ultimately, do we want from communications? Many argue (see Paul Baeyaert, 2005) that this is where all communications strategies must start: “each successful communications campaign starts by focusing on outcomes”. As we know, communications are very expensive in terms of resources and time, so the more precisely we can state our reasons for communicating, the better we’ll be able to spend those precious resources. Communications are also the most visible single activity we may engage in, requiring yet further delicacy – say the wrong thing or present ourselves incorrectly and the damage could be irreversible.

Many health research organizations would state their principal goal for communicating along the lines of: “In communicating our results and processes, we are seeking to influence policy,” or perhaps more generally, “We want people to understand the significance of our research”. There may be a variety of “sub-reasons” for communicating but at the end of the day policy influence is typically the central goal of most research institutions (with, of course, great variations arising from individual definitions of “policy,” “influence,” and the intended “policy-making” audience).

A valuable first start might be writing down this type of overarching one-sentence general objective of communications. “We want our communications to make our research understandable and to ultimately influence policy”. At this point we may wish to reflect upon an important question: are we communicating about our organization itself or about a particular project we’re undertaking? We may wish to develop communications strategies for each of our projects, or for the organization as a whole – or for both, our time and resources permitting. So long as we realize the fundamental differences between our programme and any one of our projects, our strategizing will start off on the right foot.

After devising a general objective, we should turn to the creation of precise sub-objectives. Here, we should aim to be as specific, clear and measurable as we can. Some find the “SMART” acronym useful here: our objectives should be **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ttainable, **r**esults-oriented and **t**ime-limited. In the end we want to evaluate what we’ve done, so the SMARTer we can be, the easier it will be to ultimately assess and adjust our activities. As the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) offers, examples of strong, specific, clear and measurable communications objectives could include: building awareness of a project or programme among a tightly defined audience; securing the commitment of a defined group of stakeholders to the project’s aims; influencing specific policies or policymakers among key and defined aspects; and encouraging increased stakeholder participation on specific issues.

Communications Objectives in Action: The International Monetary Fund

No matter one's opinion of the IMF, it has a remarkably well thought-out communications plan. The IMF's communications strategy seeks, above all, to "strengthen the Fund's effectiveness" – principally by "raising understanding and support among key constituencies of the Fund's mission and reform agenda; and using communication as a tool in the delivery of the Fund's operational activities". Though these two points run fairly abstract, the IMF clarifies with four separate communications objectives. These objectives aim "to build understanding and support for the IMF's reform agenda...further integrate communications with operations, raise the impact of communication tools, and rebalance outreach efforts". Each of those areas is large but very well defined, and the remainder of its Communications Strategy elaborates upon each of these four objectives.

The IMF's strategy here is particularly useful in illustrating how communications can be used to assist an organization in realizing its core objectives.

For NH=ND, we'll set down the following:

Our communications audit revealed that we were a generally trusted and accepted organization though few could point to any of our actual results, or what policies/ideas we had influenced; stakeholders were aware of our organization but not necessarily our projects. As such, we've decided that we're going to focus our communications strategy on our new malaria project. The malaria project (and related follow-up or spin-off projects) is the major initiative of our organization for the foreseeable future. After some good group discussion, we've decided that the general or overall objective of our communications will be:

To influence national malaria policy and to raise anti-malaria awareness in communities.

The general objective is relatively tight (but is it SMART?), though would be better if we were to focus on only one initiative – here we mention a desire to influence policy *and* communities. After further review, let's pare back our general objective, "smarten" it, and set it as:

To change national malaria policy by 2010.

That is specific (it's malaria policy, not health policy). It is measurable (i.e. did malaria policy change?). We feel it is attainable. It's certainly results-oriented. And the introduction of "2010" makes it time-limited (but why did we select 2010? Arbitrarily? Or does it coincide with an event like the Ministry writing another five-year Strategic Plan in 2010?)

Specifically, our organization will achieve its central objective through a communications strategy that:

- a) provides user-friendly evidence to key national audiences;
- b) promotes the efforts of NH=ND staff in discussing research processes and results with key stakeholders;
- c) creates a positive image around the use of DDT for malaria control
- d) attracts international attention, including revitalizing NH=ND as an active leader of global networks on malaria control.

3. Target Audiences

Who is our audience and what do they need to understand about our work in order to act? What is our audience's cultural context?

As outlined in *Chapter Three* and its discussion of Context Mapping, understanding who our audience is and how they might absorb our message is fundamental. To repeat: *understanding our audience is critical*. In this section we'll want to describe different target audiences (otherwise known as *segmenting our market*), how those different audiences behave, how aware of us they may already be, and what they need to understand and act upon our message. We'll divide our audience into primary targets and secondary targets, with an eye on developing appropriate messages for each.

There really is no substitute for knowing our audience. In many ways, our communications efforts hinge upon this type of understanding. For instance, we could spend all kinds of time and finances in creating a video – but if our audience is, for instance, rural villagers, will they have the hardware to play it? Will they speak the same language the video has been produced in? If not, can we add subtitles? [And will they be able to read those subtitles?] Obviously, each audience has its own needs (ranging from the intellectual (e.g. issue/research comprehension), its own culture (e.g. images it considers taboo) and its own abilities (e.g. owning a radio, having electricity) and the greater we can understand and respect these boundaries, the likelier we'll achieve our desired impact.²

For a fuller discussion of audiences, please refer to *Chapter Three*.

As far as NH=ND's communications strategy goes, we have two very prominent audiences we want to target. Fortunately, we already know these audiences quite well

² This toolkit does not explore issues of culture and communication, though this is an extremely important aspect of any communications initiative. For a strong treatment of this issue vis-à-vis health research, see Matthew Kreuter and Stephanie McClure, "The Role of Culture in Health Communication". *Annual Review of Public Health*. Vol. 25: 439-455. It is available online.

– the Ministry of Health from previous dealings with them, and local communities from their participation in the research project itself. If we revisit our specific communications objectives, we can see that there are two other audiences suggested: one is national media (especially as concerns creating a positive image around DDT), and the other is the international community. Let’s refresh ourselves of our specific objectives, divide our audiences into Primary and Secondary Targets, and then brainstorm how to best influence or reach those audiences.

Primary Targets

1. Ministry of Health

While of course we would love to have the Permanent Secretary or Director General read and understand (and even demand!) our results, let’s take a more realistic approach. Based on some of our previous work, we’re going to focus on the Director of Research, the Director of Public Health, and also on several of the Ministry’s mid-level “desk officers” responsible for working with foreign donors around malaria initiatives (Roll Back Malaria, the Global Fund, etc). We know that these “targets” have a decent understanding of malaria itself, and are roughly familiar with the pros and cons of insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) and of indoor residual spraying, among other issues. On a scale of ten, their understanding of our issue is about a seven. We can thus prepare much of our communications for this audience in a relatively scientific fashion. One issue we’ll need to wrestle with is the question of how much information they’ll need to appreciate our work – should we describe research processes or stick to straight reporting of results and policy recommendations?

2. Local communities

From our work with communities during the data-collection stage of our research, we know this audience quite well: we understand how segmented it is, and how various sub-groups within the term “local communities” may well have strong influence over other sub-groups. To attain maximum return on our investments, it is this type of primary, influential group we wish to target. Knowing, as we do from our research, that the main challenge in reaching this audience is around the fears people have around IRS and their individual health, we’re going to focus our energy here around women’s groups – for, when it comes to our country’s “local communities,” research has definitively shown that women are the arbiters of household decisions, especially on health issues.

Secondary Targets

1. The national media

This is an entity we’ve worked with a variety of times in the past. We don’t like the national media and we don’t trust them. We feel that they’ve continually misrepresented our work, and they have never approached us for our opinion on national health issues. That said, we are not fools: we understand that the media is absolutely essential in conveying messages around social change and in stirring up policy debates. Though we recognize that television is the highest-impact medium in

the country, we will not focus on this (though may be fortunate enough for an interview on the news programme) but rather on cultivating contacts and preparing information for the print media and radio. We're going to bury our dislike of the media just long enough for them to report on our story. The professionals we are, we're going to try to kindle a new relationship with them at every opportunity.

Note also that the media may not always be a particularly helpful target. As Media Trust observes, "Everyone would like a higher media and political profile, yet activities aiming towards this may ultimately be self-serving and only communications driven, with no wider impact".³

2. The international community

Beyond our own international funders – who themselves are a good and receptive audience – we have few contacts in the international community. However, we do know that DDT use is undergoing a renaissance and as such that the WHO could become a decent vehicle for disseminating our results. To understand this audience better, we'll do a good web search to reveal what networks and entities are particularly active in malaria, while also active in our country or region. Then we'll figure out the national "portals" to these audiences, either through a local agent of that organization, or via global entities like the WHO, the GFATM and others. We'll also see if there are any web sites or "news groups" we could join that might be interested in our work. There is often a strong hunger from "northern" groups to partner with strong and dynamic "southern" organizations, and we need to be savvy to this.

4. Key Messages

What is our message? Do we have one message for multiple audiences or different messages for different audiences?

Here we'll review exactly what our messages are and what action we want our intended targets to take. While we may only have one message that we want to convey (e.g. a particular research result or recommendation), we may want to spin this for several different audiences, or develop a suite of tools that can promote that single message. It is more than likely that we will have three or four key messages, and will want to tailor them for three or four audiences using three or four different tools.

The SPIN Project (2005) usefully suggests that each message be divided into three parts: the problem, the solution, and the recommended action. If each of these parts

³ More from the Media Trust can be found at http://www.mediatrust.org/training-events/training-resources/online-guides-1/guide_developing-a-communications-strategy

is no longer than 35 words, we have quick and easy-to-digest messages in 100 words or less.

For NH=ND, let's consider our audiences and the messages we want to deliver to each. In answering the Big Eleven questions, we feel that we definitely have multiple messages for multiple audiences, so let's break that down. Let's also keep in mind the goal in developing any message: keep it simple and make it "human".

1. Ministry of Health

Here we want to change (or at the very least strongly inform) national malaria policy and so we need to choose our messages carefully. As we are relatively confident in the scientific abilities of our audience within the ministry, let's devise a set of connected messages. Depending on the tools we eventually select, we'll likely use one, all, or – most likely – a combination of these messages to make our point. Though we will be embarking here on advocacy, we want to keep our message sober and scientific, and appeal less to emotion (at this point anyway). Note that we may want to segment this audience even further – with different messages (or "degrees" of message) for different audiences within the Ministry.

- a) Based on an in-country two year research project, it was determined that DDT residual spraying was the most cost-effective malaria-control strategy.
- b) Current government policy focuses on the use of ITNs subsidized through the distribution of vouchers in antenatal clinics. Research found serious problems with the uptake of ITNs through this model, and thus on malaria-control generally.
- c) Based on this recent evidence, the Ministry may wish to consider revisions to its malaria policy.

2. Local Communities

Again, based on our thorough examination of local communities as a target audience, we have a much more nuanced idea of how to proceed in terms of devising messages for them. Their principal block in understanding and appreciating our research results is a concern over the health aspect of DDT; they may also have financial concerns over the proposed policy shift as the current intervention is state subsidized. As our principal communications goal is in fact changing national malaria policy, we need to think of the local communities in the sense of sensitizing them to this potential new policy, and also to make them potential advocates of our research, hoping that they could in the end come to pressure the government to make the change. We may want to make an emotive call here.

- a) Big international entities like the World Health Organization have declared DDT perfectly safe to use in regulated situations;
- b) In comparison with ITNs and other malaria-prevention strategies, DDT is actually cheaper, more reliable and more efficient;
- c) Children are better protected from malaria when protected by DDT.

We can go through the same rationale and step-by-step logic for our secondary targets.

5. Communications Basket

Given our budget and human resources, what kinds of communications products would best capture and present our messages? What kinds of communications products will target the audiences we want to reach? Will we focus our energies on one or some or all of print, online, or video/radio? How will we factor in such things as conferences, phone calls and meetings?

At this point, we've already thought through our audience and our specific messages, and, after checking our budget to see what kind of financial resources we have – as well as recalling what human skills are present in NH=ND – we can start sketching out the kinds of items we want to place in our basket of communications.

1. Ministry of Health

Given our fairly scientific message and the scope of change we're suggesting, we will probably need to have a staged approach here: we'll start by disseminating one piece of information and then follow with more sophisticated material, to match the anticipated rise of interest from the Ministry. Beyond active one-on-one communications – there will never be any replacement for face-to-face meetings – our organization has selected the **Policy Brief** as one of its major vehicles for reaching the Ministry. Actually, we've decided on a few different briefs:

- a) the first will be a glossy **two-pager** (for more information on this, see *Chapter Six's* discussion where a policy brief is created around the subject of male circumcision and HIV prevention). This two-pager will have some science in it but its main *raison d'être* is to introduce the subject of IRS and to point very subtly at why the Ministry may wish to reconsider its current malaria policy. It will advocate for a particular policy recommendation.
- b) the second will be a longer brief – perhaps eight pages long. This will be relatively scientific and will conclude with specific policy options and a policy recommendation.
- c) backing up both of these briefs will be a twenty-five page paper that discusses the research, describes its methodology and has ample “other” resources should the Ministry wish to investigate other sources. The other briefs will clearly indicate that this paper is available. Note that this may be the paper we end up submitting to a peer-reviewed journal: let's get the most mileage out of anything and everything we produce.

2. Local Communities

This audience requires different tools to reach it: a policy brief is probably not well suited for a community's understanding of the issue. As women's groups were

selected in our consideration of a target audience – to discuss the principal issues of safety and cost – we would do well to select several different kinds of tools to reach them. First, let’s organize **village-level meetings** with community leaders and women’s associations to explain the benefits of DDT use, in the hopes of having an open discussion that might allay any health concerns. Second, let’s assist local supporters in organizing **“town-hall” meetings** and provide them with lively **posters** that could be used to support or illustrate our claims (bearing in mind that a significant part of this audience could be illiterate). And, finally, as one of the centrepieces for our communications campaign, let’s commission someone – an audio-visual producer perhaps, or a communications company – to create simple, direct **radio spots** that could be aired on a regular basis on community radio stations. Let’s also consider putting that glossy two-pager we worked up for the Ministry in local health clinics.

All of this represents quite a number of different tools, and will undoubtedly be a serious investment of time and human resources. However, the spillover from the creation of these tools will make it far easier to communicate with our secondary targets: the posters, radio spots and policy briefs are very attractive tools to attract international attention, and require little-to-no modification from primary target use. The media can be brought into this scenario in a few different ways – first as direct targets of these outputs and second – and perhaps more intriguingly – as the entity that *reports on the use* of these tools. A story on how a community was sensitized to IRS use that goes on to cite our cutting-edge radio spots and our posters and, of course, one of our meetings, would be a communications *coup*.

We should strongly consider the use of a website here to present these tools. Again, we need not modify these tools for internet use, merely upload them. We want to reduce our workloads as much as possible, and using one tool for multiple ends is perfectly acceptable, and indeed desirable. For more on websites, please see *Chapter Eleven’s* discussion of Computer Tips & Tricks.

On this very point, let’s review some of the communications products we *have* to create – like reports to our donors, for instance, or annual reports. Can we modify some of the information here for a newsletter, a brochure, or even some of the text for our policy briefs? Even better, if we start thinking that *anything we produce* for communications can be used whole or in part in different ways, the more shortcuts we create and the more time we save. It’s also worth asking a donor exactly what they want in a narrative report – would a policy brief, for instance, suffice? Could a published newspaper article take the place of a scheduled report? Donors as much as researchers are as interested in policy relevance and application of the work they support – it’s up to us to change the nature of our reporting to them.

6. Promotion and Dissemination

How will we promote our products? What channels will we use? After we've settled on key components of our message, our audience(s), and our products, how will we promote them? If, for instance, we have a new database on our website, how will we attract people to our website to use it? If we develop products like a two-page brief or a video, what channels will we select to disseminate them?

The channel is every bit as important as the product itself. In fact, we can revise this: *the channel is more important than the product itself*. While the medium isn't entirely the message, it does dictate in very frank terms who will receive the message. And if no one receives our message, it has no value at all. So what if we have radio spots that nobody hears? So what if we have posters that nobody sees? Obviously, we must be very careful about how we promote and disseminate our work. As with the research itself, if nobody sees or hears about what we've done, why do anything in the first place?

We do have a limited budget for communications, so we're going to rely on a lot of our own work to achieve maximum impact. The series of two-pagers we've designed for the Ministry we'll hand out personally, as well as perhaps mailing it directly to our intended recipients. We'll also put it on our website, and naturally send it out to all of our email contacts – perhaps after creating a listserve (for more information on this, see *Chapter Eleven's* Computer Tips & Tricks). As suggested above, we'll also print up a number to leave in strategic places, like waiting rooms at health clinics and any other appropriate locale (eg a health & fitness club, a church, etc.) where we feel our target audiences may go. For our more technologically complex tool of the radio spot, let's be sure to research in advance how to get content onto radio, and determine important issues like cost and reach of the radio station. Again, there's little point in developing a radio spot if the costs of airing it are exorbitant or if the radio does not broadcast to a sizeable or desirable audience. Let's also consider making a CD-ROM or DVD of our radio spots for dissemination (at conferences, for instance – or at the Ministry), and let's look into how we might put this on our website.

Most importantly, let's make no assumptions here. Let's find out key details of our selected channels before we do any work. A few phone calls may well tell us that a particular tool just won't work – too expensive, too limited, or just not appropriate for the channels available to us for disseminating our work.

7. Planning

What special opportunities for disseminating our message might arise? Looking into our calendars for the upcoming year, are there any obvious events – or potential events – that we could be well placed to capitalize upon? This could be a conference bringing

together a key audience, a change of government, the writing of a government position, or an anticipated policy shift.

This section is fairly self-explanatory. Every month of every year will have special events that may be suited for our message and our products, and the more “in tune” with these events we are, the better we’ll be able to capitalize on them. A key idea here may be to task one of our organization’s staff with keeping abreast of current, important events with an eye fixed squarely on dissemination. Potential changes in government – or within the Ministry itself – are also times of great opportunity for pushing our agenda.

Secondly, how can we structure our time so that we hit these “big events” with the needed products in hand? Timing, as they say, is everything, and this is never more true than in the fickle field of communications.

8. Budget

What kind of budget do we have for this? Will our budget change in the future? Moreover, what kinds of human resources do we have? While *Chapter Eleven* outlines tricks for drafting a good budget, we need to be realistic about what we can actually achieve. Communications are expensive, and we need to be aware of this and plan around this up front. There are also a range of “hidden” costs around certain tools. To discuss this in practice, let’s look at a mock budget for our radio spots:

Item	Number	Cost	Total Cost	Notes
<i>Pre-Production</i>				
Radio spot concept (esp. incorporating research) and scripting	3 hours	\$50 per hour	\$150	Writing fees to hire professional writers
Editing of copy	1 hour	\$50 per hour	\$50	To hire outside editor
Translation	Into two other languages (X and Y)	\$100	\$200	Languages will be: English, X and Y. The script will be the same for all languages.
<i>Sub-Total Pre-Production Costs</i>			\$400	
<i>Production Costs</i>				

Interviews	10	\$10	\$100	To cover transportation fees for interviewees
Voice talent	2	\$50	\$100	Small honorarium for two voice-actors
Audio Editing			\$100	Honorarium for radio staff
<i>Sub-Total Production Costs</i>			\$300	
<i>Total Pre-Production + Production Costs</i>				
English Spots (10 minutes each). Pre-Production + Production	6 different radio spots	\$700	\$4200	Only pre-production costs can be shared across the different languages. Each must be produced separately.
Language X spots	6	\$300	\$1800	
Language Y	6	\$300	\$1800	
<i>Sub-Total</i>			\$7800	
<i>Post-production Costs</i>				
Air Time	18	\$50	\$900	
CD creation: duplication of CDs (incl. master); labelling CDs, etc.	180	\$2	\$360	180 CDs in total: 60 per language. To be produced in-house.
<i>Sub-Total</i>			\$1260	
GRAND TOTAL			\$9060	

Even this type of quick, cursory budget indicates that this is an expensive proposition. Sometimes the sheer act of drawing up such a budget – and taking the time to think through all costs – can help to dictate which tools will and will not be pursued.

9. Timeline

What is our timeline? Would a staged strategy be the most appropriate? What are the key dates we need to keep in mind as we communicate? What is the nature of these key dates or events? How can we describe these dates or events from a communications perspective? Would a staged strategy be the most appropriate – particularly if we anticipate different events during the course of a research project? Might the work (or future work) of likeminded organizations or ministries, etc., present possible opportunities?

While this is again relatively straightforward, three points deserve further discussion here. The first is electing upon a staged strategy. As we discussed earlier with policy briefs, it may be prudent to envision the dissemination of our messages as a process – we start with something simple and get ever more complex or detailed with each new tool. Or we disseminate widely a two-pager that reduces our work and findings in very simple terms on the understanding that more information is available. This lets the audience stage *their own exposure* to our research: after the two-pager they may decide to visit our web site or read our journal article (emphasizing again the need to make these resources known and obvious in the two-pager). Choosing a staged strategy often makes a great deal of sense. For instance, if we know that in three months our country will be staging a WHO-sponsored Malaria Day, then we could distribute our two-pager to delegates at this day, and then follow-up with our eight-page brief at a health research conference happening a month later. Once we announce ourselves and make our message heard, we need to keep ourselves known and available. We need to keep our message fresh; we need people to be interested in what we’re saying. And we need good material to keep stoking the fires.

Paul Baeyaert (2005) frames his vision of a staged approach through a desire not “to play all your cards at once,” urging organizations to “map out who you will approach first (influencer cascade); plan for a regular flow of information rather than one-shot announcements; [and] build in ‘highlight activities’ with high impact”.

The second point is connected to the competitive analysis we may have done way back in our communications audit. Chances are quite strong that we are not the only organization working on malaria issues, or even malaria research, in our country. So how can we take advantage of momentum or publicity created by like-minded organizations? What are their big events? Can we join forces? Connected to this idea is staying alert to the work of organizations that may not, on the surface, be relevant to our mandate but, if we just spin our work or focus a little bit, turn out to be superb vehicles for our work. For instance, a conference on Information and Communication Technologies may be a great fit for our work – though not concerned with health or malaria precisely it may be a good time to showcase our radio spots as a cutting-edge, high-tech way of disseminating research results.

Lastly, in considering our timing issues, it would be useful to think through exactly how often we have new information to share with our audiences. A staged strategy really only works on the premise of more information becoming available.

10. Being on Brand

Are all of our communications products “on brand”? How can we ensure that we are broadcasting the right message?

Once we have settled on a strategy, we need to ensure that we are consistent in our communications. This is equally as true for the small details (eg using the same font and colour schemes in our print media) as it is for the big details (being true to our core messages). We communicate who we are and what our organization is every day: we must ensure that we broadcast the right message. Delivering the wrong message – to a Ministry official, for instance, or a donor – might deal a debilitating blow from which our organization may never recover.

We must take being “on brand” as seriously as we can. Part of this could be well served by undertaking media training so that everyone in our organization understands how the local/national/global media works and can reduce our work to effective, punchy and true sound bytes. Part of this relates to how well we communicate within our organization, taking efforts that even the office manager, for instance, can speak in strong detail about our general work or our specific projects. Do we as an organization take the time to develop this type of “quality” approach?

Print communications is an area that research organizations often do quite poorly. Most organizations have a brochure or a newsletter for quick and easy dissemination – but many pay very little attention to the small but significant details like consistency in font and colour, in finding the right photographs or design flourishes – or, perhaps most of all, in using brevity and simplicity to explain complex results and processes. These details are important because they indicate an organization’s professionalism: for instance, the more “professional” a brochure looks, then the natural impulse (even if not entirely borne out by experience) is to think of the organization itself as more professional, and one to take seriously.

Every organization should have its own print-communication “style sheet” to indicate preferred fonts, size of fonts, and graphics. This can be simple (eg “all our correspondence will be in Times New Roman, size 12. Text will be justified. Headings will be in bold, italics, size 14”) or it can be complex, specifying in exact terms what fonts and sizes should be used when and where and in what conditions.

Casting the net even wider, Hershey (2005) recommends seven components to any organization's style guide:

1. Description/guidelines for using our logo and any other "identity system" – when to use it and how to use it.
2. Description of our preferred "house style" setting out rules for capitalization, punctuation and, very importantly, abbreviations.
3. A reference work (eg Chicago Manual of Style) and the preferred dictionary to resolve spelling or style issues not already addressed in the style guide.
4. Description of variations to the house style, especially for electronic communications.
5. A naming nomenclature for projects, programs, and documents (especially collaborative documents).
6. A good glossary of terms.
7. A list of frequently misspelled or misused words.

In addition to this, let's consider making templates where we can – for instance, stationary with our logo, on which we can add any text for a quick memo or press release. A template for a newsletter would also be useful – instead of redesigning the newsletter from scratch each time we want to issue it, we ensure our consistency (not to mention saving all kinds of time) by filling in the template with our desired text. This also creates a sense of familiarity within our audience – at a glance they'll be able to recognize our brand.

In general: Let's be consistent. Let's keep our style and our communications as simple as we can (eg one font and one colour will suffice). Let's think about the reader's eye (appreciating our design) as much as we do their brain (appreciating our science). For more on this – including development of a logo – please refer to *Chapter Eight's* discussion of desktop publishing.

Before any of our products are disseminated, we would do well to go through a checklist to ensure that our messages are of high quality and are "on brand":

- Does our message, in two sentences or less, capture the importance of our work?
- Does our product show our honesty and trustworthiness?
- Does it show, in concrete terms, what we've achieved?
- Does it frame our issue and our research within the issue's broader perspective?
- Does our message inspire? Does it convince an audience of its worth?
- Does it lead an audience to further resources?

Source: adapted from WWF.

11. Evaluation

Did our communications influence our audiences? If, in a perfect world, our communications strategy has been an absolute success, how would we know it? What will have changed? How can we assess whether we used the right tools, were on budget and on time, and influenced decisions? Was our message understood?

Chapter Twelve of this Toolkit discusses these vital evaluation issues in much greater detail. But what should be clear here is the need to incorporate “evaluative thinking” into our communications strategy from the very outset. If we do not, we risk having a very incomplete understanding of our communications and the impact it is (or is not) having on our key audiences. In the best world, we’ll design an evaluation system that plugs back into our programming so that we are constantly adjusting our efforts based on vibrant, ongoing feedback.

Perhaps one way of going about this is to pose some qualitative questions for our own staff. A good portion of NH=ND’s work in this communications strategy is in direct interaction with our audiences – town-hall meetings, face-to-face delivery of policy briefs, etc. – so our own staff will have a nuanced understanding of what worked and what did not. We’ll also know what we need to do more of, and, perhaps as centrally, the information needs of our audience and how we are or are not satisfying that. Earlier in this chapter we sketched out eleven questions for performing an audit on our communications, and we would do well to continue this kind of auditing throughout the delivery of our strategy. Having constant feedback via an electronic survey, for instance, provides us with a snapshot of our activities, though having something more formal and rigorous like regular focus group interviews may give us the kind of picture we need to adjust and adapt our communications effort. We’re not communicating, after all, because we feel like it. We’re communicating because we want our audiences to understand and ultimately use our work. And if we’re missing the mark on that score, we need to know so that we can alter our activities. Evaluation can’t be an after-thought here. It is essential.

There are a range of other indicators that could reflect our relative levels of success – and again we refer the interested to *Chapter Twelve*. For NH=ND, some key questions that could inform our evaluation might be: Did we use the right tools to reach the right audience? Did we achieve our ultimate goal of policy influence? How did policy shift as a result of our campaign? Did we budget adequately for our activities? Did our audiences understand our message?

Communications Strategy Template

Here, in one page, we've reproduced the Big Eleven Questions with some room for organizations to fill in their own answers.

1. How have we been communicating in the past? How effective has that been?
2. In the best case, what do we want our communications to achieve?
3. Who is our audience and what do they need to understand about our work in order to act?
4. What is our message? Do we have one message for multiple audiences or different messages for different audiences?
5. Given our budget and human resources, what kinds of communications products would best capture and present our messages?
6. How will we promote our products? What channels will we use?
7. What special opportunities for disseminating our message might arise?
8. What kind of budget do we have for this? Will our budget change in the future?
9. What is our timeline? Would a *staged strategy* be the most appropriate?
10. Are all of our communications products "on brand"? How can we ensure that we are broadcasting the right message?
11. Did our communications ultimately influence our audiences?

Further Resources

R. Christine Hershey. 2005. *Communications Toolkit: A guide to navigating communications for the nonprofit world*.

>> This is an outstanding toolkit with many strong suggestions and examples on designing a strategy. It is available at:

<http://www.causecommunications.org/clients-cause.php>.

Paul Baeyaert. 2005. “Developing an External Communications Strategy”. Presentation at Communicating European Research, November 14, 2005.

>> This is a powerpoint presentation with several excellent slides. It is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/conferences/2005/cer2005/presentations14_en.html

World Wildlife Foundation. [no year]. *International Communications Department. Programme/Project Communications Strategy Template*.

>> Though brief, this document has done a superlative job of breaking down the many tasks within a communications strategy. It is available at:

http://smap.ew.eea.europa.eu/test1/fo1597352/International_Communications_Strategy_Template.pdf/download.

Conference proceedings. “Report on Communication Strategies and Information Technology”. Mexico City, Mexico. 2-4 April, 2001.

>> This lays out excellent bullet points on “best practices in internal communications” and draws very useful distinctions between internal and external communications strategies. It is available at:

http://www.wingsweb.org/download/communication_strategies.pdf

Gauthier, Jacques. [no year] “Developing a Communications Strategy”. International Development Research Centre.

>> Designed for research projects in rural areas, this short guide nonetheless highlights some key challenges around communications and research. Available at:

http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/11606746331Sheet01_CommStrategy.pdf

Media Trust. [no year]. “Developing a Communications Strategy”.

>> This website has a very strong division of core tasks within a communications strategy. Though not as intricate as the Big Eleven Questions, it is very useful in thinking through needs and abilities. It is available at:

http://www.mediatrust.org/training-events/training-resources/online-guides-1/guide_developing-a-communications-strategy

The SPIN Project. 2005. “Strategic Communications Planning”

>> This brochure is a solid overview of the components needed for strategic communications, with good diagrams and suggestions. Available at:

<http://www.spinproject.org/downloads/StrategicCommunications.pdf>

Examples of Communications Strategies:

Perhaps the best way of going about designing a strategy is to copy or modify that of others. To that end, here are some good examples of existing communications strategies:

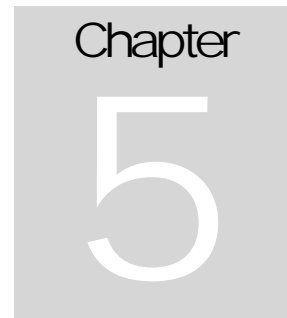
The International Monetary Fund. 2007. "The IMF's Communication Strategy".
>> This is a superlative example, and easily one of the best available. Its value is particularly in showing how communications can help an organization achieve its core goals. It is extremely well thought out and is well worth a read. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/external/np/pp/2007/eng/052907.pdf>

The Medical Research Council. 2007 (update). *Communication Strategy 2005-2010*.
>> As with the IMF's the MRC does a strong job here of laying out its strategy and imperatives. It understands its niche and audiences extremely well. Available at: <http://www.mrc.co.za/about/commstrat2007.pdf>

Africa Drive Program. 2006. *Communication Strategy and Plan*.
>> This document has an excellent breakdown of the project's communication requirements as well as several tables that do a good job of demonstrating how to develop and pitch key messages. Available at: http://www.adp.org.za/Trust_Meeting_Documents/ADP_Trust_Meeting_07_09_06/Documents/ADP_ComStrat_V0_1.doc

Endnotes

¹ From a 2004 *Los Angeles Times* article cited in R. Christine Hershey. 2005: v. *Communications Toolkit: A guide to navigating communications for the nonprofit world*.



Communicating Research Findings: Print Media

A Brief Overview

Know your story, know your audience, design a strategy and deploy the right tools: this, in a sentence, is both the heart of KT and the ongoing pulse of this Toolkit. In this chapter, we will explore this idea further via a discussion of different print media tools – outputs we can hold in our hands.

Using print media typically occurs at the end of the research cycle, when we have results that we want to share. However, a good communications strategy must be created at the *beginning* of the process, and there is no reason why we can't use print tools *during* the course of our project. While we might use a peer-reviewed article, a two-pager or an editorial to discuss our findings at the completion of the project, we can also use newsletters, brochures, and two-pagers during the process, to keep our key audiences informed of our current directions and keep them primed for when the findings or recommendations are ready. Print media is only one of the many tools we can use to communicate, but they remain the “industry-standard” and as a result are still extremely important. Our challenge is to understand their opportunities and limitations, and then weave them into a broader communications strategy that includes, in the best case, multimedia, conferences, and direct exchanges of information.

Following on the heels of *Chapter Three's* discussion of Context Mapping and *Chapter Four's* discussion of a Communications Strategy, we clearly and obviously must know our audience before we design any strategy. Again and again we come back to the question of *audience*. If, for instance, we are studying something potentially explosive (like corruption) or contentious (like calling for a complete reversal on a government policy) then we must be all the more attentive to our communications strategy from the outset. The more attentive we are to this, then the more likely we are to anticipate problems and thus to respond appropriately and comprehensively. Of course, we cannot plan for every contingency from the outset – research occurs within a dynamic, shifting environment – but the more prepared we are, the better stand our chances for success.

While in an ideal world our findings would speak for themselves, we must in reality package them in a way that is simple to understand and access, and is ultimately appealing and relevant to our audience. If we are writing a peer-reviewed paper, then we will pitch our findings to a scientific level; but if we're writing for the media or for the policy arena, then we'll present our work in terms that are “clear, simple, [and] jargon-free” and, most of all, “in the language of [our] information-users.”¹ We must keep both quality and quantity issues in mind, and carefully select the key messages emerging from our research (for more on this, please see *Chapter Six's* discussion of the two-pager). While we do not want to overwhelm our audience with too much knowledge, we also need to provide them with enough information to get them started; and further, we must tailor this information to their time and comprehension abilities. Once again, we do not need to communicate everything about our work in our selected print tool. Rather, we need to understand the scope of each tool and then use it appropriately within, of course, a broader and more comprehensive strategy.

Designing a Communications Strategy

In this section, we'll provide a brief overview of some of the key concepts introduced in *Chapter Four's* Designing a Communications Strategy as we really can't proceed with a discussion of print tools without framing them within a larger strategy. We must carefully think through our communication needs and objectives from the very outset and develop a strategy that will ensure we achieve our aims. The good news is that we don't have to be a communications expert to develop a solid communications strategy. The bad news is that there are no shortcuts. Whether we decide to hire a journalist to write up our results or dedicate ourselves to months of writing, in developing our communications strategy we must spend our precious commodities of time and resources. There is no other way.

In designing a strategy, let us consider sitting down, as an organization, and answering one-by-one The Big Eleven Questions as set out in *Chapter Four*.

The Big Eleven Questions

When it comes to designing a communications strategy for an external audience (i.e. one beyond our own organization), we would do well to think through the following questions regarding our communications desires, needs and abilities.

1. How have we been communicating in the past? How effective has that been?
2. In the best case, what do we want our communications to achieve?
3. Who is our audience and what do they need to understand about our work in order to act? What is our audience's cultural context?
4. What is our message? Do we have one message for multiple audiences or different messages for different audiences?
5. Given our budget and human resources, what kinds of communications products would best capture and present our messages?
6. How will we promote our products? What channels will we use?
7. What special opportunities for disseminating our message might arise?
8. What kind of budget do we have for this? Will our budget change in the future?
9. What is our timeline? Would a *staged strategy* be the most appropriate?
10. Are all of our communications products "on brand"? How can we ensure that we are broadcasting the right message?
11. Did our communications ultimately influence our audiences?

Let's assume that we've done a strong job of answering questions one through three and now want to develop in precise ways the messages we want to deliver. How do we know what messages our organization has? What is a *good* message anyway?

Developing our message

Let's imagine our message as one short paragraph that sums up the key points. This paragraph – and it is not simple to reduce years of work or even to anticipate years of work in one paragraph – will become our template, our seed, that will then grow into the full-blown communication tool best suited to our audience and our issue.

The **AIDA rule**² can be a useful way to frame our thinking. As such, we must consider:

- A** Attracting the **attention** of the target
- I** Raising the **interest** in the message or evidence
- D** Encouraging a feeling of **desire** to act or to know more
- A** Prompting **action** and presenting a solution

Our message should therefore be short, concise, relevant, and actionable. It should also provide a solution to a problem or a threat that our public can relate to. A good way to proceed at this point is to create one core message that can then be adapted depending on the specific audience we target.

Our message could include the following elements:³

- Our analysis of the problem
- The problem's cause
- Whom we hold responsible for solving it
- Why change is important
- Our proposed solution
- Actions we ask others (*message recipients*) to take to bring this change about.

Our message could, for example, take the following shape:

“Every year, malaria claims over 1 million lives, three-quarters of which occur among African children under the age of five. Even when people survive it, malaria can lead to low birth weight, weakness, blindness, anemia, recurrent fever, and more, in addition to representing a high economic burden for individuals, families, and communities. Yet, there exist proven cost-effective interventions that can help curtail the ravages of malaria if only they are made available to those who need them. By subsidizing the distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets at the local level, we can reduce all-cause child mortality by as much as 20%.”⁴

Top Tips for Developing Messages

- Develop some simple messages and model how these might work in different contexts – a press release, a report, a newspaper article, a website page. Remember that we can be succinct without “dumbing down”. Make sure our project is branded in line with our communication objectives.
- Consider using the “grandmother” test: would she understand our message? If it's too complex for her, perhaps it's too tricky for our audience as well.
- “Corn Flake Papers” can be read by a rushed individual over breakfast. Like the back of a cereal box, the message must be simple and direct to make its mark.

Selecting the Appropriate Tools

After carefully answering The Big Eleven Questions, let's focus on precise tools that we can use to bring our communications strategy to life. When discussing each tool, this chapter provides an indication of which audience it is best suited for, tips for how best to make use of it, as well as links to further resources. We'll discuss:

- Articles in scientific publications
- Newspaper articles and editorials
- Press Releases
- Policy Briefs

- Newsletters
- Brochures/Leaflets
- Cartoons

1. *Articles in Scientific Journals*

This tool needs little introduction. It is the favoured tool of most researchers, as it is the format in which they can stretch their scientific legs and discuss the nuances of methodology. It is the tool that can capture, in its fullness, the science of the project. Peer-reviewed articles are also, and importantly, often held as the litmus of a researcher's success, determining, for instance, one's tenure or "fundability". If the only goal of our research is to influence the state-of-the-art in our field, with our only target other researchers, then this is a perfectly adequate tool. However, if we want to change or influence policy, this tool, taken alone, is woefully inadequate. In such a case, it must be surrounded by a suite of other tools.

Clearly, the peer-reviewed paper is most effective when used to communicate our results to other members of the research community. It is important to keep in mind, however, that due to resource limitations, many scholars in low and middle income countries (LMICs) are unlikely to have access to peer-reviewed publications. One way of getting around this problem is to publish our articles in open-access formats (for more information on this, please consult *Chapter Ten* of this toolkit). An additional downfall of using such a communication tool is that our research results risk getting lost in the plethora of journal articles that are published on an annual basis. Every year around three million new articles are published in scientific journals, making it difficult even for the most devoted scholar to keep up with developments in his/her field. Finally, journal publications have a limited chance of reaching individuals that are not part of the scientific community as the language used often makes it impossible for the lay person to understand the subject of the research. "Non-scientists" indeed often feel overwhelmed by the content of journal articles and are also often frustrated by the lack of concrete recommendations.

There are, however, some useful tips that can help us gain maximum impact when writing in scholarly journals.

- Even if our main audience is likely to consist of fellow researchers familiar with the jargon being used in the field, **clarity** and **simplicity** are crucial. Do not assume that our public is as familiar as we are with the subject area or the topic under study;
- **Use words sparingly and precisely** and write using **crisp sentences** that are straight to the point;
- **Do not use colloquial speech or contractions:** use "do not" instead of "don't";
- Use **active verbs** and avoid the passive voice: use "new research shows" not "it was shown by new research that..."

- Give as much **thought and consideration** to the journal article as we gave to the study itself: do not let it be an after-thought. After all, our results have limited utility unless they are read, understood and acted upon by others.

Most scientific journals publish a set of “instructions for authors” that can guide us in writing our article. While there might be slight differences from one publication to another, the general format is usually similar and tends to adhere to the following structure⁵:

- **Title** – The title should describe the content of our paper in a short and clear manner. Use descriptive words and think about *keywords* that will be picked up by search engines and lead the reader to our paper.
- **Abstract** – This section of our paper should be self-contained – in other words, the reader should be able to understand its content without having to read the entire article. It is important that we invest in the abstract as it plays a critical role in determining whether the average reader will keep reading the rest of our work. It should not be more than a few paragraphs long and contain the purpose of the study, the research methods, the main results, as well as our principal conclusions.
- **Introduction** – Here, we must present the question being asked (statement of purpose), the context of the study (background information about what is already known) and our hypothesis. The background section should not, however, overwhelm the reader but provide him/her with just enough information to understand the context.
- **Methods** – Explain why and how each method or procedure was used, providing sufficient information to allow others to reproduce the study if they so desire.
- **Results** – These should be presented without comment, bias or interpretation through the use of a verbal summary and, when appropriate, figures and tables.

Sections of a Scientific Paper

What did I do in a nutshell?	Abstract
What is the problem?	Introduction
How did I solve the problem?	Materials and Methods
What did I find out?	Results
What does it mean?	Discussion
Who helped me out?	Acknowledgements (optional)
Whose work did I refer to?	Literature Cited
Extra Information	Appendices (optional)

Source: “The Structure, Format, Content, and Style of a Journal-Style Scientific Paper,” in How to Write a Paper in Scientific Style and Format, On-Line Resources Home, Department of Biology, Bates College, 2003. Available at: <http://abacus.bates.edu/~ganderso/biology/resources/writing/HTWsections.html>

- **Discussion and conclusion** – This section should analyze the data – evaluate their meaning in terms of the original question of hypothesis and point out their

significance – as well as explain how it relates to other studies. We should conclude by summarizing the key points we'd like our reader to take away from our study as well as point out any areas for further study.

- **Acknowledgements (if any)**
- **References** – A list of the references that were cited in the body of the paper. The *Vancouver Style* is used in most biomedical publications.

Resources:

- The website of the United States National Library of Medicine provides 41 citation examples using the *Vancouver Style*. Available at: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform_requirements.html
- The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors publishes the *Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals*. Available at: <http://www.icmje.org/>
- The websites of various scientific journals provide guidelines for authors. See for example:
 - *The Lancet* <http://www.thelancet.com/authors>
 - *The British Medical Journal* http://resources.bmj.com/bmj/authors?resource_name=Authors;
 - *The Oxford Journal of Public Health* http://www.oxfordjournals.org/pubmed/for_authors/index.html.

2. Newspaper articles and editorials

Articles in newspapers – news items, features or editorials – can be extremely useful tools in capturing the attention of a wide audience and generating public debate about our research and its many important implications. The media can inform the public about our work and it can advocate for the adoption of our findings; at the same time, it can also dismiss our work in a few barbed sentences. Understood and influenced properly, the media can be an extremely potent ally.

Choosing the right media outlet

Online media (websites, e-forums and newsletters) – useful for reaching new audiences quickly and cheaply;

National Press – important to stimulate a national government response;

Regional Press – important to reach regional bodies and large civil society organizations;

Local or community press – useful for reaching street-level bureaucrats and community-based organizations, raising public debate, invigorating the research agenda and increasing accountability.

Source: *A Researcher's Guide to Working with the Media*, Produced for the Chronic Poverty Research Center by the Panos Institute, London, 2005

In most cases, articles that appear in newspapers, especially at the regional or national level, are written by staff members and not by invited writers. As such, if our aim is to see our results and interpretations published, our hardest task will be to convince editors and writers that our story is worth the attention. In some cases, however, we might be able to write a news article or a feature that will be published by a particular newspaper. As always, the more we know in advance (e.g. the preferences and habits of a particular newspaper), the better we will be able to use our time, whether in lobbying the paper to cover our story or taking the time to write for it ourselves. Let's not discount the third option either: if budget permits, hiring a journalist to write for us can be an extremely effective way of pitching our story in the right tone and style, and then taking advantage of that journalist's media savvy and industry contacts to push our agenda forward.

Forging Relations with the Media

The media can assist us by “putting you into the kitchen [and] being part of the soup-making.”⁶ However, just like policy-makers, practitioners and the general public, the media are also overwhelmed by the daily flow of information and will need to be convinced that our story is worth covering.

As discussed above, we must do our homework before approaching any media or journalist. We need to examine the news content of different newspapers, the audiences they reach, as well as the frequency at which they are published. In the absence of doing this, we risk wasting our time by sending our pitch to a journalist or newspaper that does not cover any type of health-related stories or that is currently occupied with more pressing news.

Once we've identified our target, the first and foremost thing to keep in mind is the **topicality and relevance** of our research. Think about it this way: will the general public be interested in reading an article about a new AIDS drug in the midst of a Rift Valley Fever scare? Will the media be interested in our conference or findings during a general election – even in a neighbouring country? *Timing is of the essence*, and because of that we must keep abreast of the news – and the news agenda – to best link our research with the relevant issues of the day, to understand the opportunities to press our agenda and the moments to keep silent. The news operates in cyclical fashion; there are months of activity and months of quiet. And the more we can understand and conceptualize this cycle, the better our chances of achieving the desired publicity.

When “pitching” our research to journalists, we must be sure to make the message appealing: we must make it “sexy”. Here we might use fast and simple messages, bearing in mind the messages that journalists themselves need to write.⁷ The use of a *soundbite* can be an effective way to get our message across in a single sentence. As editors have the final word as to whether our story will be published and are free to

use the information that we provide as they see fit, we must be sure to present it as clearly – and as *sexily* – as possible.

Soundbites

A soundbite is often a single sentence that swiftly conveys our message and attracts the audience's immediate attention. Soundbites should be vivid and illustrative and without clichés. When approaching journalists, the more powerful and convincing our soundbite, the greater the likelihood of piquing their interest.

Example: “Every day more than 2,000 children under the age of five die from malaria, yet we know of simple interventions that can help prevent the disease.”

Researchers are experts...

Finally, our efforts must centre on building strong relationships of mutual respect and trust with the media. If we can present ourselves as a reliable and savvy expert on any given topic, then journalists may very well accept our story and, even more importantly, may well seek out our opinions on a subject related to our expertise. Researchers are, after all, experts in their field. And journalists so very often solicit the input of experts in any story they might be covering. Establishing these kinds of relationships is critical in amplifying not only our work but also our voice, which in turn keeps doors wide open for advancing and publicizing our own work.

Building relationships with journalists

Step 1 – Put together a list of journalists (with contact details) that might be potentially interested in our issue.

Step 2 – Once we have “new” information (such a findings or details of an upcoming event) we can introduce ourselves to the listed journalists through a brief phone call. Find out: the best time to send the person information, how soon they need it before it is printed, and how they would prefer to receive the information. The best time to call is often in the morning (but not too early!).

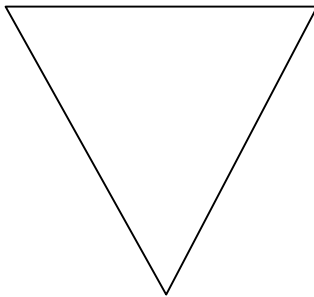
Step 3 – Focus on one or two journalists and build relationships with them to learn more about what they are interested in. Keep them up to date about what is going on with our research at every stage, invite them to attend events, and be available if they require any information.

Step 4 – We must make ourselves available to comment on any particular story that journalists might be investigating. Ideally, journalists will come to us; but in other instances, we might do well to remind them that we can provide intelligent and insightful commentary on their intended story.

Source: Adapted from *A Researcher's Guide to Working with the Media*, 2005, 9.

Writing a Newspaper Article

Obviously, the style and format that we ought to use here is very different from what we might use in a scientific journal. How many of the paper's readers would, in actuality, understand all of our methods and results? In the case of a newspaper article, not only must our title grab the reader's attention, but the article itself must be constructed like an inverted pyramid, starting with the most important information and working down to the individual supporting details.



Headline: This should be a short and attention-grabbing statement about our story that uses an active verb (e.g. "Remarkable new science reveals...").

Byline: Identifies the author.

Lead Paragraph: This is the key to our whole story and should identify the 6 Ws: *who, what, when, where, why, and how*.

Explanation: We must ask ourselves what information our readers need after having read the first paragraph; the information should then be provided in order of importance. We finish our story with the supporting details and any additional information that is not critical.

General tips:

- Use short sentences of varying lengths;
- Use simple vocabulary and avoid jargon and acronyms;
- Use active verbs (e.g. *research shows*, not *it was shown by research that*);
- Choose words sparingly;
- Where possible, use quotations to bring life and examples to the story.

Roles Played by the Media

- To inform the general public that research is underway
- To disseminate important findings;
- To act as a conduit between groups with similar interests;
- To provide a forum for debate and dialogue; often shapes debate by providing the parameters of discussion and highlighting particular issues;
- To market the research, the research institute, the programme or the researchers, building their reputation and credibility;
- To build accountability by communicating findings with those that participated in or supported the research; to allow the public to hold decision makers to account.

Source: Adapted from "Getting into the Kitchen: media strategies for research," Background paper produced for the Chronic Poverty Research Center by the Panos Institute, London, 2005; and Megan Lloyd Laney, "Tips for Using the Media," Commsconsult, August 15, 2005.

3. Press Releases

When targeting the media and trying to get our research covered in the press – be it the formal launch of our project or the dissemination of our findings – one of the most pertinent tools is a press release. These can indeed serve to inform journalists about our story and convince them to seek more information, cover our event, or, in a best case, publish it as is.

When planning to send out a press release, we must know the best moment to do so. According to Charlotte Denny, the Economics Correspondent for *The Guardian*, researchers should “think about the rhythm of the week from a journalist’s perspective. Sunday is a good day to pitch a story for Monday’s newspaper as there is usually not much news around on that day.”⁸ In the same vein, we should attempt to send our release early in the day, ideally during a quiet news period.

Once the release has been sent, we ought to make a follow-up phone call to inquire as to whether the journalist has received it, whether s/he has any questions, and whether s/he intends to cover it. Similarly, we need to be available if journalists want to get in touch with us once the release has been sent.⁹ Again, we should attempt to peg our press release to a launch event or a public meeting.

Tips for writing a press release:

- Make it short (no longer than one page), use simple language and avoid jargon;
- Mimic, as much as possible, the style and format of a news story;
- The title should contain key words, be *punchy*, and to the point;
- The first paragraph should provide all the important information and briefly outline the who (is involved/did the research), the what (is new), the where (is the study/research/publication), the when (does it take place/get published), the why (is it new) and the how (is it relevant);¹⁰
- Write in the third person (e.g. “Dr. Mutale indicated that...”);
- Use short sentences and begin a new paragraph for each new sentence;
- Use active verbs and avoid the passive voice (e.g. *not* “It was indicated by Dr. Mutale that...”)

We will also need to ensure that we target our release appropriately – the reader of our publication must be able to relate to our story on some level. If the paper is owned and run by the state, it may not be interested in findings that criticize existing policy. It might also be advisable to offer exclusivity to a particular journalist or publication.

Format of the Press Release

Date or embargo: We can decide to use an *embargo* by distributing our release early *on the condition that* it may not be used before a specific date and time. The embargo lets us control when we would like the story to appear in the news. We should make this clearly visible at the top of the page.

Heading: This should be short (no longer than two lines), use an active verb, and capture the essence of your story.

Introductory paragraph: This should succinctly provide an overview of the content of the entire press release and answer the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘when’, ‘where’ and ‘how’ questions.

Text: As with a newspaper article, the paragraphs should be written in order of declining importance.

Details: Contact information for your spokesperson; relevant website address.

4. Policy Briefs

While scientific articles are aimed typically at our peers within the scientific community, policy briefs are extremely useful when we hope to communicate with officials, bureaucrats, politicians, development practitioners, donors, and more. As always, the characteristics of this particular audience affect the format, content and style that we’ll use. Keep in mind that our audience will not necessarily be familiar with our issue or problem, and that it will generally be faced with a variety of time constraints. We will therefore need to be absolutely concise in convincing our audience of the importance, relevance and urgency of the problem and of the need to adopt particular policy recommendations – all in the space of two-pages or less. We want our brief, after all, to pass the “corn flakes” or “breakfast test” – “whether a politician [can] identify its main points in the time it takes to eat a hasty breakfast.”¹¹

In short, our policy brief should identify a **problem**, make the case for why our particular audience should care and take action urgently, provide an overview of alternative policy responses, and present a strong and compelling argument justifying why our recommended policy response is the most appropriate one. In other words, we must provide a **solution** to a problem. Much more on the methodology of a policy brief is available in *Chapter Six*, where we see how a complex piece of research on male circumcision and HIV prevention can become a two-page policy brief.

While the facts and science behind our solutions might be convincing enough from our own perspective, these will most likely be insufficient to convince policy makers of the need to take action. What we need to do here is to focus on the impacts on people and the real-life implications of the identified problem. As Hovland explains, “the presentation of the outcomes of [our] data analysis will probably not be enough to make an impact in the policy debate on a particular issue, but through the use of

this data as evidence in a comprehensive and coherent argument of [our] position, [we] will give [our] work the best possible chance of having this impact.”¹²

*Tips for an effective policy brief:*¹³

- Remain **focused** from start to finish;
- Keep our audience in mind while writing: use a **professional** as opposed to an academic tone;
- Ground our argument in strong and reliable **evidence**;
- **Limit our focus** to a particular problem or issue;
- Be **succinct** and to the point, using short sentences and paragraphs;
- Use language that is simple and provide enough information to allow the reader to follow our argument;
- Make it **accessible** by subdividing our text to guide the reader through it;
- Make it **interesting and attractive** through the use of colors, images, quotes, photographs, boxes, and more;
- Make sure that what we are recommending is **practical and feasible**;
- Avoid using jargon or acronyms.
- Provide an overview of any and all cost implications – for implementing our preferred option and for maintaining the status quo

Components of a Policy Brief

The first question we must ask ourselves is length: should the brief be two-pages? Or should it be longer? Again, this depends on the intended audience. If the problem is new, a two-pager might be enough to get the wheels turning. If the problem is well understood, we may elect to spend up to eight pages discussing our work. Should we choose to discuss our issue in eight pages, the skeleton of such a brief is typically as follows:

1. **Title** – this should describe the brief but remain short and attention-grabbing.
2. **Executive Summary** – the summary should be typed single-spaced on the first page of the brief. It should consist of an overview of the problem, its relevance and the reasons why action is now needed as well as our recommendations. This should not be longer than about 150 words.
3. **Statement of the problem** – This should, if possible, be framed as a question that requires a decision, and we should therefore avoid the use of ‘Why?’, focusing instead on ‘What’, ‘How’, ‘When’, etc.
4. **Background and/or context to the problem and its importance** – provide the essential facts needed by the reader to understand the issue at hand and convince our audience that the problem requires urgent attention and action.
5. **Pre-existing policies** – discuss what has been done in the past or what is in place now, if anything, to deal with the problem.

6. **Policy Options** – list various alternative ways of addressing the problem without overwhelming the reader with too many options.
7. **Critique of policy options** – analyze the pros and cons of each alternative from the perspective of our target audience.
8. **Policy recommendation** – present our preferred alternative, provide a convincing argument and present implications for action.
9. **Sources consulted or recommended** – this should be similar to an annotated bibliography, providing 1-3 sentences to explain the relevance and contribution of each source.

5. Newsletters

Newsletters can be targeted at both an external and an internal audience and are principally used to increase the visibility of an organization and all of its activities. It is a superb and succinct tool for informing a general audience about all the latest updates and upcoming events. A successful Newsletter should entice our reader to want more information about our work and its implications.

In *Chapter Eight* of this Toolkit, we go through a step-by-step approach to using desktop publishing tools in creating a newsletter.



When planning our first newsletter, we should once again – *once again* – think about our audience and its needs as well as about what it is that we are trying to achieve. In turn, this will affect our content as well as our presentation. If we decide upon the length and style of our newsletter early on, we'll be able to better structure the content and make decisions about what we should prioritize. If possible, we should keep our newsletter short, somewhere between two and four pages.

In terms of frequency, the key here is to be consistent and predictable. Let our readers know when it will be published and stick to the timeline. This way, our audience will know when to expect the next edition and is more likely to look out for it. On the other hand, if we publish it infrequently on an ad-hoc basis, our readership can easily lose interest.

The presentation of our newsletter is also very important (and again we refer you to *Chapter Eight* of this Toolkit). The name and masthead should catch the reader's attention. Be innovative while keeping it short and sweet. Make use of headlines using active verbs that are no longer than five to seven words long. Think about using different headlines sizes to highlight the particular importance of certain items.¹⁴

Make sure to use columns, boxes, two or three different font types, paragraphs and sub-headings to make our document more dynamic. Finally, do not be afraid of using *white space*: it gives the reader's eyes a rest and emphasizes the separation between different items.¹⁵ The more crowded our newsletter, the more difficult it is on the eye; and the more difficult it is on the eye, the less our reader will want to read on.

Articles and news items in a newsletter should be written according to the same rules as are used in writing a newspaper article. In other words, start with the 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why' and 'how' and write using the inverted pyramid format.

Unless we have sufficient resources to commission the creation of a newsletter, it can easily be produced in-house using a few simple computer programs – often word processing software (e.g. MS Word) is more than enough. Ideally, there should be in-house capabilities at using programs like Photoshop or InDesign, but these are highly complex and require an advanced computer knowledge (or hundreds of hours of using the trusty *trial-and-error* technique – and lots of hair pulled out). Word processing software, when used with attention to detail and a fuller understanding of their capabilities, will certainly suffice. *Chapter Eight* discusses this, step-by-step.

What should be included in our newsletter?

While the length of our newsletter will obviously influence its content, here are a few suggestions as to what we might wish to include:¹⁶

- Edited versions (e.g. a “snippet”) of press releases;
- Announcements of progress;
- Reports on conferences or meetings;
- Achievements;
- Info about forthcoming events;
- Tips;
- Links to further information;
- Profiles of researchers;
- Images, cartoons and pictures;
- Features.

Once our newsletter is completed, the final step will be its distribution. Again, our audience will influence our method of choice. If our newsletter is targeted at rural community members, we will have to distribute it in paper format. On the other hand if we are mainly targeting other researchers, policy makers as well as practitioners, electronic distribution would be more efficient. Assuming we have a distribution list (or “list-serv” – a way of grouping together all the emails we want to address at one go), we'll use that list to send it to all our contacts. We'll also post it on our website.

Newsletter Examples:

- *Research Matters Newsletter*: www.research-matters.net
- *NIH News in Health*: <http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/>
- *Links*, the Newsletter of the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation: http://www.chsrf.ca/other_documents/newsletter/index_e.php

6. Brochures and Leaflets

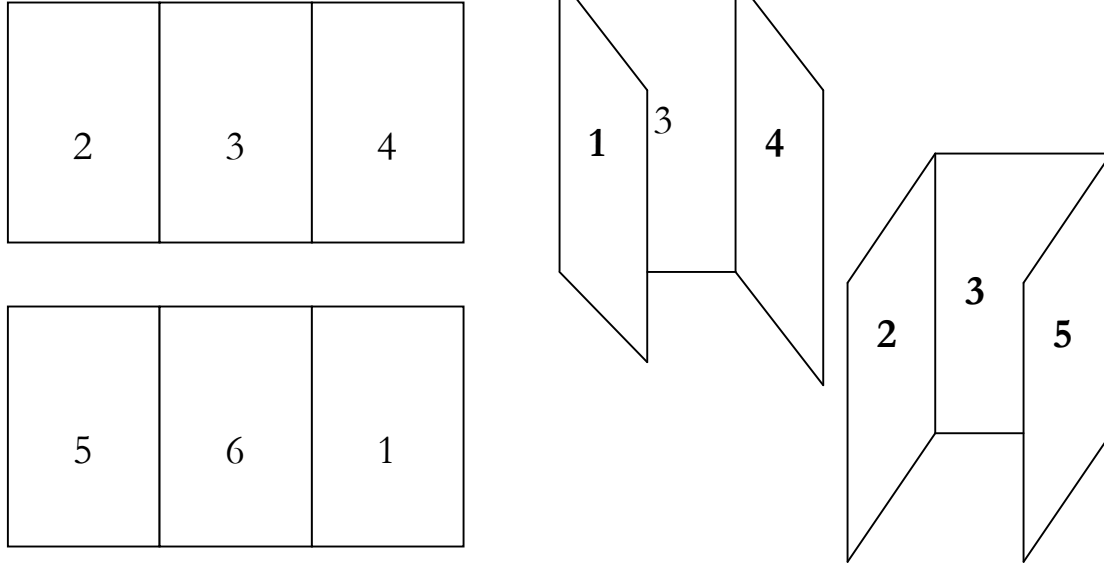
Brochures and leaflets can be a superb tool to promote our research institution or project and also as a means of communicating our most recent findings to a specific audience. While the former instance of public relations might be of greater interest, here we'll focus on cases where we're trying to share specific research-related information with our public – whose desires, time and abilities we, naturally, have already mapped out.

Many of the guidelines and tips in the previous policy brief and press release sections remain applicable in the case of a brochure or leaflet. Again, avoid jargon and scientific language, use short sentences and simple vocabulary, and use active verbs, etc. Our reader should be able to understand our message at-a-glance. As a general rule, we'll use colors, images as well as different types of fonts to make our brochure more dynamic. Finally, we'll try, as much as possible, to avoid including content that will be rapidly outdated. We must think long-term, particularly if we don't have the time and financial resources to keep this updated.

While the specific content of our brochure/leaflet will depend on our specific objectives and audience, it might include the following:

- An overview of the research project/institution/team¹⁷;
- A statement of the problem;
- A review of the background and rationale for undertaking the initiative¹⁸;
- Our research results and their 'real-life' implications;
- Our policy recommendations;
- Links to further sources of information;
- Our contact information;
- Images and graphics.

In terms of the production and design of our brochure/leaflet, we'll keep it simple – unless, of course, we have the resources to commission it to an outside agency. In its most basic form, a brochure/leaflet can be created out of an A4 sheet of paper, folded in half or in three. By keeping it small, we'll increase the likelihood that people will hold on to it.

Sample Brochure/Leaflet layout

Our front cover (**1**) should be eye-catching while at the same time proving enough content (or information) to encourage our reader to continue through the rest of the document. Consider using an image that illustrates well the subject matter or, if we already have one, our logo and tagline (i.e. a catchphrase or slogan). We should avoid using the back cover (**6**) for much more than our contact information, as this is the panel that our audience is least likely to pay attention to. We will include most of our information on panels **2** and **5** as these are the first ones that our reader will see when opening up our document. The rest should be contained in panels **3** and **4**.

7. Cartoons and Images


How many times have we heard the saying “A picture is worth a thousand words?” While images are not always the best tool to use when trying to explain the complex science behind a specific research project, they are brilliant at bringing to life – with colour and nuance and texture – the spirit of the project. A recent review of research has shown that “pictures closely linked to written or spoken text can, when compared to text alone, markedly increase attention to and recall of health education information.”¹⁹

Using Cartoons to increase adherence to treatment

Delp and Jones conducted a study with a sample of 234 patients that had arrived at an emergency room with lacerations. At the point of discharge, all patients were handed print instructions for taking care of their wounds. Half of the patients were, in turn, given pictures that illustrated the information in the text. What Delp and Jones found was that patients that had received the handouts with illustrations were more likely to read them than those that had only received text (98% compared with 79%). In addition, those that had received illustrations were more likely to remember what they had read and to take better care of their wounds.

DRESSING CHANGES

TWICE A DAY:
 WASH INJURY WITH SOAP AND WATER OR 3% HYDROGEN PEROXIDE USING COTTON SWABS OR STERILE DRESSINGS. NEXT YOU MAY APPLY A THIN LAYER OF ANTIBIOTIC OINTMENT (BACITRACIN, NEOSPORIN, ETC.). RE-APPLY STERILE DRESSING FOR FIRST 2 DAYS AND THEN AS NEEDED TO PROTECT WOUND. REPLACE DRESSING IF IT BECOMES WET.




COMPLICATIONS

IF YOUR WOUND BECOMES

RED, SWOLLEN,

SHOWS **RED STREAKS,**
 OR PUS, OR BEGINS TO HURT MORE
 INSTEAD OF LESS AS DAYS GO BY,
 HAVE IT CHECKED BY A DOCTOR.



Source: Delp C and Jones C. "Communicating information to patients: the use of cartoon illustrations to improve comprehension of instructions." *Academic Emergency Medicine*, 1996 Mar; Vol. 3 (3), pp. 264-70.

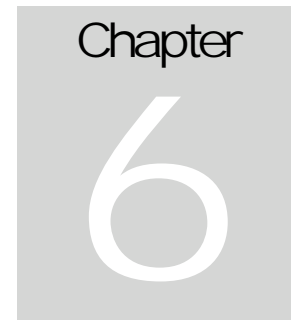
As highlighted in the above example – as well as in *Chapter One's* discussion of cartoons illustrating a corruption study in Senegal – cartoons and images can be a

highly effective mode of getting our message across in a way that captures our audience's attention. The disadvantage of such a format, however, is that unless we are skilled at creating cartoons, we will have to hire someone to produce them for us.

Alternatively, we can easily use pictures and other types of images that have already been produced, as long as we obtain permission from their creator or from whoever holds the copyright.

Endnotes

- ¹ Robert W. Porter and Suzanne Prysor-Jones, "Making a Difference to Policies and Programs: A Guide for Researchers", Support for Analysis and Research in Africa (SARA) project: Washington, July 1997, available at: http://sara.aed.org/publications/cross_cutting/policy_programs/html/eng_intro.htm
- ² Daniel Start and Ingie Hovland, *Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers*, October 2004, 41.
- ³ Costanza de Toma and Louisa Gosling. *A collection of tools to help plan, implement, monitor and evaluate advocacy*. Save the Children, March 2005.
- ⁴ Lengeler C. Insecticide-treated bednets and curtains for preventing malaria (Cochrane Review). In: The Cochrane Library, 2002. Oxford, Update Software.
- ⁵ Adapted from "Appendix E: Guidelines for Writing Scientific Papers," Available at: <http://www.bms.bc.ca/library/Guidelines%20for%20writing%20Scientific%20papers.pdf>
- ⁶ "Getting into the Kitchen: media strategies for research," Background paper produced for the Chronic Poverty Research Center by the Panos Institute, London, 2005
- ⁷ ODI Media Training, "Notes from meeting with Charlotte Denny, Economics Correspondent, *The Guardian*," 13 February 2003, in Policy Influencing and Media Engagement: Resource Pack, Eds. Kate Bird and Ursula Grant, ODI/Chronic Poverty Research Center, 2005.
- ⁸ ODI Media Training, "Notes from meeting with Charlotte Denny, Economics Correspondent, *The Guardian*," 13 February 2003, in Policy Influencing and Media Engagement: Resource Pack, Eds. Kate Bird and Ursula Grant, ODI/Chronic Poverty Research Center, 2005.
- ⁹ A Researcher's Guide to Working with the Media, Produced for the Chronic Poverty Research Center by the Panos Institute, London, 2005
- ¹⁰ Natasha Martineau, "How do I Write a Press Release," SciDevNet, Available at: <http://www.scidev.net/ms/howdoi/index.cfm?pageid=58>
- ¹¹ Chandrika Nath, "How do I Brief Policymakers on Science-related issues?", SciDevNet, Available at: http://www.scidev.net/ms/sci_comm/index.cfm?pageid=227
- ¹² Hovland, 2005, 28.
- ¹³ Adapted from Eoin Young and Lisa Quinn, *The Policy Brief*, LGI training materials, available at: <http://www.policy.hu/ipf/fel-pubs/samples/PolicyBrief-described.pdf>
- ¹⁴ *Guide to: Writing a Newsletter*. London Community Recycling Network, Available at: www.lcrn.org.uk/images/531.pdf
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Adapted from European Commission, *European Research: A guide to successful communications*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/science-communication/index_en.htm
- ¹⁷ European Commission, 2004, 32.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Houts et al. "The role of pictures in improving health communication: A review of research on attention, comprehension, recall and adherence." *Patient Education and Counseling* 61(2006):173.



The Two Pager: Writing a Policy Brief

A Brief Overview

In this section we'll focus on a very practical need that all researchers face at some point in time: the desire to have a range of audiences read and understand their work. This could be the media, affected communities, other researchers, donors, and/or policymakers. But how can we effectively reach those audiences? How can we make them appreciate our work? While we might have a full report or even a peer-reviewed paper that captures our work in fine detail, this may well be beyond the capabilities or time constraints of our desired audience.

Enter the two-pager. This is a very popular and highly useful tool that boils down the absolute essence of our argument and findings into easily understood points. It does not tell the audience everything they need to know, but it is a beginning. And if it is done well, the reader will request more information, perhaps through a conversation, a website, or even by reading the full paper. A two-pager is a simple story, an entry-point, an appetizer that, if crafted well and targeted appropriately, will leave the reader wanting more.

Not surprisingly, writing a story like this is quite difficult. How do we decide which details are essential? Which details less relevant? How do we tell a story *in two pages* that took us many years to complete?

Types of Two-pagers

Press Releases – stories in simple language highlighting the *significance* of the research and the corresponding need for action. Like a newspaper article, they can involve direct, quoted interviews with the researchers. These can also be used for other promotional purposes – a webpage, for instance.

Briefing Notes – a more in-depth and scientific examination of the issue, typically for an audience that already understands the science. Like an extended abstract.

Policy Briefs – outlines in simple terms the science, the potential policies, and a discussion of how to bridge the two.

As is clear from the box above, the only element distinguishing one two-pager from another is the *target audience*. The two-pager we write for our fellow researchers will be markedly different to the one we write for the media. Those two audiences operate in different languages, and we must understand and respect this. If we do not consider the reading and absorption abilities of our target – the details they want and the details they don't need – then the two-pager will miss, every time.

In this section, we will focus on practical tips and tools for writing a **policy brief**, a document designed for an audience that has some control over how the findings might be ultimately converted into policy. Though we are focusing here on just one type of two-pager, the logic of writing a policy brief holds for writing press releases or briefing notes. We are, after all, creating a story for a particular audience. If we want to tell this story to a different audience, we simply need to change our tone and style. But the skeleton remains the same.

In order to write an effective policy brief, we must understand exactly *who* our policymakers are. This is the first step, and an absolutely essential one. For instance, a high-level director in a government ministry may well have different capabilities and requirements than a district commissioner, and we must understand this difference. Once we establish the capabilities and needs of our audience, then we know the type of tone and style we should carry throughout the brief. We know how scientific or how general we need to be.

The overarching aim of a policy brief is to provide a clear and concise overview of the problem and the findings, then a discussion of the findings and their implications, and then suggestions for operationalizing those findings with, where possible, clear cost implications. Our first section has the findings. Our last section has the policies. And our middle section provides the bridge connecting the two.

Findings ————— Implications ————— Policies

Writing a two-pager is an exercise in logic. With a firm target audience in mind, we must isolate the points that, when taken together, form a clear and coherent

argument. This is not straightforward, and requires some careful decisions on our end before we begin writing. So let's start by asking ourselves: what are the *story needs* of our audience? In *what language* – from lay to scientific and anywhere in between – do we need to use to tell our story? What do they really need to understand our research and its implications? Do policymakers, for instance, need to understand the means by which our findings were generated? Or should the two-pager instead focus on the implications of those conclusions? If there are, for example, three strong conclusions arising from our work, what is the simple story that leads the reader to those conclusions?

To explore these ideas, we will walk, step-by-step, through the creation of a policy brief. Below we present some recent findings that, in early 2007, took the world of public health by storm – firstly because of the science and secondly because of the unclear *implications* of that science.

I. The Policy Brief: The Research

Male circumcision and HIV/AIDS: challenges and opportunities¹

From the *Lancet*, 2007; 369: 708–13

On December 13, 2006, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced the early termination of two randomised controlled trials of male circumcision—in Kenya and Uganda—on the basis of interim evidence that male circumcision provided a protective benefit against HIV infection of 53% among the 2784 Kenyan men and 51% among the 4996 Ugandan men enrolled in the respective studies. The Kenya and Uganda trials replicated the landmark findings of the South African Orange Farm study, the first randomised controlled trial to report a greater than 50% protective benefit of male circumcision. Before the availability of data from these three African randomised controlled trials, multiple observational studies correlated male circumcision with reduced risk of HIV infection. Systematic reviews and meta-analysis of observational studies provide further evidence of the association of male circumcision with reduced risk of HIV infection and a plausible explanation for the biological mechanism for reduced risk of infection has been suggested. Recently released longitudinal evidence of the range of health benefits that male circumcision provides, modeling based on the South African trials, and cost-effectiveness data in both North America and Africa provide further evidence to support the health benefits of male circumcision. Male circumcision is also associated with reduced risk of urinary tract infections, genital ulcer diseases, penile cancer, and a possible reduction in transmission of human papillomavirus (HPV) [...] We identify here 13 issues – challenges and opportunities – pertaining to male circumcision as a prevention strategy; the list will probably expand as new data become available. We wish to encourage discussion and to ensure that these issues are considered when new medical findings are released and implementation plans are developed. Furthermore, our hope is that these challenges will enrich the discussions as to how male circumcision could be used

¹ Reprinted with permission from Elsevier (**The Lancet**, 2007; 369: 708–13). It may be found online at: www.thelancet.com. Note users will be required to register at the site before downloading the free full-text article.

as an HIV prevention intervention, and what steps need to be taken to ensure it is implemented in an ethical and effective manner. In highlighting challenges, we intend to engage those involved in research, policy, and implementation of male circumcision to consider all the available evidence and to encourage dynamic, malleable, and contextual understanding of male circumcision and its potential applications.

The release of these findings resulted in extensive media coverage in print, TV and radio, which further convinced large groups of men (particularly in western Kenya) to press for the intervention. However, there are no easy policy options when it comes to male circumcision. What is known at this point is the science – that circumcision can be a very effective HIV-prevention intervention. However, there is much that remains unknown. How might governments operationalize this? How does it fit into existing HIV-prevention strategies? Should they make the procedure free? Or subsidize it? Should they mandate it? And if so, how might certain parts of the population react?

This is the niche for our policy brief. There are no clear or obvious policy choices but at the same time there is an urgency for governments to respond.

To make things easier for us in this complex case, let us imagine that the Ministry of Health has approached us directly and requested a simple document that can help the Minister and others understand the scope of the problem and its many implications. From the outset, then, we know exactly who our target audience is: a Minister who has a decent but not a deep scientific knowledge. She requires at this point a careful examination of both the science *and* the context. She wants to understand how any government policy must examine and address both in order to succeed.

Thus the first issue has been resolved. We know our target audience. We know its story needs and we know the language we must use to reach it. And we know that we have *a maximum of two pages* to say what we have to say. While some policy briefs may indeed be longer (up to 8 pages), we're choosing to keep this short and direct. We may want, however, to have a longer brief available should the demand arise for a more in-depth examination of the available options.

A useful starting point would be taking a moment to think about the nature of this article. Though it reports on evidence generated by randomized controlled trials, it is more of a synthesis paper that discusses *in scientific language* the findings of two different studies (with reference to a third). The bulk of the paper is dedicated to a discussion of the many different implications of these findings, but again in highly scientific language. One of our immediate challenges here is to change the language into something much more readable, something that avoids jargon and hyper-syllabic words. We must make the science brief and understandable; we must discuss why these findings are significant; and we must outline some relevant policy options.

The Logic of a Policy Brief

1. The research
2. How the research connects to policy
3. The policy options

Let us rethink this paper by reducing it to a single sentence. Above all else, what does the paper say? The sentence here may well be: *Male circumcision leads to a dramatic drop in HIV infection in men, and this has strong implications for those involved in research, policy and implementation.* In that one sentence we highlight the essential “big picture” elements. Everything that follows is simply supporting details. If we can pass along this one sentence to policymakers, and convince them of its relevancy and urgency, then our policy brief will be a success. That said, we don’t want any random policy. Rather, we want to use our supporting details to shape the nature of the policy response. We will offer them a useful discussion of the findings, three concrete (and roughly costed in terms of time and funding) policy options, and also show them where they can get more information on the topic.

II. The Policy Brief: The Outline

Let us call our single sentence, *Male circumcision leads to a dramatic drop in HIV infection in men, and this has strong implications for those involved in research, policy and implementation*, our conclusion. This is the heart of our paper. What we need to do now is formulate a clear argument that leads to the above conclusion and then let that conclusion bloom into a number of implications which, in turn, will suggest clear policy options. The danger here, as with any two-pager, is losing our audience with too much science or jargon at the outset. We need to keep the science simple, and build quickly to our overall message, implications, and set of policy options. Because we do not simply want to inform an audience here. We want to spur action.

Throughout this brief – in the introduction, the discussion, and the conclusion – we will group our thoughts and arguments into three. Three is not too many and not too few, and can often represent the spectrum of possibilities from left to centre to right, or from no action to small action to wholesale change.

III. The Policy Brief: The Science

Three Statements

As we break down our argument into its essential components, let us devise three statements. They will be the “hooks” for our introductory paragraph. We will likely need to add some “filler” between the statements when we tell our story – but if the hooks are clear to us before we write, then the story almost writes itself.

Statement One

Randomised controlled trials of male circumcision in Kenya and Uganda showed such a strong

protective benefit against HIV infection – 53% and 51% respectively – that the research was stopped on ethical grounds.

This is a lengthy statement. However, it shows three important elements of the evidence. First, that it was based on two randomised controlled trials, which most policymakers (at least in a Ministry of Health) would know to be a very reliable and sound methodology. If we do not believe that our audience will understand the term “randomised controlled trial,” (and we must know such things before writing this brief) then we can substitute it for something like, “Research on male circumcision ...”. Second, this statement shows that the findings were so powerful that the research project was stopped. This is an excellent introduction because the fact that the research was stopped introduces that something compelling and significant has occurred which may require urgent action to correct. And third, this statement hints (without directly stating it) that perhaps male circumcision could become a new and powerful tool in the fight against HIV.

Statement Two

This confirms a previous landmark study in South Africa.

Here we cast the net wider in the hopes of showing that this is not random and is not a fluke. It reproduces what has been proven in another context and is thus more credible. Raising the particular case of South Africa may also solidify our argument given the oft-held perception that science in South Africa is well-funded and reliable. This is debatable; this may not be the case in our particular country – but if it is, then we are using a clever *ad hominem* or emotive argument here, playing upon the existing prejudices of our audience: *well, if this worked in South Africa then we need to pay attention.* Again, this highlights the need to know our target so that we can effectively take advantage of what they do and do not *already believe to be true.*

Statement Three

There is strong evidence suggesting that male circumcision has positive cost implications not only in the fight against HIV but also as regards other elements of sexual and reproductive health.

In any policy brief, the idea of cost needs to be carefully considered. Cost – rather than effectiveness – is likely to be the first question any policymaker will ask when faced with a new set of policy choices. *Well this is a fine idea, but how much will it cost to implement?* If we are proposing an intervention or an approach that is drastically more expensive than the government’s existing policy, then our challenge becomes incrementally more difficult, and our policy brief will need to explain why such a cost increase is justified. However, if we can convince policymakers that action is cost-effective or will even save the government money, then our recommendations have a much greater chance of implementation.

The Title

Lastly, we need something catchy for a title, something that will encourage our

audience to read on. We do not want to deter people here with any jargon, so we will keep it as simple as possible. The best titles are those that will immediately convince the reader to continue. They should be descriptive (*in five words what is it all about?*) and catchy (*Hey - I need to know what this is all about*).

So let us recap this discussion and write the above three statements into a paragraph that tells the simple story of our research and ends in our clear conclusion.

Male circumcision and HIV/AIDS: What are the policy options?

In December of 2006, randomised controlled trials of male circumcision in Kenya and Uganda showed such a strong protective benefit against HIV infection – 53% and 51% respectively – that the research was stopped on ethical grounds. This series of events is compelling and significant. Could male circumcision become a front-line intervention in the fight against HIV/AIDS? Certainly, the findings in Kenya and Uganda were not accidental or even unexpected. Indeed, they confirm the landmark findings of a similar study in South Africa, which also reported high levels of circumcision protecting men from HIV. Additionally, the research makes clear that circumcision may well be a cost-effective tool not only in the fight against HIV but also against other hazards in sexual and reproductive health. Beyond any doubt, the research demonstrates conclusively that male circumcision leads to a dramatic drop in HIV infection in men, and this has strong implications for those involved in research, policy and implementation.

IV. The Policy Brief: The Discussion

Now that we have outlined the science, we need to move onto its implications. The science does *not* lead us to clear policy options, so we now need to discuss an agenda for moving forward. We've made the science easy to understand but now we must explain *why* that science is important. Why should our policymakers care about this? Why is it relevant to them? What exactly are those “strong implications”? We have selected a very difficult issue here, as the road ahead for implementing male circumcision as an HIV intervention is full of dangerous potholes. Thus, our discussion section is absolutely vital in making our audience understand that there are no obvious policy options, but rather a host of issues that need to be taken into account *before* moving ahead. We need, in other words, to contextualize the science.

In the *Lancet* article, the authors dedicate most of the paper to a discussion of the context and the resulting considerations. In the interests of our three-point approach, we have made careful decisions in selecting *talking points* that capture the complexity of the situation. These talking points are the links that will ultimately connect science with policy. If the first part of our brief is the science and the third part the policy,

then here we must show our audience how to connect the first with the third.

We do not want to get into too much detail here, and again risk losing our audience, so we must make some careful decisions. Again taking our three-point approach, we have grouped together the issues into three broad subjects: Impact on Health Systems; Cultural Responses; and Safety and Education. As with the first part of our brief, we will design three statements or hooks, which we can then join together to provide a comprehensive overview of the issues at hand. And again, we will begin by summarizing this discussion into one sentence: *Implementing male circumcision as an HIV-prevention intervention will have a number of effects on the health system, on cultural practices, and to be effective must be accompanied by safety measures and public-awareness campaigns.*

1. Impact on Health systems.

Statement One

Implementation of male circumcision as an HIV-prevention intervention may strain the human and financial resources of health systems.

This point is an effective way of getting at the central ways that circumcision might affect the overall functioning of the health system. In other words: who will pay for it? And who will deliver it? For instance, one month after this piece was published in the *Lancet*, the media picked up the story, disseminated it via print, radio and TV, which led to men in western Kenya flooding the health system with demands for circumcision. (The fact that people are clamouring for circumcision is an excellent point to raise in the Discussion as it lends further urgency to the situation; though this was not part of the *Lancet* article, we do not need to restrict ourselves to the article only. We must always *contextualize* our work). In this discussion, we need to stress that any intervention occurs within a broader system, and raise the possibility that increased attention to one intervention may, among other things, negatively affect other preventative or curative strategies – as concerns, for instance, HIV/AIDS, antenatal care, malaria control, or nutrition.

As a starting point here, do we know the financial implications of this intervention? For example, in Kenya, circumcision costs roughly US\$10, and this cost must be borne by the patient. Given the efficacy of the intervention, however, should the government assume all costs? Part of the costs? If circumcision is free, will this overwhelm the health system? We likely do not have enough information on this question, so perhaps one of the key conclusions emerging from this discussion is the need for a more in-depth examination of the health financing implications of the intervention.

The second major consideration we want to draw the attention of policymakers to is the issue of who is delivering the intervention. If, as anticipated, demand for the procedure increases – and if the government in fact mandates the widespread

implementation of the intervention – then this question of *who will deliver it* is extremely pertinent. We can divide this human resource question into two parts: deciding *who* should deliver the intervention and then *what* training issues may arise as a result. Similar issues arose several years ago in the discussion around delivery of ARVs, and we may want to draw this link in our discussion. Our key talking points here are: Have basic competency levels in delivering this intervention been established? Are personnel required to be certified in order to deliver the intervention? In WHO parlance, is male circumcision a “clinical practice within health delivery settings” – i.e. a procedure that would rule out traditional healers and perhaps even nurses from performing it? If so, this might hinder national scale-up efforts and may well exclude significant parts of the population from the treatment, favouring only those who have access to formal health care services.

The final health systems’ point we may want to raise here is how to integrate circumcision into existing HIV-prevention strategies. Should male circumcision be included and integrated as part of a country’s comprehensive HIV prevention strategy (and if so, how)? Or should the government initially offer the intervention to select target groups, such as those ethnocultural groups “with high rates of HIV infection, low rates of male circumcision, and high or potentially high rates of acceptability”?²

Clearly here we will need to make some choices, and difficult ones at that. Perhaps we will be best off, *in this two-pager for an audience that is new to the issue*, to keep these considerations simple and spur, above all, our policymakers to think about the broader systemic context. Note that we really don’t have hard and fast answers to the questions raised in this discussion. This is acceptable so long as our resulting policy options address and even operationalize this ambiguity.

2. Cultural Responses.

Statement Two

Circumcision carries major religious, social and cultural meanings for large parts of the population.

This statement reflects the immediate context of the intervention, and will definitely differ from country to country. In parts of East Africa, for instance, circumcision is often a “rite of passage” among certain cultures, and thus any policy that affects this tradition will most certainly provoke a strong response that must be considered at the policy level. If, for instance, the government were to mandate that circumcision were a “clinical practice,” then it would by default need to have a plan in place for sensitizing or soliciting the input of the affected communities.

Circumcision in general carries significant stigma, both positive and negative, and any

² from author correspondence with Dr. John Lavis.

successful policy must take this into account. As such, in our discussion of this we want to highlight these considerations and suggest the strong need for some *context mapping* to better understand the existing practices and strategies. While we have discussed context mapping in *Chapter Three* of this toolkit, the bottom line here is having a good, comprehensive sense of who our policy might affect. Which groups practice circumcision? How do they practice it? For whom is circumcision unacceptable? Our necessary conclusion here is that we must map out these stakeholders and then consult them, for we strongly suspect that without their input any overarching policy will either fail or stir a strong and potentially negative response.

A second useful question we might ask ourselves here revolves around another sense of “context mapping”. Is there other research or knowledge that might inform our understanding here? This, after all, is also part of the broader picture. Is there, for instance, research examining the socio-cultural incidence and impact of male circumcision? This may have been conducted by an anthropologist or sociologist, and may well have nothing to do with HIV but yet is entirely relevant to our inquiry here. If there is such research available, then there may be scope for bringing together these researchers into a forum discussing circumcision and HIV. If there is no such research available, then we might suggest the need for carrying out further research into these cultural responses and reactions to circumcision, in particular to connect this knowledge with circumcision as a possible HIV-intervention. *Could any policy be viable without taking into account this type of knowledge?*

3. Safety and Education.

Statement Three

While circumcision does provide certain medical benefits, it is not without risks and to be effective must be accompanied by clear safety measures and a public-awareness campaign.

This set of issues flows nicely from the above two statements in that it repeats many of their considerations while also introducing new ideas for policy deliberation. In terms of safety considerations, there is first the health systems point of *who* is delivering the intervention (i.e. are they formally trained?), *how* the intervention is delivered (i.e. where, with what tools, and under what sterility levels) and then *when* it is delivered (i.e. as infants, children or adults). This last point of *when* deserves further discussion, as it is a key element. Circumcising infants or children may raise some of the above cultural issues of acceptability; but, more importantly, circumcising adults has a range of consequences beyond the cultural. These touch upon health system capabilities, the expense, the outright complexity of the procedure later in life, and the medical complications that might arise. In other words, this intervention in adults is not a simple procedure. It is not a one-stop fix. For instance, if freshly circumcised men engage in sexual behaviour, their risks to acquiring HIV soar. Similarly, undergoing circumcision does not make one “immune” to the disease and thus it

must be situated within the broader context of HIV-prevention strategies.

Given these safety considerations, there is a clear need for the intervention to be accompanied by widespread public-awareness campaigns that outline the benefits and risks while also placing circumcision within the broader HIV-prevention context. We need not delve, at this point, into the details of that public-awareness campaign (e.g. using toolkits and posters, etc.) but we should, if requested, have such ideas at hand.

Whew. This has been a difficult discussion as there are a raft of issues to consider and debate. Let's try now to write a ¾-page discussion of male circumcision based on our above talking points. Again, we will go back and find our conclusion and our three hooks or statements, and let the discussion flow logically and simply from one point to the next. We will also use bullet-points as a means of making our information as concise as possible. Bullets are a very useful way of creating a “break” for the eye from reading straight text.

Discussion

Implementing male circumcision as an HIV-prevention intervention will have a number of effects on the health system, on cultural practices, and to be effective must be accompanied by safety measures and public-awareness campaigns. While the science behind the intervention protecting men from acquiring HIV is sound, the implementation and operationalization of these findings will require high-level attention to a range of complex issues. This discussion will examine some of the key points in moving forward, and will then result in three firm policy options.

1. Health Systems: Implementation of male circumcision as an HIV-prevention intervention may strain the human and financial resources of health systems. Experience in western Kenya has already shown that the research has resulted in a spike in the demand for circumcision. Central to this intervention are the key and interrelated questions of: who will pay for it? Who will deliver it? Will increased attention to one intervention affect other disease prevention strategies? And how will this intervention be integrated into existing HIV-prevention strategies?

Financial Implications

- The cost of circumcision is US\$10 and this is borne by the patient.
- Given the efficacy of the intervention, should the government absorb some or all of these costs? What other systemic implications would this have?

Human Resource Implications

One of the key issues with this intervention is deciding *who* should deliver it

(physicians and/or nurses and/or traditional healers/surgeons) and *how*, leading into further considerations of the training necessary to undertake the task. Similar issues arose several years ago in the discussion around delivery of ARVs, and there are strong lessons to be taken from that experience.

- Have basic *competency levels* in delivering this intervention been established?
- Is male circumcision a “clinical practice” and thus an act that should *not* be performed by traditional healers/surgeons?
- If it is deemed to be a “clinical practice,” how will this affect traditional beliefs and practices? Will restricting its availability to the formal system further affect or determine who can access the treatment?

2. Cultural Responses.

Circumcision carries major religious, social and cultural meanings for large parts of the population. There are enduring cultural practices of circumcision as a rite of passage, and significant levels of stigma around the practice, both positive and negative. Therefore, no national policy on circumcision could realistically proceed without first *mapping the context* of existing practices and existing research on those practices. There is a pressing need for multidisciplinary research into cultural responses and reactions to circumcision, involving, for instance, anthropologists or sociologists who may have already studied circumcision and could now contribute their knowledge and findings in the context of HIV prevention. Secondly, given the obvious impact on communities, there is also a strong need for national fora or consultations that can bring together religious and cultural leaders to discuss their views of the intervention.

3. Safety and Education.

While circumcision does provide certain medical benefits, it is not without risk and as a result must be accompanied by safety measures and public-awareness campaigns. Beyond the safety issues of *who* is delivering the intervention and *how* it is delivered is the central question of *when* it is delivered. While circumcising infants or children may raise certain cultural issues, circumcising adults presents a number of different concerns and questions. At this later stage in life, the procedure is more complex, results in more complications, and generates additional HIV concerns. For instance, if freshly circumcised men engage in sexual behaviour before they are healed, their risks to acquiring HIV soar. Similarly, undergoing circumcision does not make one “immune” to the disease and thus the procedure must be placed within the wider HIV-prevention context.

V. The Policy Brief: Policy Recommendations

This will be our very last section, and in many ways we have anticipated it from the beginning. While it is often a good idea of sketching out in advance what the policy options or recommendations are, sometimes the sheer act of writing a policy brief will make certain, unthought-of options suddenly clear. Depending on the nature of our research, there may be three equally valuable options, and we may prefer none of them but simply provide an objective assessment of each, outlining their pros, cons and cost implications. More likely, though, there will be an option or set of options that we prefer and will advocate for. Policy briefs are an opportunity for advocacy. They are ideal, short pieces that can outline why our particular recommendation is the best one to address the problem or situation at hand.

In our particular circumcision example, we present three options that flow logically from our discussion. After our section on the science and then our section on the implications of that science, our options are, in a way, like final conclusions, a road-map of the possible way ahead.

Though there are a range of options here, we have selected two that closely follow the discussion, and one that does not. This last option is designed instead to provoke and stimulate further thinking. We will use a brief introduction to reiterate why action is necessary and then, again briefly, weigh the merits of each option and the possible costs. Again, let us break this down into statements, consider the relevant points to support each statement, and then write up this final section of the brief.

Statement One

Form a multi-stakeholder committee to discuss and map the context of male circumcision both culturally and scientifically, while also examining its implications as an HIV-prevention intervention.

This recommendation has a number of advantages. Firstly, it allows the government to send a signal that it is taking the circumcision issue seriously but cautiously, without needing to commit itself to any immediate action or binding policy. Secondly, given the complexity and ambiguity of the issue, it allows the major stakeholders – from communities to cultural leaders to other researchers to policymakers themselves – to discuss the issue and to arrive at a policy or policies that has wider buy-in and acceptance. Given that there is no clear-cut way forward and that all we have at the moment are the results of randomised controlled trials – as opposed to the findings from implementation research – then this option is clearly an attractive one. The government sends a message yet commits only to listening. Additionally, the committee may well devise the set of policies the Ministry requires to move forward, with all considerations taken on-board. The costs of this would be high in terms of time but low in terms of funding. It would likely require leadership from the Ministry in establishing an inclusive committee, in setting rules for the committee's functionings, and in convening meetings, with all the relevant delegate travel

expenses, per diems and even sitting fees included.

Statement Two

Commission multi-disciplinary research into male circumcision and HIV, emphasizing financing options, the broader socio-cultural and HIV-prevention context, and potential delivery mechanisms.

This recommendation also carries strong advantages. We know, and have already discussed in our brief, that the phenomenon of circumcision as an HIV-prevention intervention has not been studied in anything other than a biomedical sense and it is therefore incumbent upon us to investigate the socio-cultural context before proceeding. The knowledge generated from investigations into financing options, the socio-cultural and HIV context, the potential delivery options – and even the experiences of ARV implementation – would provide a wealth of evidence that could underpin any future policy or set of policies. This would also signal the government's commitment to resolving the issue. However, there is the perception that research is expensive and takes too long to complete, and these are important notions to consider. How quickly does the government require an answer? The cost of this policy would depend on the research methodology selected.

Let us not rule out combining policy option one with policy option two as in many ways they complement each other. In fact, this may well be the approach that we advocate upon concluding this policy option section.

Statement Three

Make male circumcision free and immediately available to all.

This is our radical suggestion, and we make it knowing full well that the government is unlikely to take such a course. However, making such a recommendation could push the boundaries of the debate, and force immediate high-level considerations of implementation. This recommendation would show, above all, that the government is committed to HIV-prevention and is making the welfare of its citizens a top priority. However, the pitfalls to such an approach are numerous, given that the context is largely unknown, the financial implications would be enormous, and capacities of the health system would likely be severely strained.

Even though we could not advocate such a position, describing it as objectively as possible may well work in the favour of the options we do recommend. Remember, the first reaction of any policymaker reading this brief could be, *Well we must make circumcision free to all*, but upon reading through our careful deliberations and talking points may well come to his/her own conclusion that such a move is likely premature.

Now that we've sketched out our three policy options, let's write up our final section and conclude with our own recommendation for the way forward.

The Policy Options

It is incumbent upon the Ministry to address these findings and act upon them. There is high demand among males for this procedure, and it could very well represent a significant step towards achieving lower rates of HIV acquisition. Though there are a range of options available to the Ministry at this point, three recommendations seem the most viable at this point in time.

1. *Form a multi-stakeholder committee to discuss and map the context of male circumcision both culturally and scientifically, while also examining its implications as an HIV-prevention intervention.* To investigate the issue appropriately, the Ministry must form an inclusive committee comprised of community members, religious leaders, researchers, Ministry staff, and any other concerned groups. It must establish rules for the functionings of this committee, and it must charge the committee with devising viable policy options within a tight timeframe. Time costs would be high, but financial costs low.

2. *Commission multi-disciplinary research into male circumcision and HIV, emphasizing financing options, the broader socio-cultural and HIV-prevention context, and potential delivery mechanisms.* The Ministry must investigate the socio-cultural dimensions of male circumcision as an HIV-prevention tool. Beyond the biomedical findings of this intervention, little is known in terms of how it might actually work in a range of different contexts. The experience of implementing ARVs may be a useful set of experiences to draw upon. Time costs of this research would be high – up to two years or more – and financial costs would depend on the methodologies selected.

3. *Make male circumcision free and immediately available to all.* Given the landmark importance of the findings, the Ministry must act immediately and provide the intervention to all who want it. This would show the Ministry's commitment to the health and safety of its citizens, and also its commitment to reducing the spread of HIV. Financial costs of this procedure would be significant and recurring.

In light of the above options, we believe that the Ministry should proceed with a combination of the first and second recommendations. Implementing this intervention requires careful planning and an in-depth examination of current health system capabilities, cultural practices and responses, and an investigation into the safety and public-awareness campaigns that must accompany such an intervention for successful implementation. Above all, the Ministry must respond cautiously and comprehensively, and requires a more robust evidence-base upon which to base further action.

For more information on this, see the full article at <www....> or directly contact <name> at <phone number> and <email>.

And there we have it. A complex, thorough policy brief that has dissected an extremely difficult issue and made it relevant and “human” for a select audience. Now all we need to do is cut and paste our individual sections into our two-page document – and, if we have them, create or include some pictures or graphics that both demonstrate the research and give the eye a “break” from straight text.

However, we now have one slight problem. Upon cutting and pasting our work into a two-pager, we realize that we have almost three pages of text. Should we shrink the font? Expand the margins? The answer to both is a resounding NO! We need to review our three pages and delete where we can. Remember, the objective is not to cram as much information as possible into two pages. It’s to express, elegantly and concisely, what the problem is, what the considerations are, and what the policy options might be.

Along the same lines, keep the choice of font a simple one. Let’s restrict ourselves to the widely-used fonts so as not to jar our audience with something unexpected or aesthetically suspect. Suggested fonts would be *garamond*, *times new roman*, *century*, *arial* and *helvetica*.

Of course, even the best-written policy brief that considers and addresses every last angle of importance will have no effect whatsoever unless it gets into the hands of the people who need to read it. In *Chapter Four* of this Toolkit, we discuss communications strategies, with practical tips and tools for giving research a greater visibility.

Male circumcision and HIV/AIDS: What are the policy options?

In December of 2006, randomised controlled trials of male circumcision in Kenya and Uganda showed such a strong protective benefit against HIV infection – 53% and 51% respectively – that the research was stopped on ethical grounds. This series of events is compelling and significant. Could male circumcision become a front-line intervention in the fight against HIV/AIDS? Certainly, the findings in Kenya and Uganda were not accidental or even unexpected. Indeed, they confirm the landmark findings of a similar study in South Africa, which also reported high levels of circumcision protecting men from HIV. Additionally, the research makes clear that circumcision may well be a cost-effective tool not only in the fight against HIV but also against other hazards in sexual and reproductive health. Beyond any doubt, the research demonstrates conclusively that male circumcision leads to a dramatic drop in HIV infection in men, and this has strong implications for those involved in research, policy and implementation.

Implementing male circumcision as an HIV-prevention intervention will have a number of effects on the health system, on cultural practices, and to be effective must be accompanied by safety measures and public-awareness campaigns. While the science behind the intervention protecting men from acquiring HIV is sound, the implementation and operationalization of these findings will require high-level attention to a range of complex issues. This brief will examine some of the key points in moving forward, and will then conclude with three firm policy options.

Discussion

1. Health Systems: Implementation of male circumcision as an HIV-prevention intervention may strain the human and financial resources of health systems. Experience has already shown that the research has resulted in a spike in the demand for circumcision. Central to this intervention are the key and interrelated questions of: who will pay for it? Who will deliver it? Will increased attention to one intervention affect other disease prevention strategies? And how can this intervention be integrated into the overall HIV-prevention strategy?

Financial Implications

- Should the government investigate whether it can absorb some or all of the costs?
- Will free circumcision place an overwhelming burden on health systems?

Human Resource Implications

A key issue with this intervention is deciding *who* should deliver it (physicians and/or nurses and/or traditional healers/surgeons) and *how*, leading into further considerations of the needed training. There are strong lessons and experiences here from ARV delivery.

- Have basic *competency levels* in delivering this intervention been established?
- Is male circumcision a *clinical practice* and thus an act that should not be performed by traditional healers/surgeons? Will this affect the people who can access it?

2. Cultural Responses: Circumcision carries major religious, social and cultural meanings for large parts of the population. There are enduring cultural practices of circumcision as a rite of passage, and significant levels of stigma around the practice, both positive and negative. Therefore, no national policy on circumcision could realistically proceed without

first *mapping the context* of existing practices and of existing research on those practices. There is a strong need for national fora that can bring together a range of stakeholders to discuss their views of the intervention. There is also a pressing need for further multidisciplinary research into the phenomenon.

3. Safety and Education.

While circumcision does provide certain medical benefits, it is not without risks and as a result must be accompanied by safety measures and public-awareness campaigns. Central here is the question of *when* the intervention is delivered. Circumcising adults presents a number of important safety questions. At this later stage in life, the procedure is more complex, results in more complications, and generates additional HIV concerns. Undergoing circumcision does not make one “immune” to the disease and thus aggressive public-awareness campaigns must place the intervention within the wider prevention context.

The Policy Options

It is incumbent upon the Ministry to address these findings and act upon them. Circumcision could very well be a significant step towards achieving lower rates of HIV acquisition. Three policy recommendations are the most viable at this point in time.

Form a multi-stakeholder committee to discuss and map the context of male circumcision both culturally and scientifically, while also examining its implications as an HIV-prevention intervention. To achieve this, the Ministry must form an inclusive committee comprised of community members, religious leaders, researchers, and Ministry staff. It must charge the committee with devising viable policy options within a tight timeframe. Time costs would be high, but financial costs low.

Commission multi-disciplinary research into male circumcision and HIV, emphasizing financing options, the broader socio-cultural and HIV-prevention context, and potential delivery mechanisms. Beyond the biomedical findings of this intervention, little is known in terms of how it might actually work in a range of different contexts, and thus further research into the phenomenon is required. Time costs would be high – up to two years or more – and financial costs would depend on the methodologies selected.

Make male circumcision free and immediately available to all. Given the landmark importance of the findings, the Ministry must act immediately and provide the intervention to all who want it. This would show the Ministry’s strong commitment to the fight against HIV. Financial costs of this procedure would be significant and recurring.

In light of the above options, we believe that the Ministry should proceed with a combination of the first and second recommendations. Implementing this intervention requires careful planning and an in-depth examination of existing capabilities and potential responses. The Ministry must respond cautiously and comprehensively, and, above all else, *requires a more robust evidence-base upon which to base any future policy or action.*

For more information on this, please see the full article at <www.the.lancet.com> or directly contact <name> at <phone number> and <email>.

Systematic Reviews

A Brief Overview

Every year, researchers and scientists publish over three million new articles in biomedical journals, each adding height to a substantial mountain of evidence. What is so often lost in this accumulation of new science is *perspective*: for instance, should we value one study over another? How does one new study relate to decades of work on the subject? *Systematic Reviews* are an essential means of transport to the top of that mountain of science, giving us a broad yet detailed view of all the results and evidence we need to understand our particular field of inquiry. In terms of Knowledge Translation, systematic reviews are a unique and extremely powerful tool, but only for a very particular audience. They are targeted to researchers and medical practitioners, and serve most of all to capture and to deepen the scientific state-of-the-art.

Their evolution has taken centuries. As early as the 17th century, astronomers began to see the value of combining data sets instead of choosing between one and the other. In the 19th and 20th centuries, many such efforts focused on the social sciences, particularly psychology and education.ⁱ No matter the field of inquiry, however, routine attempts have been made to synthesize the results of various medical studies, particularly in simplifying the eventual clinical decisions of medical practitioners.

For a long time, narrative reviews – *qualitative summaries of evidence* – were used to overcome the limitations of single studies. However, these reviews were often subjective and predisposed to bias, error and selective inclusion of studies. They were an important evolutionary step, however, as narrative reviews were in many ways the precursor to systematic reviews. If done properly, systematic reviews allow us to confidently overcome the pitfalls of comparing and contrasting science, creating in the end a rigorous synthesis that details – fairly and objectively – all relevant knowledge on the subject at hand. For this reason, they are a superb KT tool, as they can directly bring evidence (and innovations) to bear on practice. By summarizing the

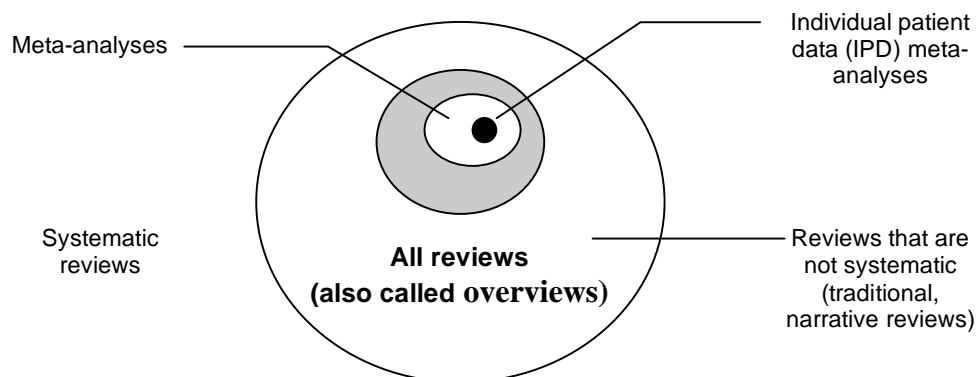
results of a myriad individual studies *and further*, by evaluating the effectiveness of specific interventions, systematic reviews are a cornerstone of evidence-based medicine.

sys•te•ma•tic: (adj) Arranged or conducted according to a system, plan, or organized method; involving or observing a system.
Source: The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Volume II, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985

What is a Systematic Review?

Systematic reviews assist a range of audiences in making evidence-based decisions about the effectiveness of specific interventions, especially in the social, behavioral and educational fields. In the medical arena, they can be defined as “explicitly formulated, reproducible, and up-to-date summaries of the effects of health care interventions.”ⁱⁱ As opposed to narrative reviews, they use a very structured method that is always explicitly stated at the beginning of the review. In the case of traditional narrative reviews – which are usually written by an expert in the field under consideration – the author’s views might be reflected in the review. Systematic reviews, on the other hand, are usually prepared by a team of at least two reviewers that have a thorough understanding of both the clinical area they are examining, as well as the methodology required of a systematic review. Thus, the process behind a systematic review minimizes – without altogether eliminating – human error and bias.

Systematic reviews should not, however, be confused with meta-analyses, which are in effect a statistical analysis of the results from separate studies. While the latter are often included in systematic reviews, this is not always possible.



Source: Pai et al., 2004, p. 86

What is Critical Appraisal?

Critical appraisal is the process of carefully examining all aspects of the studies selected for inclusion in the systematic review. This detailed analysis involves breaking down the components of the study to evaluate characteristics of participants, outcome measures used, completeness of study follow up, and appropriateness of statistical measures. Critical appraisal – which lies at the very heart of a systematic review – requires dedicated time and expertise from systematic review researchers.

What are the advantages of a systematic review?

- Allows the reader to access, in a condensed format, the results of vast volumes of information;
- Objective in nature, thus reducing the risks of bias and error;
- Includes a broad range of studies which are identified via a thorough and systematic search strategy;
- Transparent process which allows the reader to know exactly how the conclusions were reached;
- Replicable;
- Can be updated on a regular basis;
- Helpful in identifying areas that are under-researched or in identifying new research questions;
- Presented in a format that is easy to read and understand.

What is the methodology behind a systematic review?

One of the great advantages of this type of review is its process: systematic reviews are both transparent and well-documented. In fact, reviewers must use as much rigor in conducting their review as is expected of the primary research they seek to summarize. In their illustrated “step-by-step guide” to systematic reviews, Pai et al. provide a good overview of the process by breaking it down into five chronological steps.ⁱⁱⁱ

1. Formulation of the question

Since there is little point in reinventing the wheel, and as should be the case before initiating any type of research or review, anyone intending to undertake a systematic review should ensure that no other such review is readily available. Once it has been determined that no such review exists, it is now time to proceed with the creation of the review protocol. At the heart of this protocol resides the *study question* that determines the focus of the review. This should address the **P**atient group, the **I**ntervention, the **C**omparison intervention, and the **O**utcome – **PICO**.^{iv}

For one example, a research question that incorporates all of these PICO elements might be: *Among children under the age of five living in rural settings (**patient**), does the use of insecticide-treated bed nets (**intervention**) lead to lower malaria prevalence rates (**outcome**) as compared to when non-treated nets are used (**comparison intervention**)?*

Systematic Review Protocols

The protocol is at the heart of the review and serves to make the research plan explicit as well as minimize bias. It is one of the main things that differentiate systematic from traditional reviews. Prepared by a team of at least two, the protocol is then appraised by an editorial team.

The website of the *Cochrane Collaboration* provides an extensive list of workshops and training courses offered by Cochrane Centers around the world, many of which focus on the process behind the development of a protocol.

In-depth information, in written form, about how to prepare reviews is also freely available from the Cochrane Collaboration, namely through the **Cochrane Reviewers' Handbook**, available at www.cochrane.org/resources/handbook as well as through the organization's **Open Learning Material** available at www.cochrane.org/resources/openlearning.

2. Search and inclusion of primary studies

As opposed to narrative reviews, systematic reviews represent an attempt to identify and analyze all possible studies that fall within the scope of the review question. As such, restricting a search to a general database like MEDLINE is clearly insufficient; for example, only about half of all randomized-controlled trials (RCTs) can be identified using this tool.^v

Where to locate primary studies?

- Major databases;
- Reference of studies identified in databases;
- Unpublished studies (in order to avoid publication bias);
- Interviews with the authors of original studies when data is missing;
- Non-English language studies.

Identifying RCTs: The Cochrane Central Register

The Register is a bibliographical database of controlled trials that have been identified by a team of experts through hand and database searches. To date, the database includes reference to over 300,000 such health care trials, providing the title of the article, indicating where it was published and, in many but not all cases, an abstract. The register is available at www.cochrane.org and offers a useful search function that allows us to perform effective advanced searches.

3. Quality assessment and data extraction

A step that usually involves two independent reviewers, the *quality assessment* considers the value of the studies under consideration and their eligibility for inclusion according to the criteria included in the review question. Usually, studies are appraised for their methodological error, particularly to identify any possible sources of bias.

4. Synthesis and summary of study results

If applicable, this is the stage at which a meta-analysis will be used to pool together the statistical results from the various studies under review. The aim here is to combine the multiple findings in order to reach a conclusion on the clinical effectiveness of the intervention under consideration. When a *difference of effect* is detected across various studies, the source of this divergence can then be analyzed.

5. Interpretation

During this final stage, the synthesized study results are interpreted and the limitations of both the review and the studies included within it are discussed. As Pai et al. explain, “limitations of the primary studies, for example, may include issues relating to design flaws. Limitations of the reviews itself may include issues such as inclusion of only English language studies or inability to accurately interpret the summary estimates due to heterogeneity.”^{vi} This, in turn, allows the reader to judge for himself the value of the review and its conclusions. Finally, the review discusses the practical implications and applicability of the findings.

Where can I find systematic reviews?

The Cochrane Collaboration

The Cochrane Collaboration offers state-of-the-art systematic reviews of healthcare interventions. Established in 1993, the Cochrane Collaboration is an international non-profit and independent organization that produces and electronically

disseminates systematic reviews. It also provides resources for reviewers or individuals interested in learning how to produce a review. Currently, thousands of individuals – typically volunteers – are involved with the organization, which in turn collaborates with a myriad of centres throughout the world. Since 2000, the number of contributors from low, lower-middle and upper-middle income countries has increased by 248%.^{vii}

Reviews are available in two formats: on-line (www.cochranelibrary.com) or on CD-ROM. While all abstracts of reviews are freely obtainable, access to the full-text versions is restricted to subscribers. In many cases, however, countries have made arrangements to provide free-access to their nationals, as is the case in Australia, Denmark, England, Finland, Ireland, Scotland, South Africa, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and Wales. Specific programmes are also in place to provide free-access in lower and middle-income countries. Information on these free access programmes is available on the organization’s website.

The screenshot shows the Wiley InterScience website for The Cochrane Library, Issue 2, 2007. The page includes a search bar with a dropdown menu for 'Advanced Search', 'MeSH Search', 'Search History', and 'Saved Searches'. A callout box points to the search bar with the text 'Open the advanced search interface'. Below the search bar, there is a 'Welcome to The Cochrane Library' section with a list of 'What's New in Issue 2, 2007?' including items like 'Wholegrain cereals for coronary heart disease' and 'Routinely abdominal drainage for uncomplicated open cholecystectomy'. A callout box points to this section with the text 'Basic facts about systematic reviews'. On the right side, there are several sections for different audiences: 'Help! New Users Start Here', 'For Clinicians', 'For Researchers', 'For Patients', and 'For Policy Makers'. A callout box points to these sections with the text 'Information targeted to different audiences'.

When looking for reviews, one of the Collaboration’s most useful “entities” are the Review Groups. Numbering over 50, these groups focus on specific areas of health and each consist of a team of reviewers as well as an editorial base. The complete list of groups, which are hosted in centres around the world, is available at www.cochrane.org/contacts/entities.htm#centres.

The screenshot shows the Cochrane Library search page. The main search area is titled 'Advanced Search' and includes a search box and a 'Search' button. Below the search box, there are several dropdown menus for selecting search fields: 'Search All Text', 'Second Title', 'Author', 'Abstract', and 'Keywords'. A callout box points to these dropdowns with the text: 'The advanced search interface allows us to search for keywords in 10 different fields'. Below the search area, there is a section for 'Restrict Search by Product' with a list of checkboxes. A callout box points to this section with the text: 'If we already know what we are looking for, we can limit our search to specific Cochrane products such as reviews, clinical trials, methods studies, etc.'.

The Campbell Collaboration

Also an international non-profit organization, the Campbell Collaboration prepares and disseminates systematic reviews in electronic format. Building on the work of the Cochrane Collaboration whose own work focuses on the health care sector, these reviews focus on studies that discuss the effects of policies and practices. Specifically, reviews cover studies about the effects of interventions in social, educational and behavioral areas and are available at www.campbellcollaboration.org.

Currently, the Collaboration consists of six Coordinating Groups, each with their area of specialization. All identify topics, contributors, and users of reviews; assists reviewers in the process of conducting reviews; and ultimately disseminates the reviews. The six groups are:

- The Campbell Collaboration Crime and Justice Coordinating Group;
- The Campbell Collaboration Education Coordinating Group;
- The Campbell Collaboration Social Welfare Coordinating Group;
- The Campbell Collaboration Methods Coordinating Group;
- The Campbell Collaboration Users Group; and,

- The Campbell Collaboration Communication and Internationalization Coordinating Group.

The **Campbell Collaboration Library** consists of two databases to which online access is provided free of charge:

- The Campbell (C2) Social, Psychological, Education, and Criminological Trials Registry (C2-SPECTR) which contains over 11,700 entries on randomized and possibly randomized trials; and,
- The C2 Reviews of Interventions and Policy Evaluations (C2-RIPE) containing approved titles, protocols, reviews, and abstracts.

How can I learn how to do a Systematic Review?

There is a strong demand among researchers and KT professionals to learn how to undertake systematic reviews. Fortunately, there is a wealth of information on the internet, and also, more critically, courses offered at various centres throughout the world. Systematic reviews are, for their rigour, extremely difficult and should never be tried at home (i.e. only professionals trained in the arts of systematic reviews should undertake them). Centres that periodically offer systematic review training courses include:

The Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI)

<http://www.joannabriggs.edu/au/about/home.php>

The South African Cochrane Centre

<http://www.mrc.ac.za/cochrane/cochrane.htm>

Resources

- **Training resources produced by the Cochrane Promotion and Public Health (HPPH) Field:** <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/cochrane/training/>
This website provides a handbook, guidelines, a day course workbook, a train-the-trainer handbook, powerpoint slides, links to courses, guides to handsearching, and more.
- The **Centre for Reviews and Dissemination at University of York, UK**, organizes training days for information professionals involved in systematic reviews: <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd/infosrcourse.htm>
- The **Cochrane Collaboration Training Homepage:** <http://www.cochrane.org/resources/training.htm>
Provides online resources, a training email list to which you can subscribe, workshop listings, and more.
- **Other Cochrane Centres workshop pages:**
 - Australasian Cochrane Centre workshop page (<http://www.cochrane.org.au/workshops/workshop.htm>);
 - Brazilian Cochrane Centre (<http://www.centrocochranedobrasil.org/>);

- Canadian Cochrane Centre workshop page (<http://www.cochrane.uottawa.ca/workshops.asp>);
- Dutch Cochrane Centre workshop page (<http://145.117.214.42/DCC/main.html?x=3&y=1>);
- Iberoamerican Cochrane Centre Agenda (<http://www.cochrane.es/Agenda>);
- Nordic Cochrane Centre workshop page (<http://www.cochrane.dk/ncc/courses.htm>);
- US Cochrane Center workshop page (<http://www.cochrane.us/workshops.htm>).
- **National Health Service Center for Reviews and Dissemination.**
Undertaking systematic reviews of research and effectiveness. York, England: University of York: <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd/report4.htm>

Endnotes

ⁱ Matthias Egger, George Davey Smith and Keith O'Rourke, 2001. "Rationale, potentials, and promise of systematic reviews." In *Systematic Reviews in Health Care*, Matthias Egger, George Davey Smith and Douglas Altman (Eds), 2nd Edition.

ⁱⁱ Matthias Egger, George Davey Smith and Keith O'Rourke, 2001, 4.

ⁱⁱⁱ Madhukar Pai et al., 2004. "Systematic reviews and meta-analyses: An illustrated, step-by-step guide." *The National Medical Journal of India*, 17(2): 86-95.

^{iv} Ibid, 86.

^v The Systematic Review Study Group, 2005. "Searching for Trials." *Systematic Review Home Page*, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, <http://ssrc.tums.ac.ir/systematicreview/>

^{vi} Pai et al., 2004, 94

^{vii} *Newcomer's Guide to the Cochrane Collaboration*, The Cochrane Collaboration, October 2004, available at www.cochrane.org



Chapter

8

Desktop Publishing: Creating a Newsletter

A Brief Overview

We have all read dozens of newsletters – some good, some outstanding, and some less so. What differentiates the good from the bad? What makes one newsletter stand apart from another? Though a newsletter is typically short and sweet (rarely exceeding two pages), reducing complex ideas and events into something brief and punchy is a very difficult task. There are elements of design to consider, then the content to include (and what not to include), and perhaps most centrally (yet again!) the considerations of our audience. Who will ultimately read our newsletter and how much do they want or need to know about our activities?

As outlined in *Chapter Four* and *Chapter Five*, when viewed within the overall perspective of a communications strategy, a newsletter is used primarily to promote the visibility of an organization and its activities. It might serve as a vehicle to highlight research findings, to announce a special event, or just to keep the reader up-to-date on our various activities. Whatever its content, a newsletter is for informational purposes: if successful, it will leave the reader wanting more. Like a good two-pager, it cannot give all the important information, but it will point the interested to further resources. Like a good two-pager, it is an appetizer that will ideally leave the diner wanting more.

In this chapter, we will create a simple, straightforward newsletter in step-by-step fashion, using several desktop publishing tools that many of us already have on our

computers. The main tool will be Microsoft Word – chosen for its ubiquity as opposed to its utility. We would prefer to advocate the use of Open Source software like Open Office, but to start things off, we will use the software that we already have. MSWord is an extremely bulky tool for desktop publishing, and has many shortcomings. However, the more we understand these obstacles, the greater we can navigate around them. And if we keep our newsletter simple, then the frustrations of publishing with MSWord will fade. In this chapter, we will:

- make some content decisions by reviewing our materials;
- perform some “reverse engineering” on a newsletter we’d like to borrow some ideas from;
- develop a logo and a banner (or masthead);
- crop, resize and reduce (or shrink) photographs;
- use text boxes;
- download photographs from the internet;
- create a distribution list.

Some basic definitions

Open Source: Software whose source code – the version of the software as originally written – is made available for anyone to study, inspect and use.

Freeware: “Software that is available at no monetary cost but for which the source code is not made freely available.”¹

Shareware: Software obtained free of charge, “accompanied by a request for payment”; “try before you buy”.²

Listserv: An electronic mailing (or distribution) list. Sometimes spelled “listserve”.

Public Domain: The body of knowledge “in relation to which no person or other legal entity can establish or maintain proprietary interests ... This body of information and creativity anyone may use or exploit, whether for commercial or non-commercial purposes.”²

¹ Open Source Definition. The Linux Information Project, January 2007. Available at: http://www.linfo.org/open_source.html

² From <http://www.wikipedia.org>

1. The audience

We put this section first not to discuss it again – for more on the audience or the “target,” please refer to *Chapter Three* on Context Mapping and *Chapter Five* on Print Communications – but merely to remind ourselves, again, that our audience will dictate everything that is to appear in our newsletter. If we know that we want to inform the general public in our country or region about our recent activities, then we must develop relatively simple and straightforward content that does not delve into complex science, but rather points the truly interested to further resources. However,

if we are to attend a large global conference of experts, for instance, and we want something in our hands to give to our fellow researchers or donors, then we can certainly craft a newsletter that has much more complexity.

2. The content, the design, the quality and the size

Now that we've (roughly) sketched out our audience, we can ask ourselves the next big question: who is going *to write* the newsletter? Do we have the time and ability to do it? Is there someone else in our organization whom we can task? Ideally, the template of the newsletter will be done by someone with decent technical expertise, and we will contribute with our "big picture" ideas. We know the audience, and we know what they need to read; hopefully there is someone else in the organization who can take care of the design work. If not, then we will just follow the steps below and do it ourselves. We need to budget about fifteen-twenty hours to do this properly. We also need to admit in advance that this will be a trial-and-error operation – and to expect lots of mistakes!

In terms of the content from a design point-of-view here are a few key tips:

- The logo and the banner (or masthead) must be splashy and must capture the reader's attention at a glance. We might use colour here, but most of all we want something clean, elegant, and professional that will lure the intrigued into reading the bulk of our content. A bad or confused or overly complex masthead might leave one with the impression that this is not professional, and that the content beneath will be equally as amateur.
- Make the text variable. We might use columns or text boxes or bullets to give the eye different elements to take in, and we will certainly use plenty of *white space* (a place *without* content: an emptiness). We do not want to cram as much information as possible into two or four pages here. We want to keep it simple.
- Include different types of information. We may have some results we want to highlight, we may want to show what our future plans are, we may want to report on a conference we attended, there might be a future event of importance, we may want to feature or profile a particular researcher or member of the organization, and we most certainly want to include links to further information, resources, and ways our readers can contact us.
- Include different types of media: photos, cartoons, text boxes, anything that gives the eye a break from straight text.

Two last points here deserve mention. If our audience will consist primarily of those in our country or region, and if our means of dissemination will be chiefly electronic (email or internet), we need to be extremely sensitive to two issues: quality and size. We are likely less interested in disseminating a high-quality, high-resolution newsletter that has a lot of colour or shades of gray because our recipients will be less likely to print it, as it will consume a lot of expensive printer cartridge ink – and make no

mistake, *we want our recipients to print our newsletter*. People tend to scan information on their computer screens, without absorbing it as deeply as they do the written word. Especially when recipients must pay for their own printer cartridges and paper, the less we use of both the better.

Secondly, we must keep our newsletter small enough (in terms of computer filesize) so that those with a slow internet connection will be able to download it. This point is critical. We must keep our eye on the size of our document: this element alone can sink our efforts. We'll review both of these elements in the below sections.

Creating a Simple Newsletter

1. Review of materials

Remember Dr. Bight from *Chapter Three*? Let us put ourselves in his shoes and imagine that we are a small research NGO. We've existed for about five years and are a total of four employees: the principal investigator (Dr. Bight), a research assistant, an IT/KT/KM staff member, and an office manager/assistant. We've undertaken about four different research projects in that time. We've contributed papers to a regional network, and have published several in different international journals. We're now embarking on a massive new project, looking at the effectiveness of indoor residual spraying of DDT for malaria vector control. A new senior researcher has just joined our ranks and a foreign donor is committing significant funding and an intern to us for parts of this project. We'll need to acquire more office space and perhaps another research assistant.

We need to tell the world about what we're doing. Perhaps something that announces to a very general public who we are and what we've achieved; something that the foreign donor can also use to show the type of quality partner it has in the field. We also want to inform the government about what we are doing and entice them to become involved. Additionally, there is an important conference in two weeks in Cape Town, and we want to have something we can hand out to all those who might be interested in our work.

So our **audience** is set: very general. It is an audience that will not understand or even want to understand our research, our science, our methodology or our tools. This audience wants to know about our results, and why our work matters in the grand scheme of things.

Our **content** is also set: the anchor for our newsletter is the new project. We also want to feature our new senior researcher, and we want to bring attention to some of the projects, articles and *successes* we've had in the past. We want to give the

impression that our organization is on the rise, and that we are doing exemplary, cutting-edge work.

Unfortunately, our IT/KM/KT person is in the field helping set up some data collection units and sensitizing communities. She would be the natural fit to do this work, but we must take it on ourselves – it’s too urgent to wait. Though we’re not at all happy about this, we soon realize that doing the newsletter ourselves will really be no problem at all.

2. Reverse Engineering

Before we panic and say to ourselves that we have no idea how to proceed, let’s go to a few websites and download their newsletter and see how others have done this same task. This is a form of *reverse engineering*, where we take a final product and then disassemble it step-by-step to see how all the small parts went into the end result.

The diagram illustrates the process of reverse engineering two newsletters. It features two sample newsletters with various callout boxes highlighting specific design and content elements:

- Top Left Callout:** "Simple title; date provided; pictures add flavour." (Points to the title and date on the 'RESEARCH MATTERS newsletter' sample.)
- Top Right Callout:** "Quick description of the project's mandate and funders." (Points to the introductory paragraph on the 'RESEARCH MATTERS newsletter' sample.)
- Middle Left Callout:** "Lots of white space: not too much information." (Points to the layout of the 'KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT' sample.)
- Middle Right Callout:** "Simple logo; organization name in large type and in different formats." (Points to the 'research matters' logo on the 'RESEARCH MATTERS newsletter' sample.)
- Center Callout:** "Text boxes give the eye a break from straight text" (Points to a text box on the 'KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT' sample.)
- Bottom Left Callout:** "Picture with small amount of colour to change mood" (Points to a small image on the 'KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT' sample.)
- Bottom Center Callout:** "Too much text here? Reverse engineering isn't always positive: perhaps we see the mistakes or things we don't like and will change for our own." (Points to a large block of text on the 'KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT' sample.)
- Bottom Right Callout:** "Donors credited and logos reproduced." (Points to logos at the bottom of the 'RESEARCH MATTERS newsletter' sample.)
- Bottom Center Callout:** "Contact information and website address." (Points to the website URL 'www.research-matters.net' at the bottom of the 'KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT' sample.)

3. Development of a Logo

This should, ideally, be left to a professional or at least someone with a good grasp of software programs like Adobe's *InDesign* or *QuarkXpress*. However, there are easy ways of creating a logo using MSWord. We need to think carefully through this decision, though. A logo serves to brand an organization, and if the logo is of low quality, or if we think we will change it later, then we might be better served in holding off on creating a logo, and instead just put our organization's name in the masthead. People will remember our logo, so we need to ensure that we don't change it with every newsletter, and that it adequately captures the spirit of our organization.

Tip 1: When we embark on desktop publishing, there is one mantra that we must repeat and respect: *trial and error*. We will make a thousand mistakes doing this, something won't look right, or we just won't be happy with something we've done. Keep trying. Keep experimenting and testing. And keep saving our work. We can always use the 'Save As...' to keep multiple versions of the document (e.g. Newsletter-v1.doc, Newsletter-v2.doc, Newsletter-v3.doc) in case we're not quite sure of our changes and want to check them (and even undo them) once we've done more experimenting.

Tip 2: Another trick we will use throughout this section is the use of a **text box**. This can be found in MSWord under 'Insert' > 'Text Box'. These are superb ways of grouping small bits of text together. The viewer only knows it is a text box if we turn on its border. If not, it appears as just more text, yet we can manipulate it much more easily.

To develop our logo, let's insert a text box into an open, blank document.

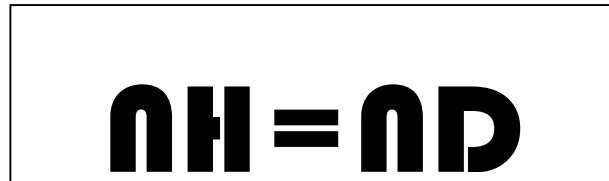


Inside this text box, let's now type the name or acronym of our organization. In our fictitious example, the name of our NGO is National Health = National Development (NH=ND). We want the full name to appear in the logo, but for now let's focus on the acronym. It's smaller and easier to manipulate. Let's insert it into the text box, by moving the mouse inside the box and clicking. Then we'll see our cursor blinking inside the box.



Now we have some choices. How big do we want the letters to be? What colour? What will be the ultimate size of the logo? Do we want it in a corner or do we want this to be the banner or masthead for the newsletter?

We're going to make it the masthead, so we're going to expand the font size to fill the box. Use the mouse to highlight the NH=ND we've just typed in. Then, by going to 'Format' > 'Font' we can see the chosen effects (font, size and colour) on screen. We can in fact scroll through all the different fonts to see which ones we like.



Remember: this is the first thing that anyone looking at our newsletter will see, so we need to capture our spirit using a careful selection of font. Does the above example (using font Bauhaus 93; size 48) really capture the mood and spirit of our organization? We are a research NGO, so we may want to choose something a little bit more sober and professional. This is not an art project after all.



Newsletter

OK. We are happy with this (Colonna MT; font size 36 and 12). It is distinctive, strong and bold, something to take seriously. We've shaded the text box for an extra effect – doing this by right-clicking on the edges of the text box, clicking 'Format Text Box' and then picking a shade of grey inside the 'Fill' options. And we've put the full name of our NGO below the acronym, but in small type so as not to distract. Let's put it aside for the moment and work on another element. This time we want to have the word "Newsletter" in bold, so that people know that what they're holding is, in fact, a newsletter. Let's copy the above example and use a long textbox that goes vertically up the side of our newsletter – just like the newsletter we "reverse engineered".

Note that we've used the exact same font here, though it is a smaller size (40). Once we've selected a font we must stay with it and be consistent. There is nothing more distracting than a document that is littered with different font types. Two fonts will do: one for our banner, and one for

our text. To rotate the text vertically, we've placed our cursor inside the text box and then selected 'Format' > 'Text Direction' from the top menu. There, we've simply selected the desired orientation.

Let's put this aside for a moment as well. We now have two elements for the template of our newsletter (as in, we can use this formula again and again, we just need to change the content but the form can remain the same).

The next step we want to do is to include a few photographs in our newsletter – something pleasing to the eye, and something that brings our text alive. We have to be extremely careful with our selection of photos: we need images that fit our mandate. We want photos that illustrate exactly what we do. We also need something that is simple, clean, will reproduce well on any printer (without taking too much cartridge ink), and not be too large to affect download time.

We want two photos. One we already have on our computer – we took it ourselves. The other is on a website we once visited. Now we want to go to that site and download it. We are confident that there are no copyright restrictions on the photo (it is in the public domain), and thus will not be “stealing” intellectual property if we in turn use it to illustrate the activities of our organization. However, we want to be sure to give the original source its due credit, so we should take pains to include a small text alongside the photo citing the original source.

4. Cropping, Resizing, and Shrinking Photographs

In a very limited number of cases, this task will be very straightforward. All we will need to do is to save the image the way it is and paste it into our newsletter. In many cases, however, photos on the internet or our hard drives are: too large (and will make our newsletter's size too big – in the megabytes instead of the kilobytes); too big for the space we have available for them (and thus we must resize them); or contain unnecessary parts that we wish to cut (or crop). Fortunately, there is an easy way to accomplish all three of these tasks. Below is a step-by-step guide to saving pictures, cropping and resizing them, and inserting them into our document. To assist us in this process, we will need to download easy-to-use – and freely available – software (or *freeware*) that we can find on the internet: *Photogadget*.¹

1) Installing *Photogadget*

First, we will need to visit the company's website: www.xemico.com/photogadget. Now, all we need to do is follow a few steps and freely download the program.

¹ Note that this is freeware, not open source software and is thus liable to change with time – with its developers possibly charging users to download it or limiting the functionality of the free version. A search engine can be used to find other software that can do the same core tasks of cropping, resizing and shrinking.



That wasn't too complicated, was it? Now, we are ready to surf the internet in search of an image that we can insert into our newsletter.

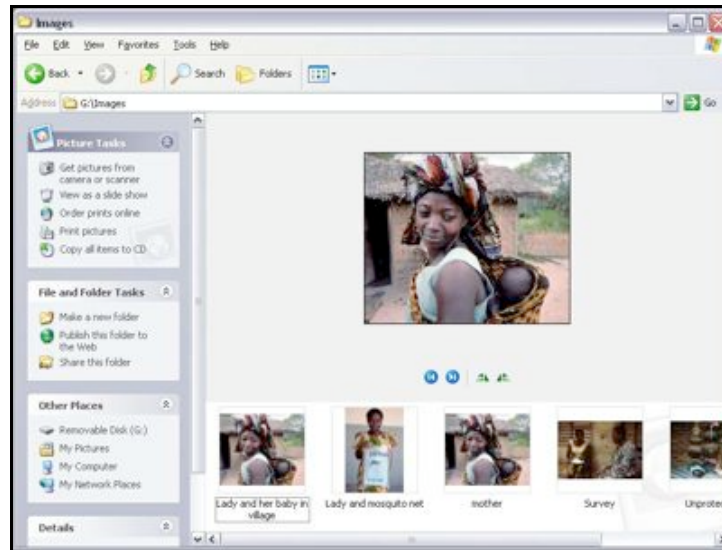
2) Selecting and saving our image.

So we have found the picture that suits our needs, now what? We need to download that image from the internet – in other words we need to save it onto our own computer. Then, we will be able to resize it, crop it, and more.

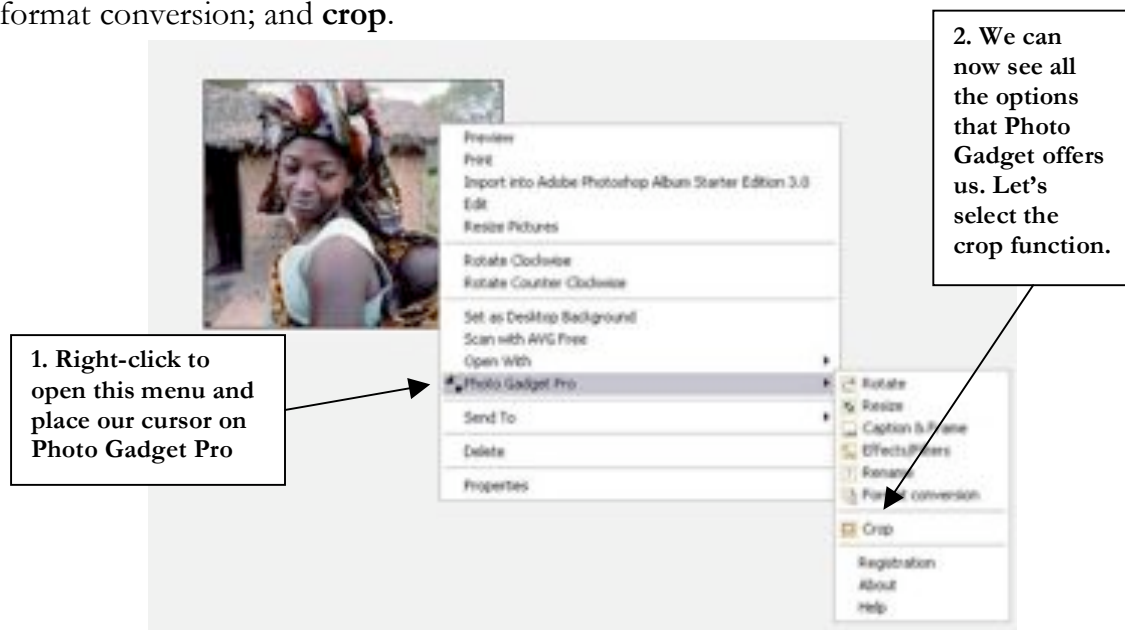


3) Cropping our image

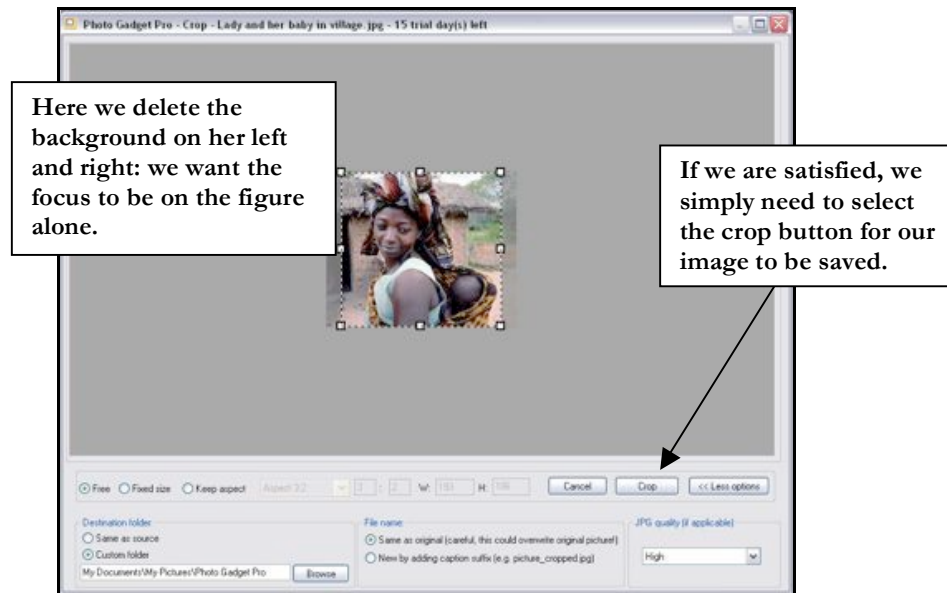
In some cases, we will find that we do not need to use the whole picture as we want to focus the audience’s attention on a specific aspect of our image. This is called cropping. And now that we have installed *Photogadget* on our computer, doing so has become very simple. It will take only a few minutes of our time. First, let’s open our image into our image browser – in this case we will use Windows Explorer (right-click your mouse over the “Start” button to find the “Explorer” option).



Now, let’s right-click on the selected image. As we can see from the image below, ‘*Photo Gadget Pro*’ appears as one of our options: let’s select it. Now, we have a variety of options at our disposal: rotate; resize; caption & frame; effects/filters; rename; format conversion; and **crop**.



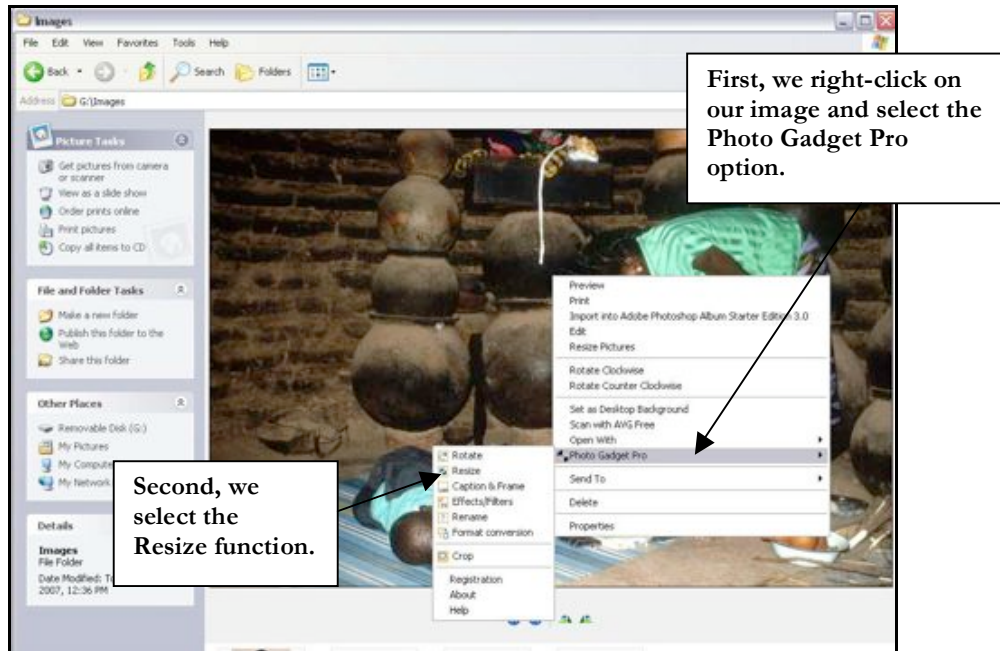
Once we have selected ‘Crop’ in the right-hand side menu above, a new window automatically opens. Now, all we have to do is use the cursor and select the area that we want to keep – for this particular image, we want to feature the figure and dispense with the background on either side of her. Once we are satisfied with our selection, we simply need to press the crop button, and voilà!



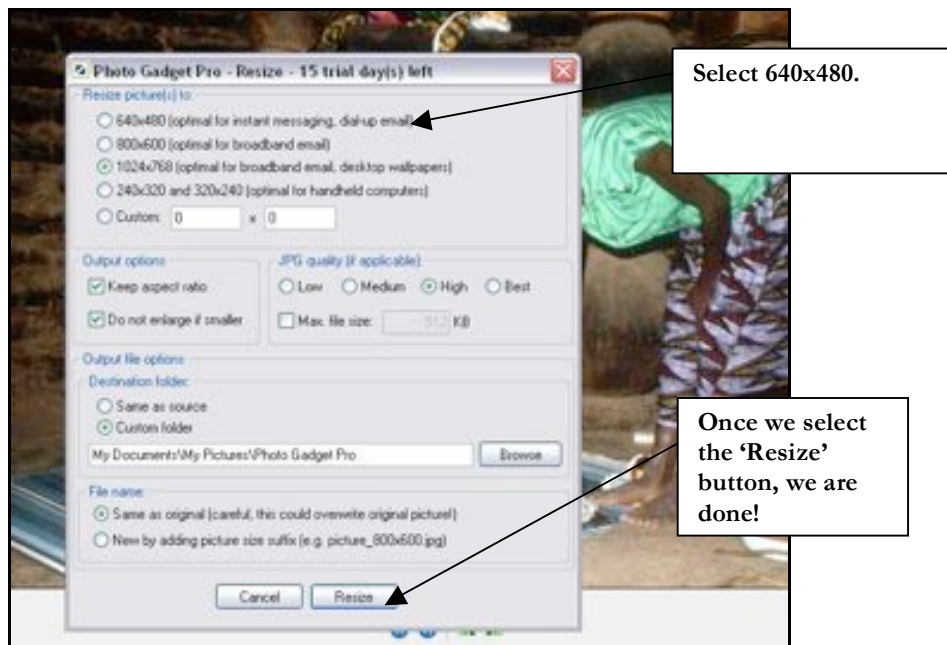
3) Resizing our image

We are satisfied with our first image – beyond design concerns, it perfectly targets an aspect of our research (maternal mortality) *and* one of our key audiences – mothers. It is a photo that adds a thousand words to our newsletter, letting images bring our work to life.

Our second image – which we already have on our computer – is too big. In other words, if we insert it into our newsletter as is, it will take up too much space (or memory), creating a memory-intensive newsletter that readers with slow internet connections will not be able to download and access. Using *Photogadget*, what we need to do now is to resize our image (making its size in a physical and a memory sense smaller). Again, we must first open our image using Windows Explorer. Once that is done, we will right-click on our selected picture, select the ‘*Photo Gadget Pro*’ option, and then select the resize option.



Selecting the resize option now opens up a new window, with a new set of options. We can now resize our image to suit our purposes. Because we know we will be sending the newsletter to individuals and organizations in countries with slow internet connections (including dial-up), we will select a smaller image format: 640x480. We could go to 320x240 but, after experimenting with this, we've decided that it reduces too greatly the quality of our image (remember: there is always a trade-off in quality when we compress the size). If we are unhappy with 640x480, we can experiment using the Custom box to find the right size. Once we have done this and are happy with our selection, we hit the 'Resize' button and the new version of our image will be saved.

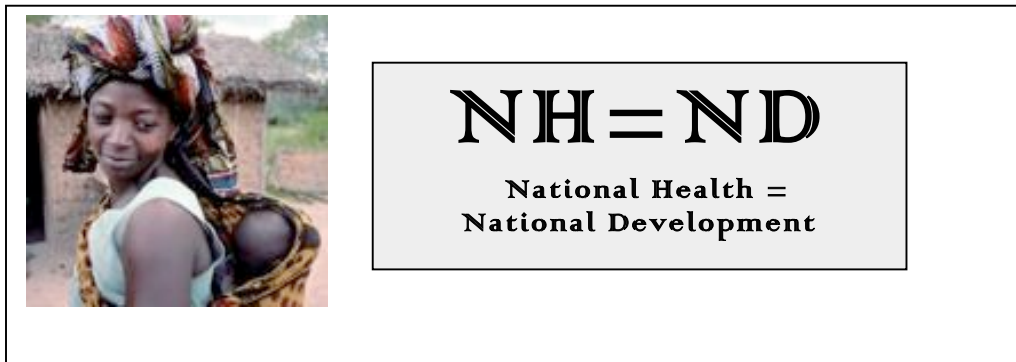


5. Completing the masthead

Let us now go back to our logo and add our pictures to it in order to finalize our banner or masthead. First, let's create a new textbox. In it, we'll insert the logo that we created earlier (we can do this by copying it and pasting it into the textbox).



To catch our reader's attention, we'll add the two pictures we saved earlier to our masthead. Again, we just place our cursor in the textbox and use the Insert function.



As you will notice, we might have to play around with the image, the logo and the textbox in order to make everything fit. While this might take us a few minutes, it's nothing we should be worried about. We can now insert our second image, this time to the right side of the logo. After right-clicking on the photos and selecting 'Borders and Shading' we've added borders to the photos.



Again, MsWord can be fussy; so don't be worried if you need to resize the images and the logo to obtain a satisfactory masthead. Trial-and-error is absolutey key.

6. Creating our content

Now that we have created our masthead and formatted our images, we should probably save the master template somewhere on our hard drive so that we can use it over and over again each time we create an updated newsletter.

We can now concentrate on the substance of our newsletter: the content. Now that we've finished the style, let's work on the substance. As we will recall, we have already determined that our newsletter will be aimed at a very general public. So what is it exactly that we want to include? Because we are new at this, we will keep it simple and include only the following:

- A brief overview of our NGO;
- A brief description of our new project;
- A short biography of our new senior researcher;
- An acknowledgement of our new donor;
- The titles of our last projects with links to more information;
- A mention of our past publications;
- An advertisement for our new Research Assistant position;
- Our contact information, including a link to our website.

Let's draft a paragraph on each of these to give us some raw material that we can then shape into our two-page newsletter, adjusting as we go to reflect available space and refining what we truly want to highlight. We will use text boxes, columns and different font sizes to capture our audience's attention as well as white space to provide a break for the eye. We know how to create textboxes, we know how to play with our images to modify their format, and we know how to change the font and size of our text. Let's see what we can do.



NH=ND

**National Health =
National Development**



Here, we've hidden the border of our textboxes to create a different effect.

Newsletter

Health = National Development (NH=ND) is a research organization in M----- whose work focuses on pressing health issues in vulnerable populations. Building on the invaluable knowledge that we create through our various projects, we devise evidence-based recommendations that seek to influence policy.

Malaria Control: An alternative

In November 2006, NH=ND initiated a new project in M----- to assess the cost-effectiveness of DDT when used for malaria control. In 15 villages, the research team will soon start comparing the cost effectiveness of this particular method with those of insecticide treated bednets (ITNs), insecticides, and a combination treatment. The project's completion date is set for November 2009.

New Senior Researcher joins the team

We are pleased to welcome Dr. V. to NH=ND. Dr. V. completed his medical degree at Hampford University, in N-----. Having practiced in district hospitals for many years, he then returned to Hampford where he obtained his PhD in Public Health. Dr. V. comes to us with years of experience as a field researcher and advisor to the Ministry of Health of N-----.

NEWS

- *Generosus*, an international funding agency, recently afforded us a US\$750,000 grant over three years to support our new research project as well as the expansion of our resource center. We would like to thank them for their support and we look forward to our new collaboration.
- In light of our malaria control research project, we are now recruiting for the position of Research Assistant. Interested candidates should visit our web site for more information: www.nhnd.org

This footer reminds our reader of our website address.

We've shaded these two textboxes with different colors to create a break for the eye.

Research updates

- *ART in resource-constrained settings:* NH=ND recently completed a one year research project which assessed the feasibility of nurse-administered ARVs in rural areas of M-----. Preliminary results have been distributed to government officials, academics and community members. The final report and accompanying documentation will be available shortly. Visit our website for updates.
- *Mutual Health Insurance vs. User Fees:* The results of a research project conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Health for M----- and the *Smarts Research Institute* are now available online.



PUBLICATIONS

Visit our website to read some of our most recent publications

- ◆ A. Bight et al. "Helping communities play a role in their own health." *Health International* 6(10), 2004.
- ◆ A. Bight et al. "Equitable access to health care: alternatives to user fees." *International Medical Journal* 8(3), 2003.
- ◆ E. Mutua and A. Bight. "Overcoming ART rollout constraints: a role for nurses." *Health International* 6(12), 2004.
- ◆ A. Bight, E. Mutua and L. Njini. "Models of ITN distribution." *Public Health Today* 7(5), 2004.

We've inserted an additional picture and used a different kind of frame. We've also modified the presentation of our text to avoid monotony.

Again, we've used textboxes, bullets and different formatting to provide some variety.

The NH=ND Team:

<i>Dr. A. Bight, Principal Investigator</i>	<i>Dr. V., Senior researcher</i>
<i>E. Mutua, Research Assistant</i>	<i>B. Veracruz, IT/KT/KM officer</i>
<i>R. Roes, Office Manager</i>	

To contact us, email info@nhnd.com or visit www.nhnd.org

7. Creating an Electronic Distribution List

This is the last part of our newsletter. Now that we have created the content, it's time to determine exactly who will receive it. This step is every bit as important as all the other steps before. If we spend a week designing our newsletter and then send it to a mere handful of people, will this be worth the time and energy?

We need to determine a dissemination strategy. We know there is a conference in Cape Town in two weeks, and we plan to print, on glossy colour paper, 250 copies to take with us. We have also agreed to send our principal donor 200 copies. Beyond this, we will rely on electronic dissemination – the interested will be able to download it from our website, and we will also send it directly to our various contacts via email.

Let's take a few hours and comb through our email inbox to see whose email addresses we already have. For the moment, we can simply copy and paste those addresses into an open Word document. Note that there are those email addresses that we will see in our inbox, and then there are those emails sent to us that cc (or carbon copy) a host of other people. For instance, we know we received a newsletter from a similar organization in our country, and if we open up that email we suddenly see all kinds of email addresses. Let's copy these – even if we don't know who they actually belong to. After an hour or two, we will have several hundred names in our Word document, and now we have a choice. We can copy these names directly into an email and send it to everyone; or we can visit a site like www.dgroups.org and create a mailing list, so that with one touch of a button we can send anything we like to all our contacts (instead of entering email addresses every time). Please visit www.dgroups.org for more information on how to do this.

Also please note that not everyone will want to receive email from us. And since what we are sending is not spam or junk mail, we must be open to people requesting not to receive any further correspondence from us. Giving them a simple “unsubscribe” option if sending a listserv or indicating at the bottom of any correspondence “if you believe you received this email in error...” can be convenient ways for letting our recipients opt out of receiving emails from us. It's also polite and highly professional – a good move all around.

We need to write a brief email to introduce the newsletter, and convince people to open the attachment. For this reason, the subject line of the email is very important. If we write URGENT or Hello in the subject line, we'll likely be caught by spam or junk-mail filters. Let's instead do it like this:

To: NH=ND mailing list
From: Dr. A Bight
Subject: NH=ND Newsletter: Jan 2008

Attached: NH=ND Newsletter – Jan-08.doc

Dear Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that we present to you our very first newsletter. In the attached document, you'll find details about us, our new project, and our new senior researcher. These are exciting days at NH=ND as we keep growing as an organization.

We're looking forward to hearing from each of you in the days to come, and to seeing many of you at the upcoming Cape Town conference.

Best wishes,
Dr. A Bight

attached: NH=ND Newsletter – July-07.doc

Good luck to you!! A newsletter can be a painful, time-consuming proposition. But at the end of the day, we may receive so many compliments and new hits on our website – even direct requests to see some of our work, not to mention keeping ourselves visible – that we've already started planning our next one...

Video Editing: Windows Movie Maker

1 A Brief Overview

The goal of this booklet is to give us a short and functional overview of a *non-linear video editor*. We will use Windows Movie Maker (WMM) to *capture* our footage, manipulate *video clips*, eventually stitching these together with *transitions, effects, titles* and *credits* into a short movie. WMM is a simple piece of computer software – while it does not give us the range of options available in other video editing software, it does offer easy-to-learn tools to bring our story alive. There is a steep but short learning curve to WMM and thus experimentation (and asking questions!) is key to understanding the movie-making process. We have tried to use pictures and *screen caps* as much as possible throughout this manual to show how to navigate this software.

As this chapter shows, WMM, a video camera and a USB cable are all the technical components we need to create a short movie. As for the story – that’s material for another chapter!



2 Introduction to some Key Terms

Before we continue, let us look at some of the common terms used in video editing. We will be using these terms throughout this manual.

- **Capture** – to transfer the contents of a video cassette from the camera to the computer.
- **Footage** – the contents of a video cassette. Everything we shoot with the camera is footage (but not everything we shoot is good footage...)
- **Timecode** – a number the camera gives to every frame of video on a video cassette. Knowing the timecode allows us to identify, with precision, the footage we want on a video cassette. For instance, if we want to find the footage of a girl holding a red banner at the Showgrounds parade, we know from our recorded timecode (also called a **log**) that it is on Cassette #1, starting at 00;25;15;02 and ending at 00;26;12;05.
- **Log** – a list of timecodes, descriptions, and filenames for all captured footage.
- **Project** – In WMM, the video task we’re working on. Projects become finished movies.
- **Video clip** – This is a small piece of video (usually called “a clip”) that, when put together with other clips, forms our movie. A movie is a collection of clips all strung together.
- **Timeline** – In WMM, this is our canvas. Here we’ll be moving around clips, getting the logic and flow of our story just right.
- **Screen cap** – a photograph of a computer screen (short for screen capture)
- **Collection** – In WMM, this is the basket holding all of our clips.
- **Interface** – the interactive “face” or appearance of a piece of software.
- **Playhead** – the indicator on the timeline that shows our position within a clip.
- **Non-linear video editor** – unlike film editing, an editor that can insert scenes in any order.
- **USB cable** - The cable (Universal Serial Bus) that connects our video camera to the computer.
- **DV tape** – Digital Video tape (these are the tapes that we use in our cameras)
- **DVD** – Digital Video Disc. We can also save our video onto DVD, which have much more storage space than a CD.
- **WMM** – Windows Movie Maker (the software we’ll be using here)

3 The story, the script and the capture ...

As we know by now, the first step in making a movie has nothing to do with cameras or software. It all begins with an idea, which grows into a story and then a script. In most cases, we should know *what* we want to shoot *before* we start shooting. Often we cannot go back to capture footage that we missed or to re-interview someone. Questions to ask yourself before shooting include: What is the overarching goal of this video? What elements do I need to

include to reach this goal? Who will watch it? What images do I require? Will it be narrated? And so on.

Assuming we have done the shoot correctly, we must now follow these steps:

a) write down the key parts of our story. Oftentimes, the story will change as a result of the footage we recorded – new opportunities came up, or the anticipated images/interviews just didn't happen. Write down, *in one sentence*, what story our movie will tell. Then write a sentence on how it will begin and how it will end. What are the key scenes? The key interviews? What is the key message?

b) ensure that all video cassettes are **labelled descriptively**. Eg: Parade at City Showgrounds - morning. Labelling descriptively is a good way of jogging our memory in the weeks to come. This way we don't need to look at the tape – we already know what it contains.

c) now we must **log our footage**. This means we need to watch our footage on the camera and write down the timecodes of each piece of footage we would like to transfer to the computer. Video files are large and the computer will not like entire cassettes transferred – and there is no filmmaker in the world who will use all of what she has shot in the final product. Logging involves writing down the timecode for each clip – when the action we wish to capture starts, and when it finishes. For each cassette we should have an organized list of when a clip starts, when it stops, what that clip contains, and the name of the file to be saved on the computer.

Example of a log:

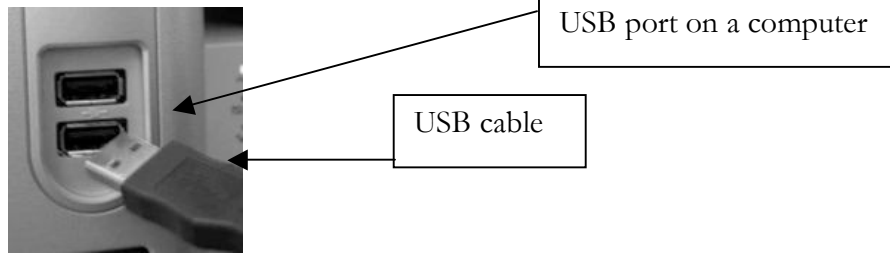
Cassette 1: Parade at City Showgrounds – morning

Start	Finish	Description	Computer Filename
00;14;26;02	00;15;14;06	girl walks in front of the parade with red banner	girl-red-banner
00;15;42;09	00;15;49;09	child dancing on the grass	child-dancing-grass

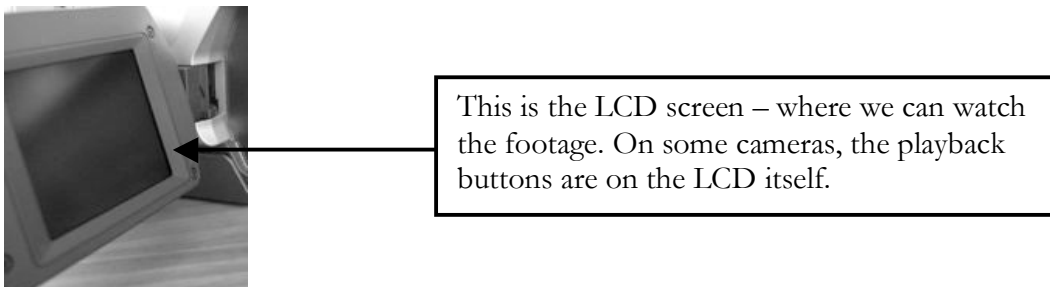
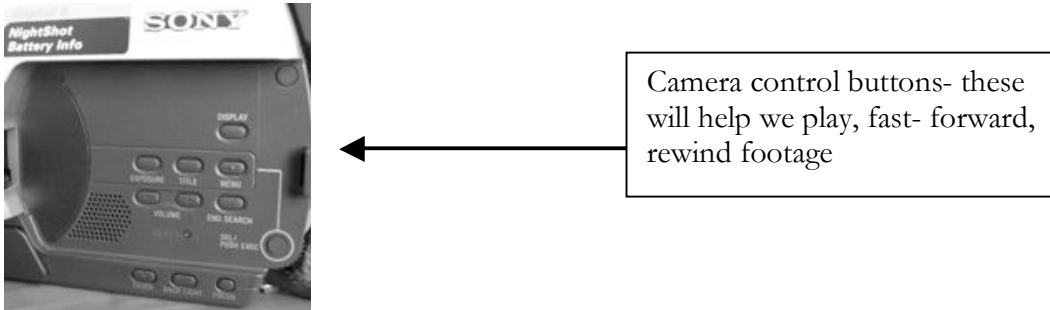
d) Now that we know, exactly, what we have on our cassettes, we may wish to take a moment and work on our story or script. Can we already see how the clips will come together to tell the story? Do we want to write down the order of the clips?

e) We're ready to capture this logged footage into the computer. Follow these steps:

- Connect the power cable to our video camera and switch on the power.
- Connect the USB cable to our video camera and then to the computer.

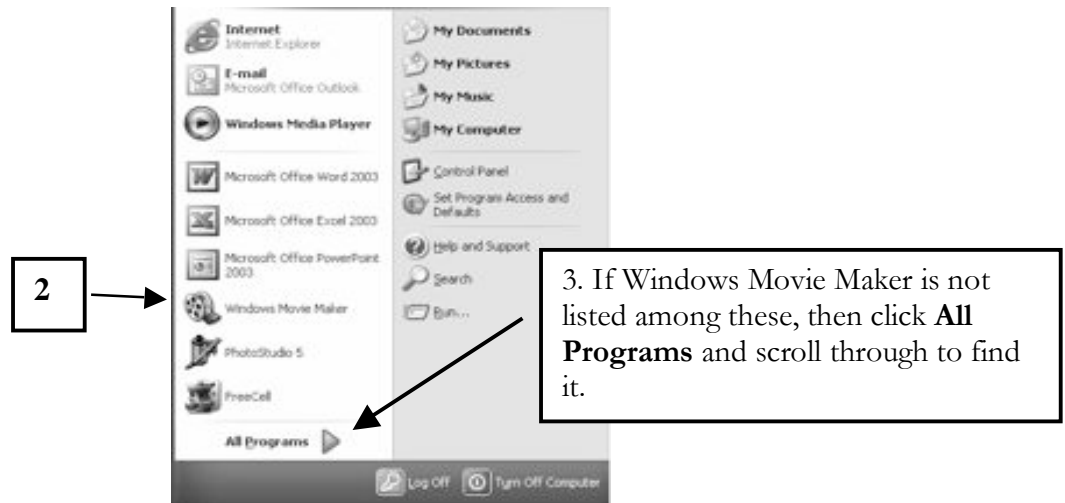


- Switch our video camera into VCR mode.



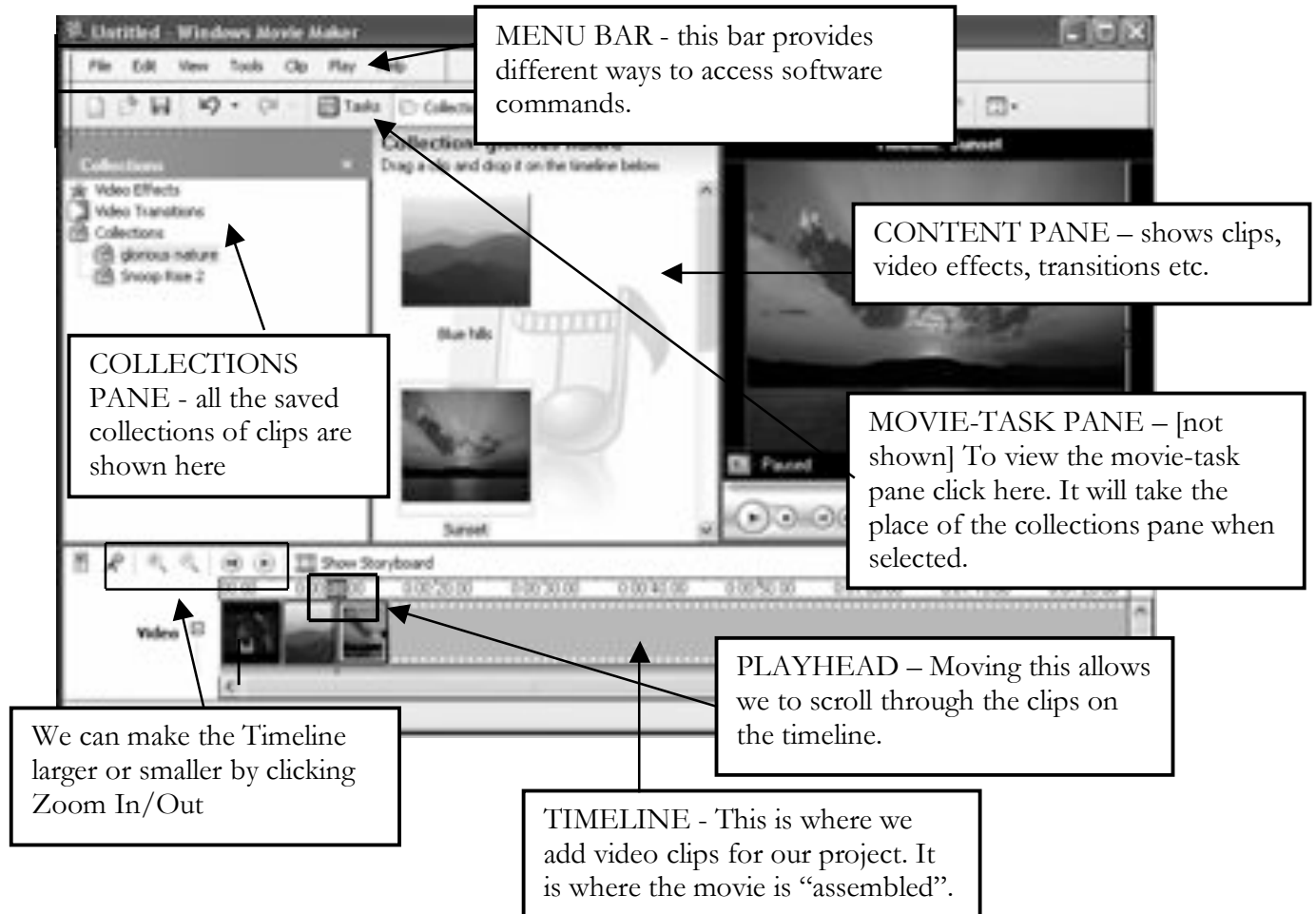
- Now, let's go back to our computer. Click **start** on the toolbar and then click on Windows Movie Maker. If we don't find this in the Start menu, go to **All Programs** and then scroll through to find it.

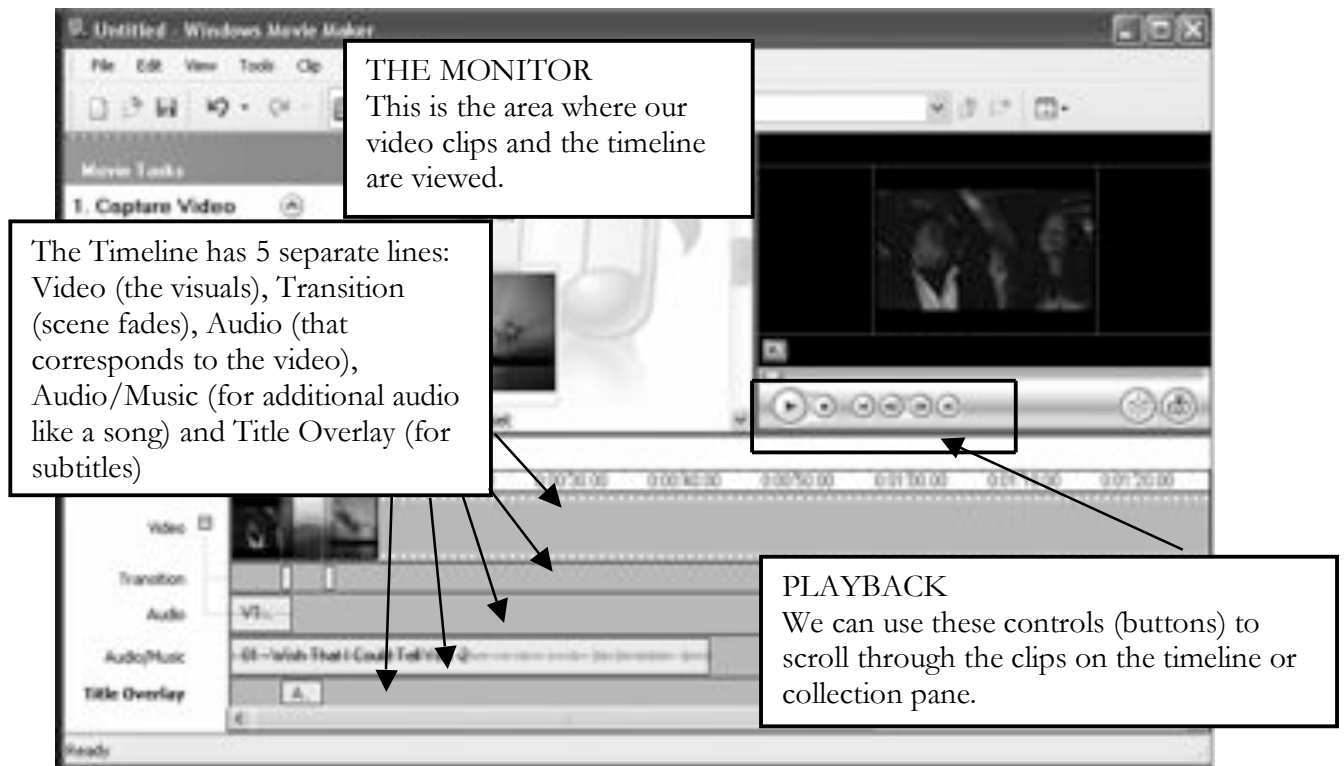




4 Understanding the WMM Interface

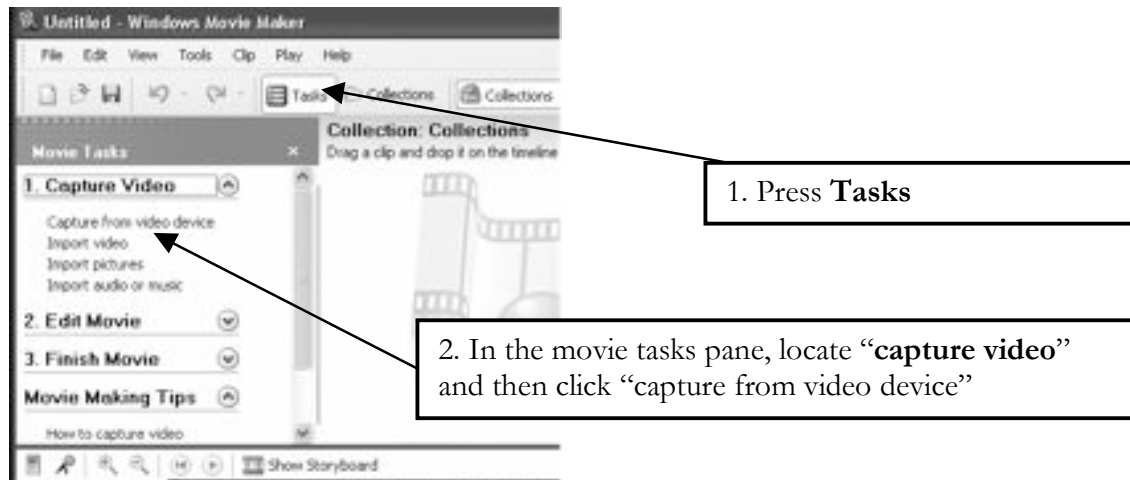
Let's pause a moment for a brief introduction to WMM's "look and feel". The *interface* of WMM is divided into several main areas or "panes": the menu bar, toolbar, movie-task/collection panes, the content (or middle) pane, and the timeline.





5 Capturing Video [continued...]

Now that we're familiar with the interface, let's continue capturing our footage. Our camera is connected to the computer and WMM is open. Now we need to:



- The **Video capture** prompt appears and we will be asked to:
 - Enter a file name for our captured video. Remember to be as descriptive here as possible, we want to be able to identify clips later at-a-glance.
 - ⇒ **Save the video to My Videos and then click Next>**
- In the **Video setting** prompt, there are three options from which we can choose:
 - **Best quality for playback on my computer (recommended):** if we will be playing our video on a computer, then this is the best option.
 - **Digital device format (DV-AVI)** sometimes we will need to record our movie back to Mini-DV tape (see p. 21).
 - **Other settings:** this has advanced features we will discuss later.
 - ⇒ **Select “Best quality for playback on my computer” and Press Next>**
- In the **Capture method** prompt, we’ll find these options:
 - **Capture the entire tape automatically** – this option is used when we need to capture the whole tape to our computer. When we choose this option, the tape rewinds itself and starts recording all the contents of our tape from the beginning. Remember, this consumes a lot of computer memory, and most of the time is unnecessary.
 - **Capture parts of the tape manually** – This is the recommended option. This will enable us to capture just the parts of the tape we want.
 - ⇒ **Select this and Click Next>**

Now cue the tape on our camera to the first timecode that we earlier logged. Now we are ready to capture our first clip. At the bottom of WMM’s monitor it will say **start capture**. Click this. When we have reached the end timecode for this clip, click **stop capture**. Repeat this process until we have captured all the necessary clips as set out in our log.

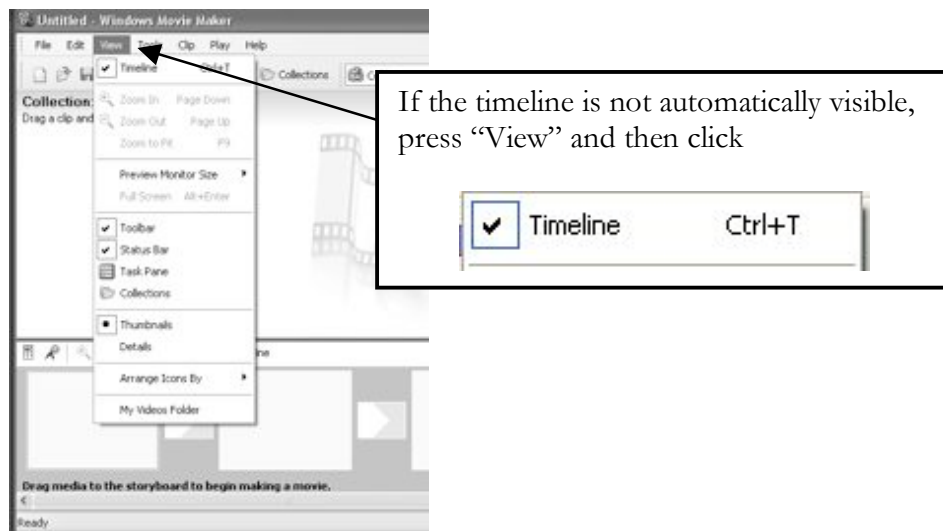
Notes: Give a little extra time at the start of a clip and at the end of a clip. If our timecode reads 00;04;30;28 then start capturing 2 seconds before this, in order to give we some editing leeway. Secondly, the time taken to capture our footage to the computer will be the same as when we shot it. The capture is therefore done in “real-time”. For example, it will take 3 minutes to capture a 3-minute clip, 20-minutes to capture a 20-minute clip, and so on.

When we have finished capturing, click **Finish**.

6 Editing our Project

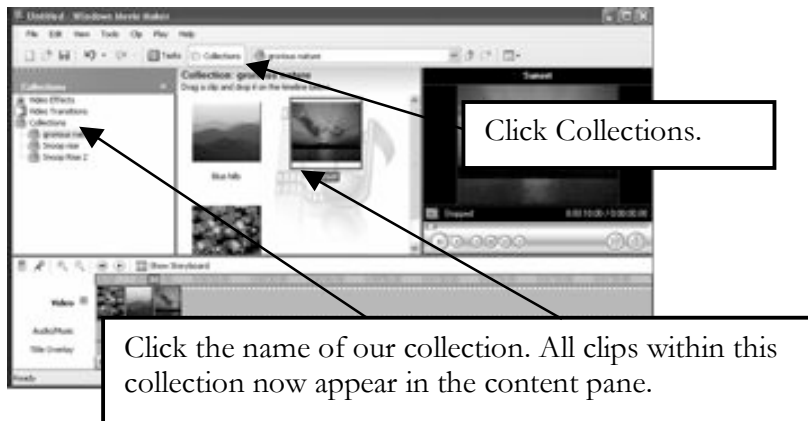
Now that we've captured footage into the computer – and thereby created a *Collection* – it's time to play with our footage and create a movie! To do this, we move clips from the collection to the timeline [note we will **not** be using the storyboard function in this chapter]. The timeline is the section of WMM where we can experiment with the order of the clips and thus the construction of our story. It is our canvas.

Opening a timeline



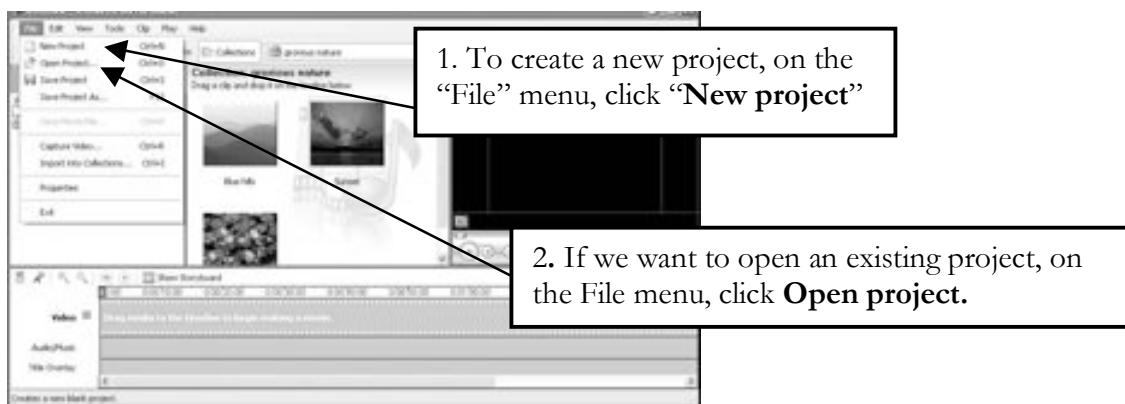
Opening the collection

All video clips are stored as part of a collection – something that organizes our clips and keeps the related ones together (important if we have more than one project open). In case our collection is not already open, follow these steps:



Creating a new project – or opening an existing project.

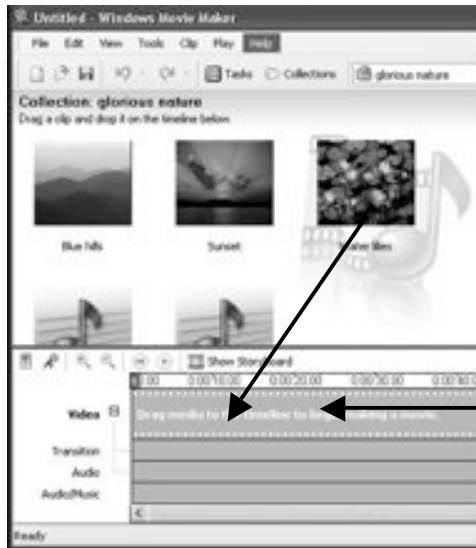
A “project” is another word for a “draft movie”. If we want to start a new project, we must select **New Project** from the File menu. If we want to open an already existing project we need to select **Open Project** from the File menu.



7 Adding video clips to the timeline

As we know, a video clip is a piece of our footage that we have captured to our computer. In order to stitch together the many different clips we have in our collection, the timeline provides a space for experimentation. It is the virtual equivalent of a painter’s canvas. Take some time now to drag clips from the collection to various places in the timeline. Is a certain clip appropriate for the beginning of the film? The end? Which is our best clip? Where do we want it to go? What clips should surround it?

Note: the easiest way to watch footage on the timeline is to use the spacebar on the keyboard – it starts and stops the playhead.

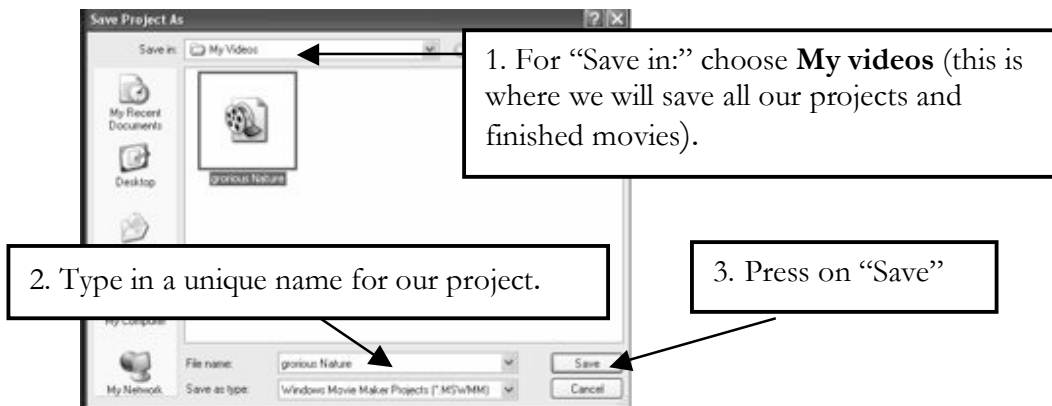


Click and drag the video clips we want to add to the timeline. Repeat this process until we have all the clips that we want in the timeline – or start slowly and evaluate our story clip-by-clip. Experiment. Change their order by clicking and dragging.

All the video clips that we add in the timeline will appear here.

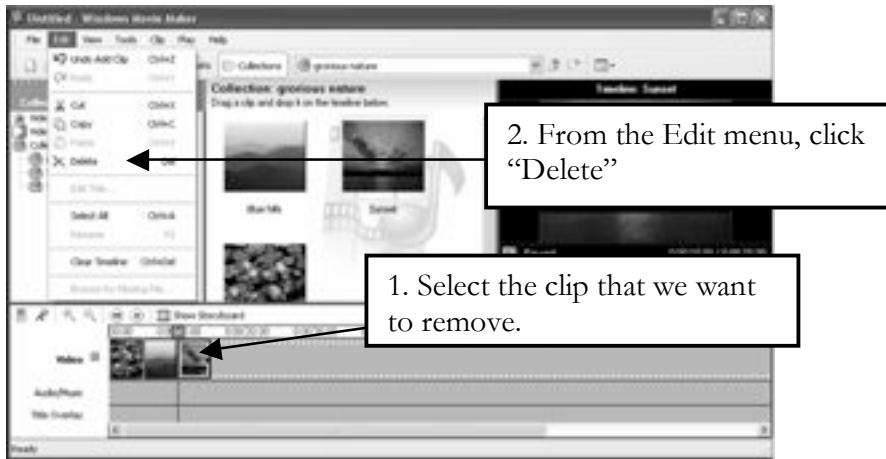
8 Saving a project

This is the most important step of all – SAVE, SAVE, SAVE. Every two minutes, we must save our project. Why? Because video files are large and sometimes computers have a hard time digesting them, making the entire system crash. So save, save, save. Get in the habit. Be sure to give our project a unique name so that we can always find it at-a-glance. And keep saving.



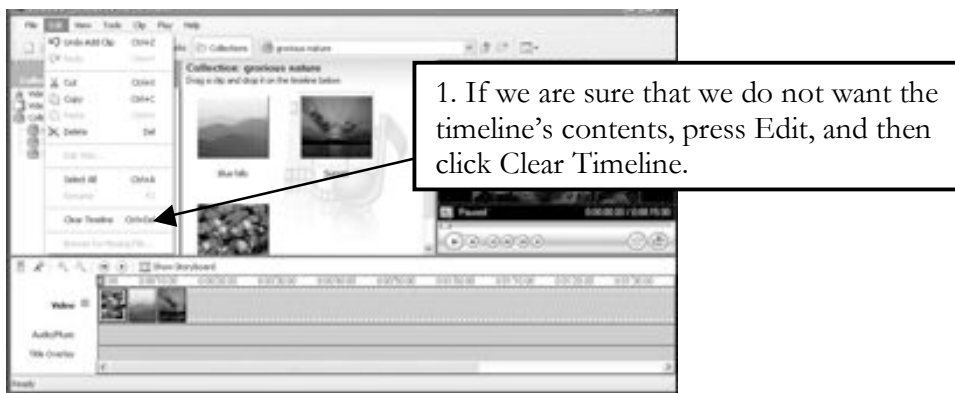
9 Removing a clip from the project

Sometimes we'll want to remove a clip from the timeline because it doesn't fit or just isn't right. There are two ways of doing this. One is by right clicking on the clip and selecting "delete". A second is below:



Clearing the Timeline

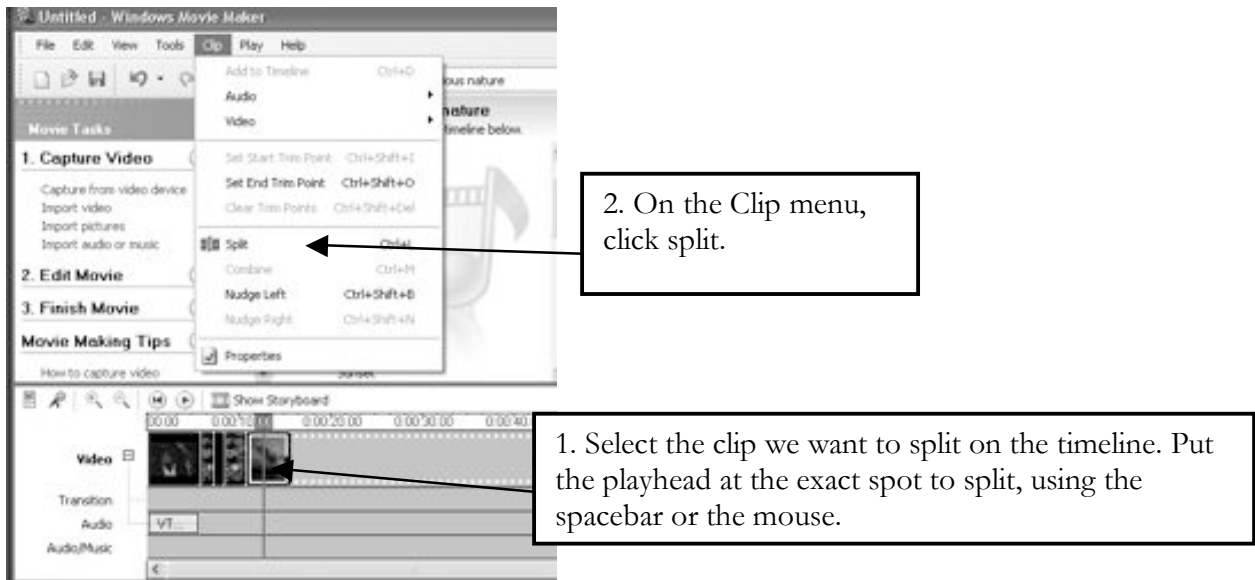
Sometimes we may want to remove everything that we have added to the Timeline. In that case, do the following:



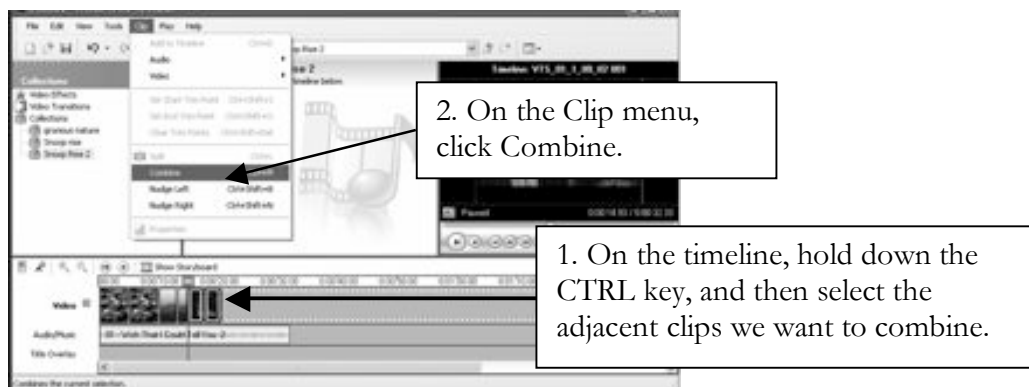
10 Splitting and combining Clips

Splitting is dividing a clip into two smaller, manageable clips – that can then be moved around independently on the timeline.

Combining is joining two clips into one clip. This is useful when we want two video clips that we split previously to appear as one again.



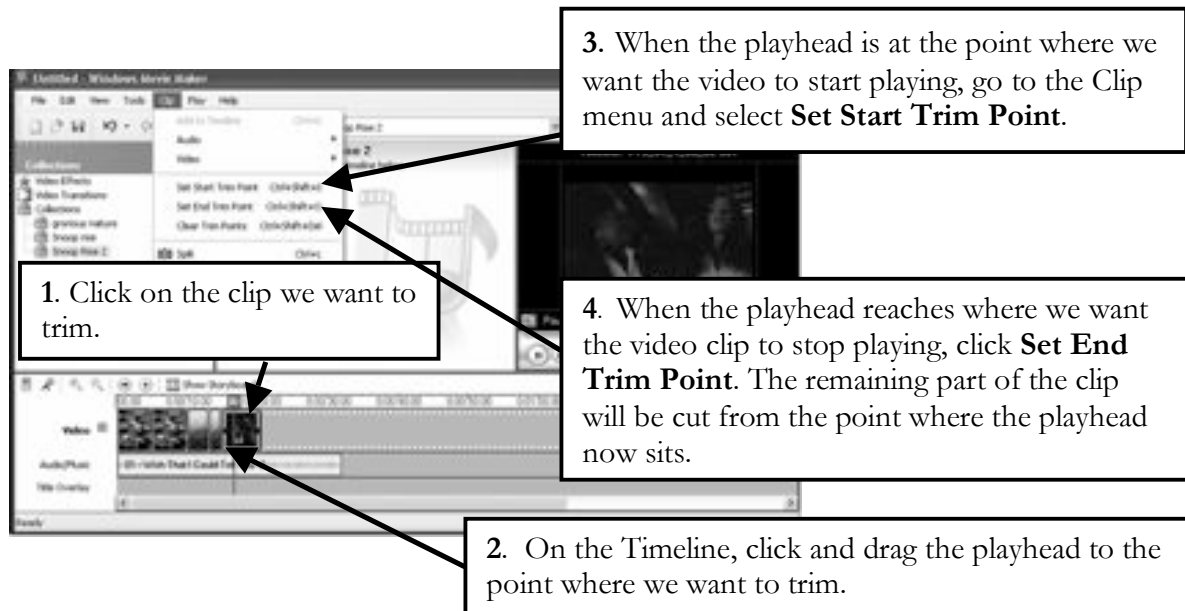
Combining a split audio or video clip



11 Trimming clips

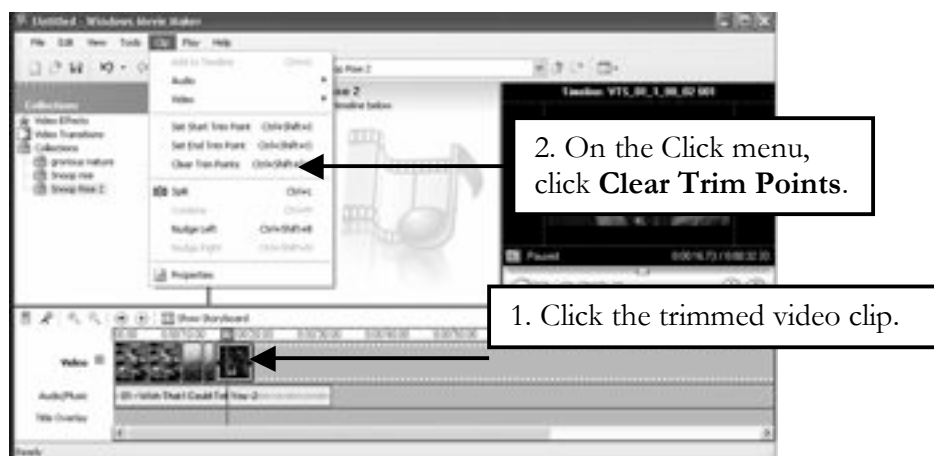
By trimming we can hide the unwanted parts of any clip, usually the start and end of a clip – so that it starts and finishes exactly where we want it to. Trimming is essential to the creation

of a high-quality movie. Using the mouse, we can “drag in” the start or the finish of a clip on the timeline. Or:



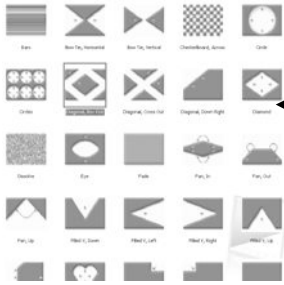
Clearing Trimmed points

When we feel we have trimmed too much or too little we can adjust by clearing the trimmed points. This is when we bring back (restore) what we had trimmed.



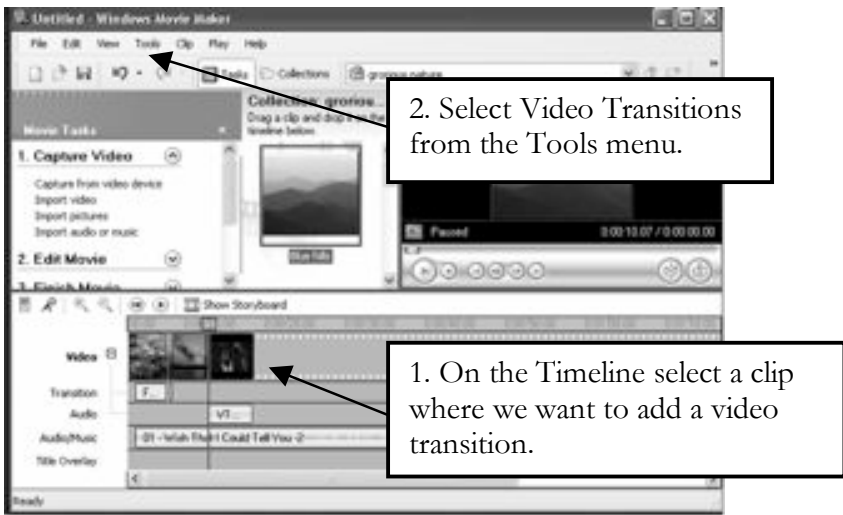
12 Adding Video Transitions to our movie

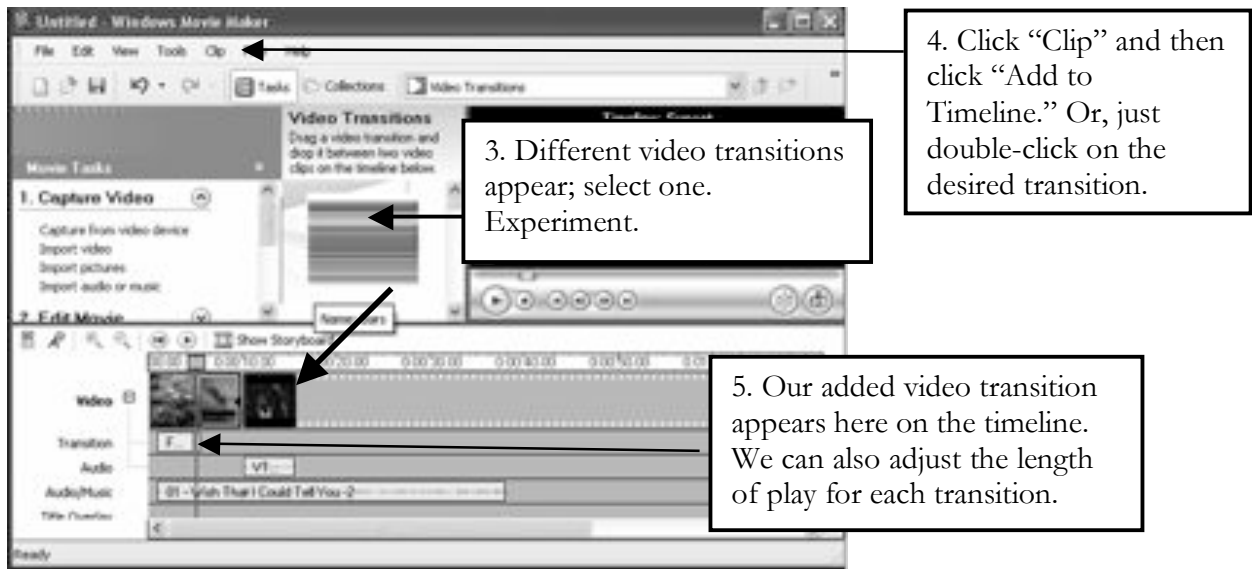
Adding a video transition controls how one clip “fades” into the next. For instance, does one clip “fade out” while the next one in the timeline “fades in”? Or does one “cross-dissolve” into the next? Note: we should use only one type of transition for each movie – too many different types of transitions can distract the viewer from the message of our movie.



From the “Tools” menu, select “Video Transitions”. As we’ll see, there are many types of transitions to add to our project. Play around and discover the one most appropriate. Remember: sometimes simple is best.

Inserting a Transition

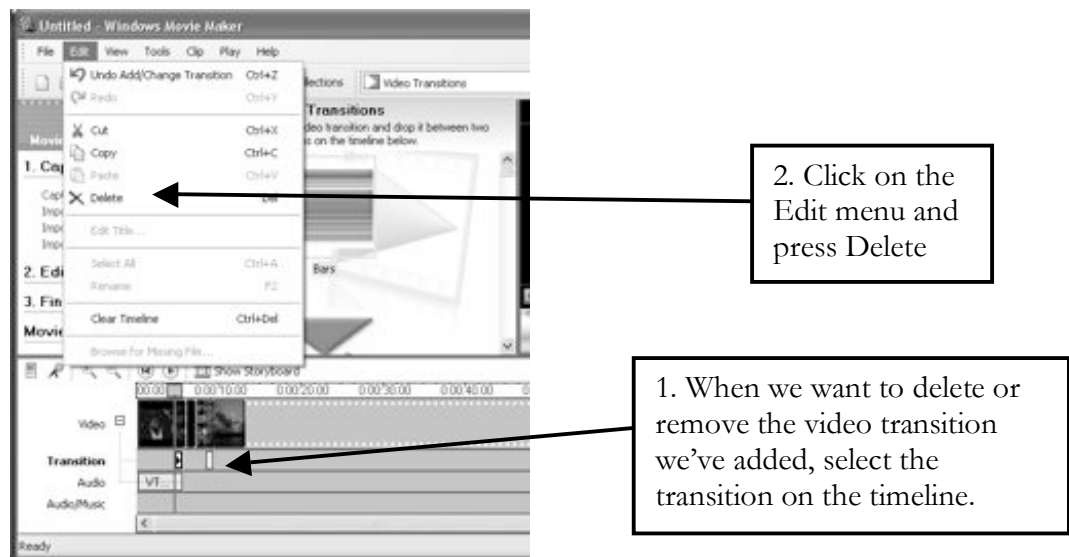




Note: We can also add a video transition by pressing and holding down the transition and dragging it to the Timeline and dropping it between the two clips.

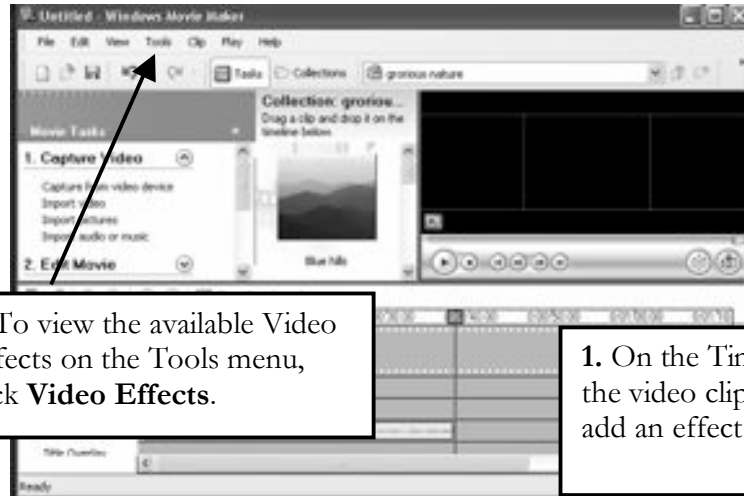
Deleting a video transition from our project

Just select the transition, right-click our mouse and select "delete". Or:



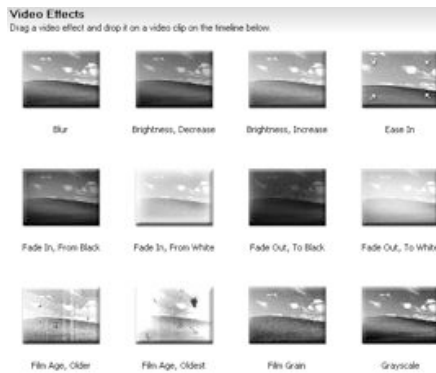
13 Adding Video Effects

A video effect gives we a chance to add a very special touch to our movie. [Like transitions, these should be used with caution!!] For example, we may want to brighten a particular clip; we may want to add a “grainy” aspect to it to make it seem as though the movie is from the 1920s; or we may want to convert colour to black-and-white (grayscale). Take the time to experiment and see what happens with the various different effects. Remember: sometimes simple is best.

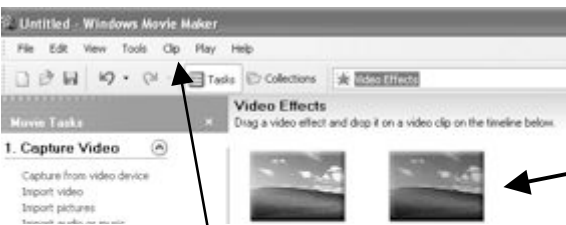


2. To view the available Video Effects on the Tools menu, click **Video Effects**.

1. On the Timeline, select the video clip we'd like to add an effect to.

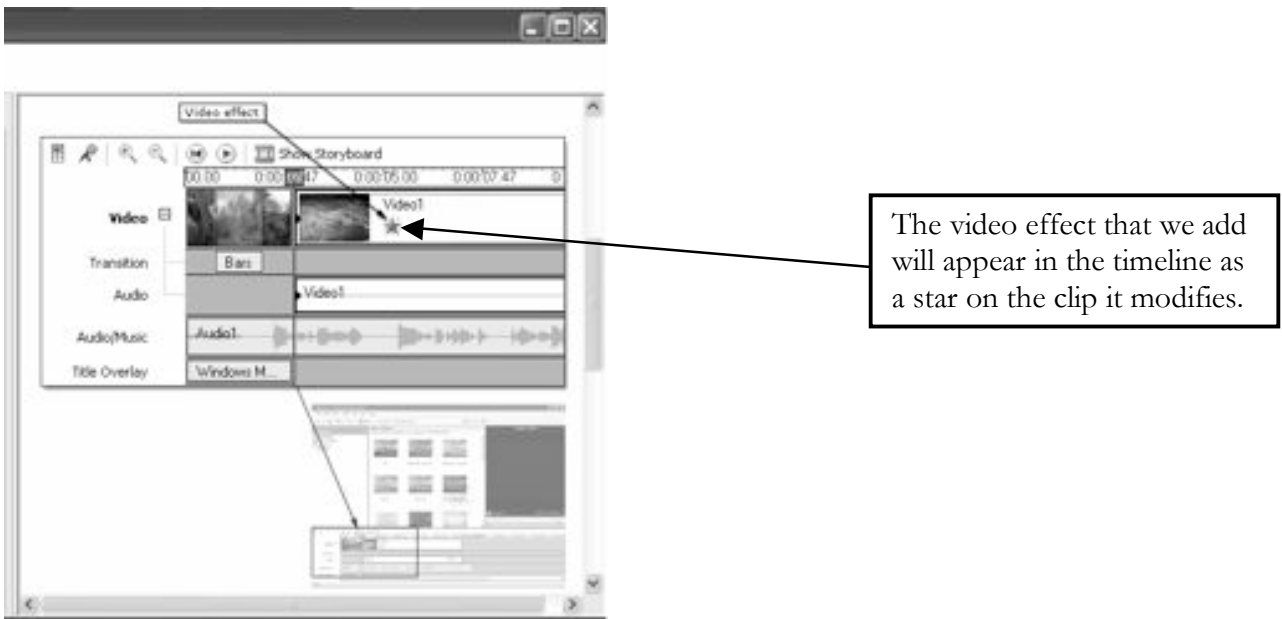


The video effects will appear like this in the middle pane. Play around with different kinds of video effects to determine what is most appropriate to our project.



4. On the clip menu, click **Add to Timeline**

3. After experimenting, select the Video Effect we'd like to add.

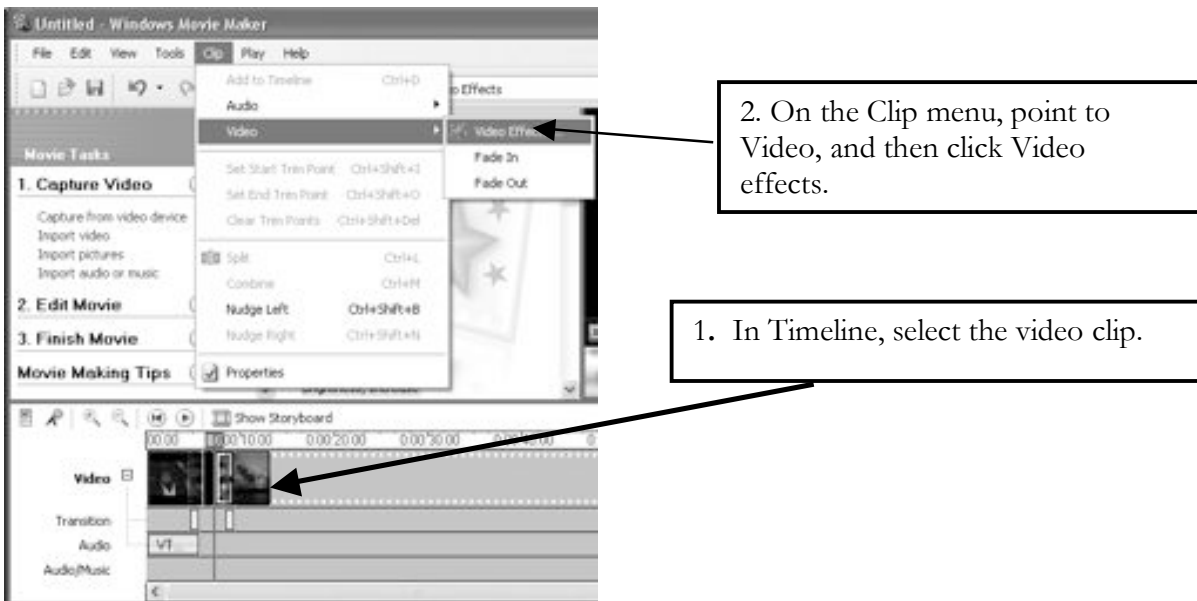


The video effect that we add will appear in the timeline as a star on the clip it modifies.

Note: this picture originally appeared in the WMM Help Topics.

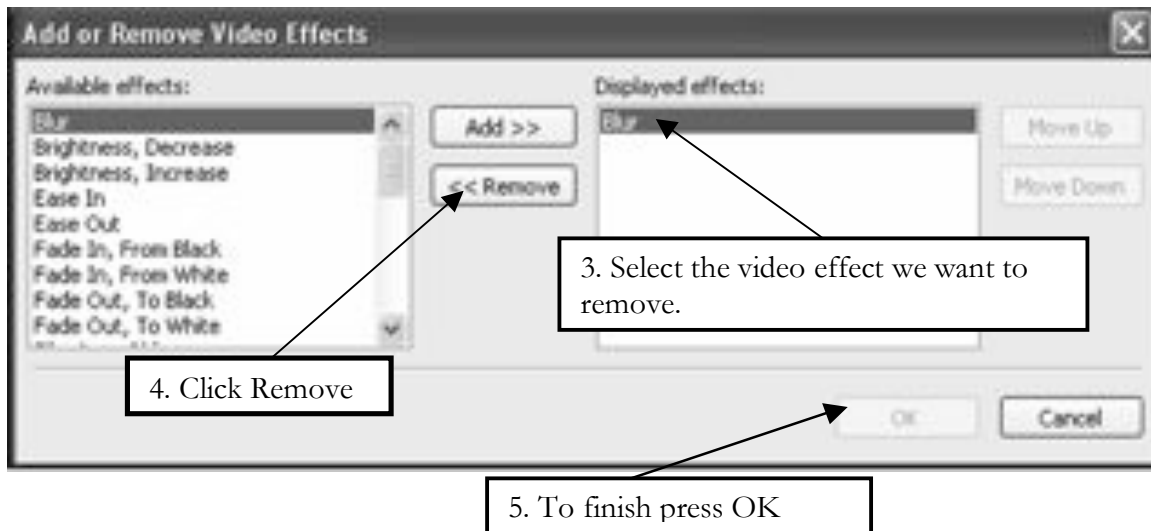
14 Removing a Video Effect

When we are not satisfied with the video effect that we have introduced to any given clip, removing or deleting it is simple.



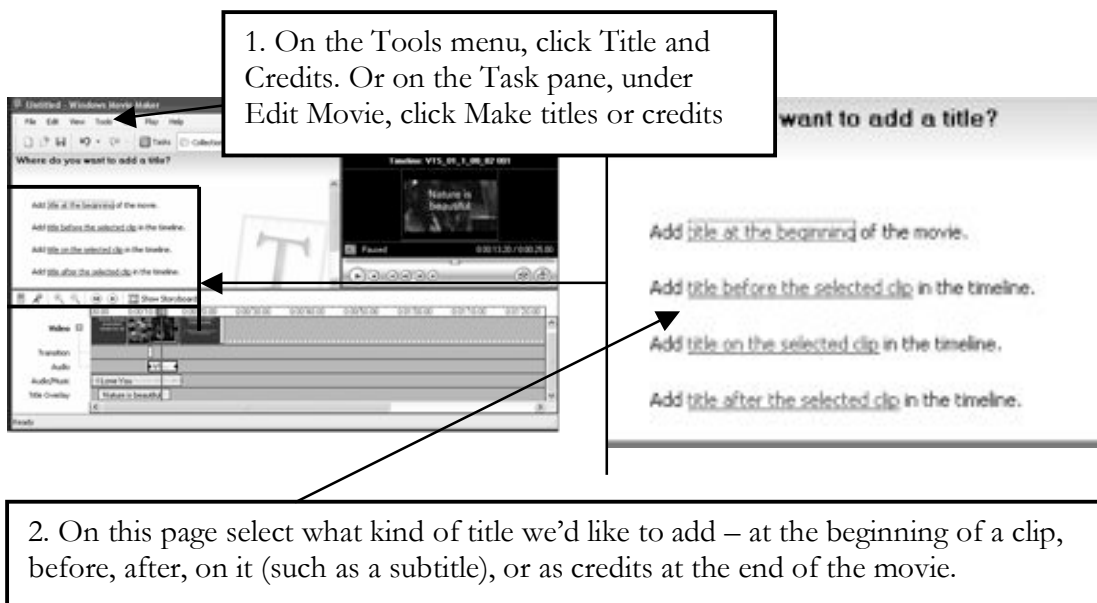
1. In Timeline, select the video clip.

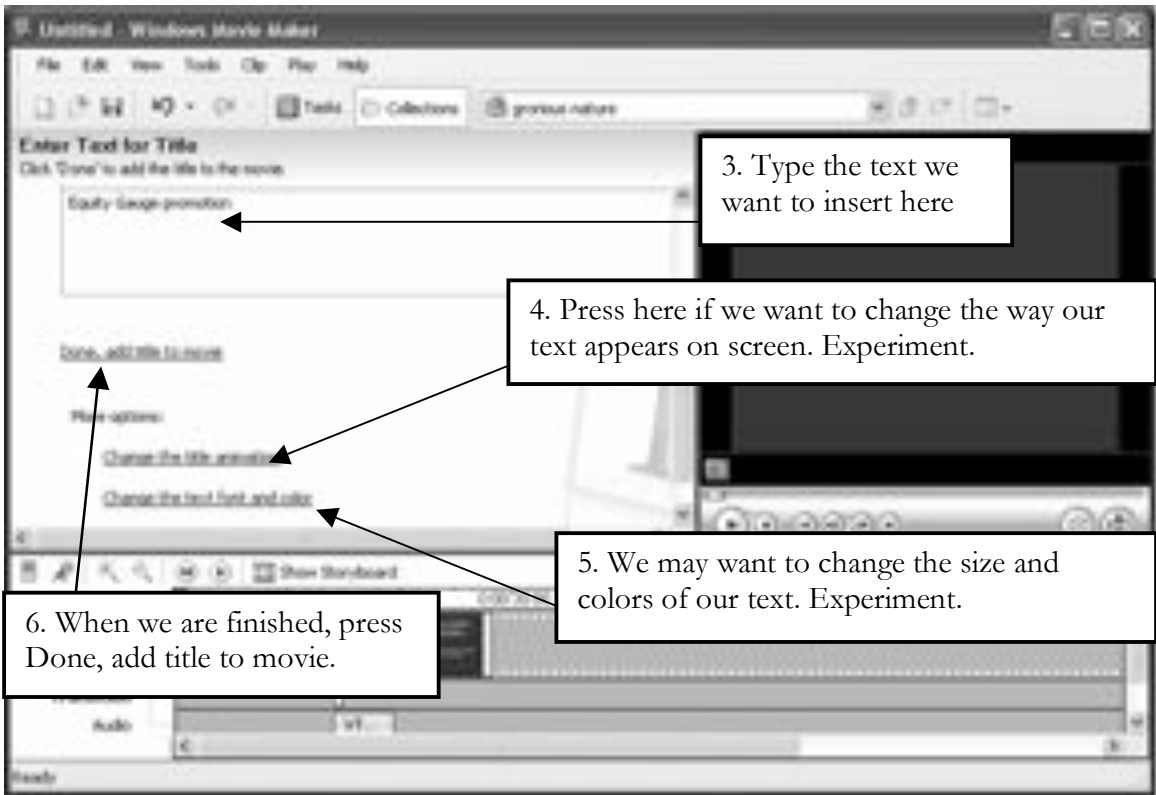
2. On the Clip menu, point to Video, and then click Video effects.



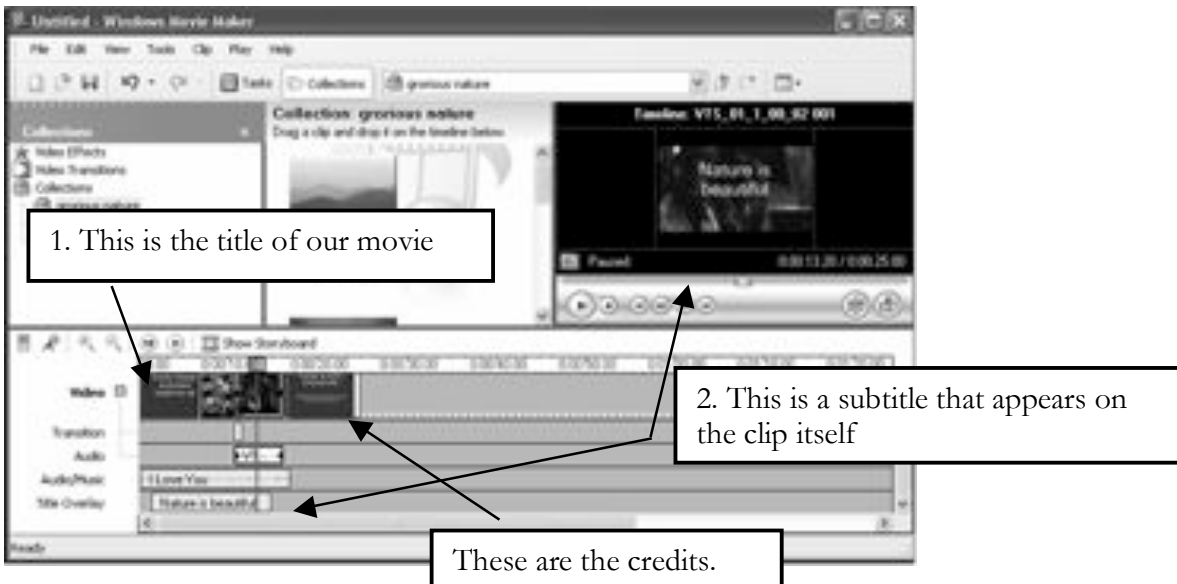
15 Adding titles, subtitles and credits to our movies

Titles, subtitles and credits help add important information to our movie. We can add simple text information such as the title of our movie, our name (as writer, producer and director!!), a list of thank-wes, subtitles, the date and so on.





How it looks on the timeline...

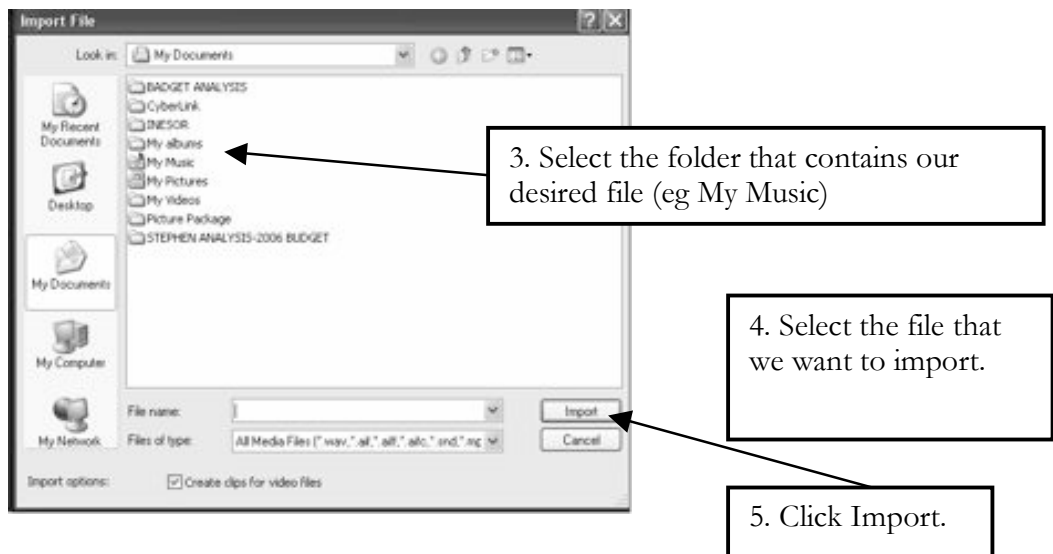
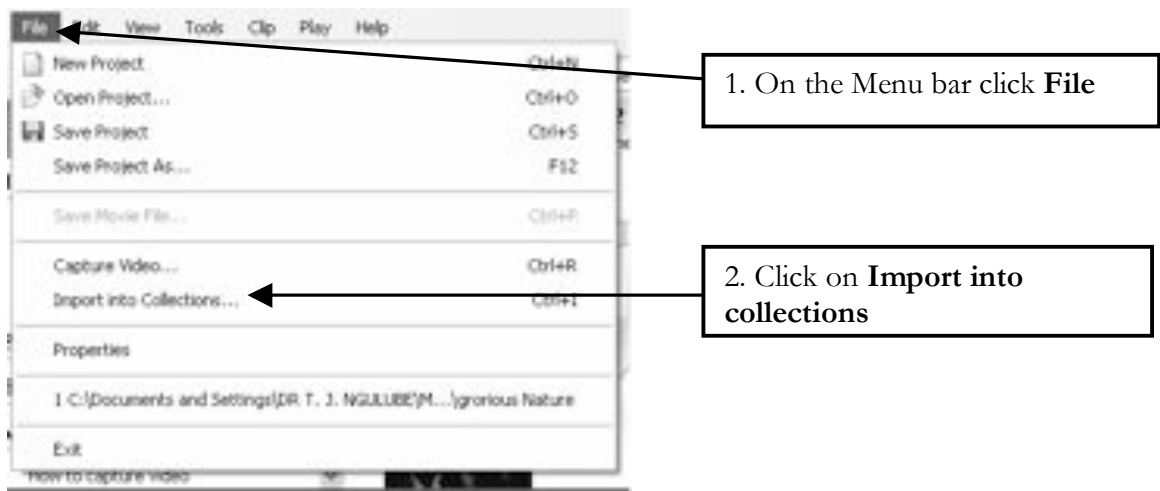


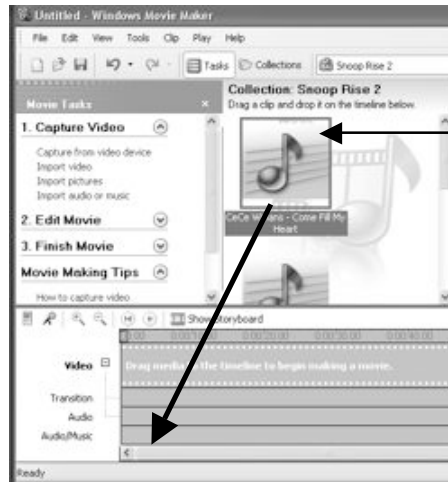
Removing a title, subtitle or credit from our movie.

- On the Timeline, click the title we want to remove.
- Click the **Edit** menu, and then press **Delete**

16 Importing existing pictures and audio files

In addition to capturing video from a camera, we can also add digital photographs and audio files (such as mp3s) to WMM and incorporate these in our movie. Here's how:



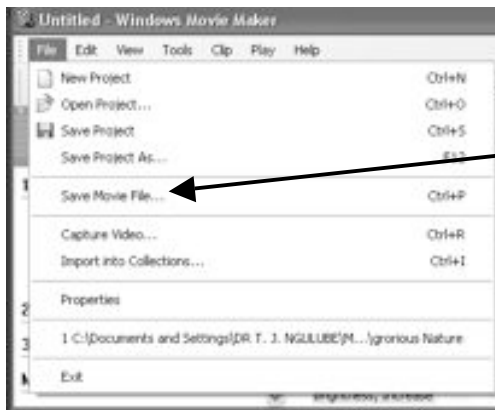


6. Add our music to the Timeline by dragging it to the Audio/Music section on the timeline

If we've imported a photograph, drag this onto the timeline. How long will it last onscreen? Will there be music playing while it's shown?

17 Saving our movie

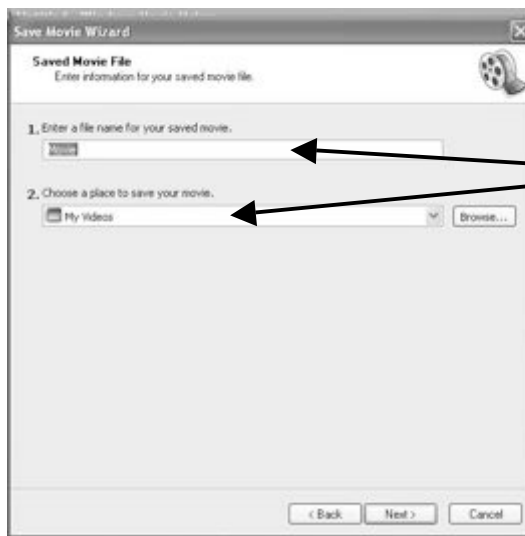
There! We've done it! We've created our own movie. We've strung clips together, we've added transitions, an effect or two, titles, credits and subtitles, and now it's time to save it. This is a different operation than saving a project – this is actually “exporting” the movie into a full, separate file that can be played on another computer or on television.



On File menu, click Save Movie File



Select "My computer" – saving the movie for computer playback. Click Next>



Enter a unique file name for the movie. Save to My Videos. Press Next>



Select Best quality for playback on my computer. Click Next>



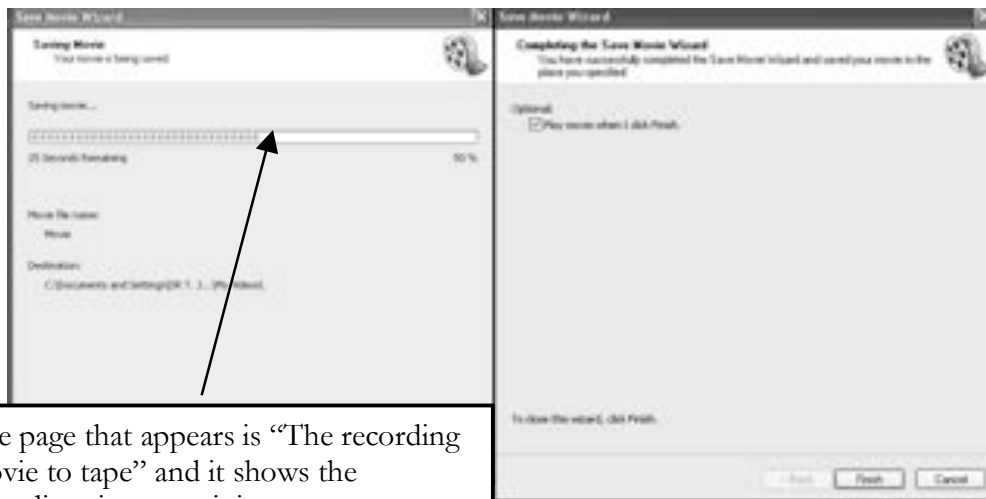
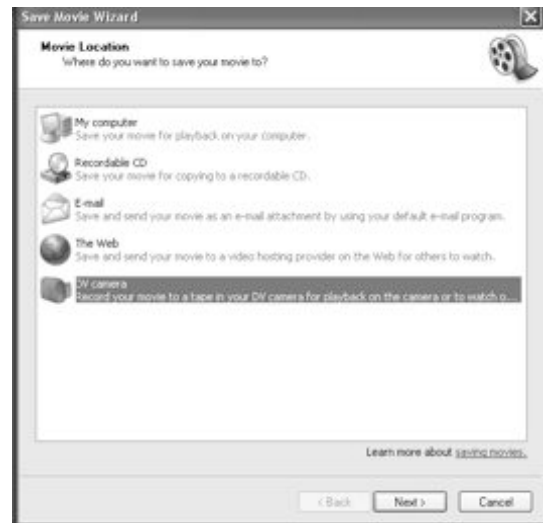
The final page in the process.
Click Finish.

18 Saving our movie to DV Video Tape

This is the best option if we want to a) show our movie on a TV screen (by connecting the camera to the TV) or b) record (eventually) to a VHS cassette. This option obviously depends on who will be watching our movie and what tools are available to show our movie.

If the video camera is not connected to the computer, connect it with the USB cable and switch on the video camera. Set the camera as if we are going to record new footage.

1. Press “Save Movie File” from the File menu.
2. Select the DV Camera option
3. When it says “cue our tape” ensure that the tape in our camera is at the right position.
4. When it says “The content on this tape will be overwritten and lost. Do we want to continue?” If we are certain (!) click Yes.



The page that appears is “The recording movie to tape” and it shows the recording time remaining.

The final page that appears shows that our recording to tape has been completed. Click Finish.

And that’s all there is to it. Good luck and remember: trial-and-error, with a good dose of patience, is our best friend in any video editing endeavour.



Open Access

A Brief Overview

“Today, most of the 2.5 million articles published in the world’s 24,000 peer-reviewed journals are inaccessible to many of their potential users because they cannot afford access.”ⁱ

Since scientific journals were first created in the 17th century, they have become the vehicle of choice for the dissemination of research findings. Publishing in a reputable journal often paves the way for scientists to gain tenure or secure further funding. In fact, the incentive structure for researchers has come to prize journal publication, with far less emphasis placed on, for instance, policy influence. But why embark upon a research project if publication in a journal is the only destination? What relevance will our research have if its findings are only ever read by our research colleagues?

Too often we publish our findings in private and commercial journals, targeting an audience comprised only of those who can afford the journals’ selling price or have special institutional access. From a Knowledge Translation viewpoint, this is clearly and highly unsatisfactory: we want as wide an audience as possible to read, comprehend, and ultimately use our findings. If there are wide segments of our desired audience who cannot access our work, then we have a serious problem.

Publish or perish!

The research isn't complete until it's published!

Only a strong publishing record will give you tenure.

Leaving aside, for a moment, the fact that scientific journals are only for *very* specific audiences and should, therefore, be only one part of our broader dissemination strategy, there remain significant and essential ways that we can increase the visibility, audience and the ultimate influence of our peer-reviewed articles. The most important of these strategies is called *Open Access*.

At its core, Open Access (OA) aims to create a “perfect world” where knowledge is free, always available, and easily accessible. It is a world where knowledge is always building upon itself, and where its builders face no barriers to contribute. While conducting research itself is not free, in the OA paradigm, accessing it should be. Born in the 1990s, OA is all about *equality of opportunity*: since knowledge is a public good, everyone ought to have the same opportunity to access and ultimately use that knowledge. Nobody “owns” the science, and no one need pay a fee to retrieve it. After all, knowledge – especially that which can influence policy and ultimately affect the livelihoods of millions – should not be the dominion of any one individual or organization. Knowledge must be equally available to all.

For this very reason, OA is a revolutionary technique and is gradually reshaping the scientific publishing world. However, while OA is certainly in the ascendance, it is not yet the dominant publishing model. In many cases, researchers who publish their findings in established journals often sign away their rights and lose all control over how their knowledge will be disseminated. The publishers who now own those rights often sell that research – at a premium – back to the general public. This, quite naturally, limits the number of people who can access those findings, particularly individuals in lower income countries. Institutional memberships to major publications, for example, tend to range between US\$10,000 and \$20,000 per year. Even more, between 1986 and 2000, journal prices increased by 291% though the retail price index only rose by 74%.ⁱⁱ Particularly when research is funded through public coffers, we can rightfully question whether those results ought to be sold back, at a profit, to the very people who funded it. Once more, knowledge cannot feed on itself when only a select few can afford to access it.

Beyond these philosophical or ethical issues, there is also very strong evidence suggesting that OA'ed articles have a greater impact than non-OA'ed articles.ⁱⁱⁱ The logic here is simple: the more people who can access a particular article, the greater

the chances that those people can ultimately use those findings, whether citing them in their own papers or applying them in a policy setting. *Open Access is the future*, and its ultimate success depends not upon convincing publishers to act for the greater good *but upon convincing researchers (and research funders) to publish their work only in OA journals*. If we as researchers adopt an OA publishing code then for-profit publishers will have absolutely no material to publish and it is they themselves who must *OA or perish*. We and we alone control the fate of OA.

OA or perish!

Open Access in Practice

OA has been technically defined as the “free availability [of research literature] on the public internet, permitting any user to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraints on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.”^{iv}

But what does all of this mean in actual practice? To simplify dramatically, an OA environment means: we can search the web, find an article, read it, digest it, cite it, use it, email it, and post it to our own website, so long we always acknowledge the original author(s). And we can do all of this without spending a shilling or cent or rupi. The knowledge is there for the taking: freely available and free for all to use.

Is Open Access the same as Free Access?

Free Access, as defined here, refers to a situation where particular individuals, groups or institutions are given access to one or many publications free of charge or at a lower cost. In the biomedical field, for example, the *Health InterNetwork Access Initiative (HINARI)* currently provides non-profit institutions in 113 developing countries that meet certain requirements with free or low cost access to over 3750 journal titles. Such an arrangement, however, “is seen as a type of ‘social contract’ viable only if institutions in developed countries are willing to pay higher prices for their journals than colleagues in developing countries.” OA, on the other hand, provides unlimited and free access to all, regardless of their financial status.

As OA is still in its development stage and many publications are not yet available free of charge, free access initiatives can be a good alternative for individuals in developing countries. Some of the programmes currently available include: [continued]

- Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI): www.who.int/hinari/en/;
- Ptolemy Project: www.utoronto.ca/ois/myweb9/;
- Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL): www.eifl.net;
- International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP): www.inasp.info/peri/index.shtml
- Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture (AGORA): www.aginternetwork.org/en

Source: Helen J. Doyle. *Open access can shrink the global knowledge gap*. SciDev.Net, March 2004. Available at: www.scidev.net/opinions/

Why Should We Use OA?

As discussed in the introduction, using OA is the first step in creating the “perfect world” of knowledge, wherein it can be freely accessed and used, with cost barriers to access removed. It allows us to reach a wider audience, ensuring that even those who don’t have the means to pay for journal subscriptions can read and ultimately benefit from our work. On the heels of this is the logical fact that, the more who read our work, the greater the influence of our work, with recent studies – focusing mainly on computer science, astronomy and physics – finding a clear correlation between the citation count of an article and its online availability.^v While it is important to recognize that access might not be the only condition for citation, it is certainly a necessary one.

Another closely related advantage of OA is its potential for *speeding up research progress and productivity*. As more individuals, and especially scientists, can access our work, the greater their ability to use our findings to improve their own research. As each one of us is not only a writer but also a reader of scientific publications, we also stand to benefit from the greater availability of scientific articles: the more Open Accessed articles, the greater the pool of knowledge we can all draw upon. As with the Cold War’s *domino effect*, we can each contribute to the downfall of the for-fee model. With more and more of our knowledge going into the public domain, we can eventually render the marketplace a non-factor at the dissemination stage of the research. What’s more, there will be no need for special institutional memberships or budgeting for journal subscriptions. OA is truly changing the publishing landscape. But its work is not yet complete.

Though the OA movement has been growing since the early 1990s – attracting an increasing number of researchers, institutions, funding agencies and governments – the pace at which authors are adopting OA is still slow. In 2004, for example, only about 20% of authors were OA’ing their articles.^{vi} To many, the concept of OA is difficult to grasp, and though the benefits may seem clear, the methodology remains

puzzling. Does it involve techno-internet wizardry? How can we, given our scarce time and human resources, actually do it? Following these lines, publishing it in a traditional, for-profit journal may seem the easier task, as someone else can worry about all of these questions.

OA does require a paradigm shift in our thinking about publication. But fortunately for all, this shift is an easy one, and simple to understand.

The Routes to OA

To keep things simple, there are two main ways to OA'ing our research articles. The first is by publishing in an OA Journal: this is commonly called the “gold route” to OA. The second is by self-archiving our articles in a repository – commonly called the “green route”.

OA Journals: the gold route

OA Journals are on-line scientific publications that differ from subscription-based ones in that they are available, free of charge, to any interested reader. Their numbers have been growing and, as of May 2007, 2,667 OA journals were available online.^{vii} In most cases, the author retains his/her copyrights. Even when copyrights are transferred to the publisher, the articles are still freely available.

No matter the publishing model – be it open access or for-profit – publishers or journals fulfill a number of important functions, including peer-review, editing, layout, conversion of plain text into XML coding, and more. *These costs will not disappear.* In fact, the costs associated with producing and distributing OA Journals are nearly identical to those of non-OA Journals. Current conservative estimates place these costs at around US\$1,500 per article.^{viii}

The important element here is not the cost itself but understanding exactly *when* these costs appear in the production cycle, and *who* pays them. In some cases, OA journals charge upfront “**processing fees**” equivalent to what it costs them to publish a specific article. Such fees are often referred to as “author fees” and have been criticized for placing too big of a burden on authors, preventing many from actually publishing in OA Journals. In most cases, however, authors do not cover these costs themselves. Instead, sponsors (such as employers or funding agencies) provide the necessary funds for doing this, and scientists are increasingly budgeting funds from their research grants to accommodate this. Obviously, this only works if these actors place a premium on OA, and plan for such a publication method from the very outset.

It is also important to note that, today, less than half of all OA journals charge processing fees (or author fees).^{ix} Even when such fees are charged, they are often waived for researchers who cannot afford to pay for them, especially if they are from lower-income countries.

Alternatively, OA Journals can opt to charge **institutional memberships**, where an institution pays a subscription fee which in turn allows its own researchers to publish, free of charge, articles in a particular journal. Other funding mechanisms currently being explored include grants to OA publishers, institutional subsidies, and priced “add-ons”.

Some subscription-based journals are now known as *hybrid journals*, where authors can opt to pay a certain processing fee that will ensure that their specific article is made freely available even if the rest of the publication is not. Currently, some journals are using this as a way to move towards OA while still recovering most of their costs through subscription revenue.

Good examples of OA Journals and directories include:

- *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*: <http://www.who.int/bulletin/en/>
- BioMed publishes 179 open-access biomedical journals, including: *BMC Public Health*, *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, *BMC Infectious Diseases*, *Health Research Policy and Systems*, *International Journal for Equity in Health*, and many more. Visit: www.biomedcentral.com
- The Directory of Open Access Journals offers a thorough list of OA journals which you can search by subject (or field). Visit: www.doaj.org

Self-Archiving: the green route

Self-archiving may seem like a complex, techno-horrific term but all it means is, simply, “the electronic posting, without publisher mediation, of author-supplied research.”^x In other words, when we post a copy of one of our research articles on our personal web site – making it freely available to the public – that, in itself, is an act of self-archiving. The same applies when we make it available in a public (electronic) archive. Though this is often called *the green route* to OA, it is not equivalent to publishing; instead it allows for the free availability of articles “in parallel to any publication system”.^{xi}

There are a number of ways in which authors can self-archive their work, including personal web-sites, disciplinary archives, and institutional repositories (IRs). While we will focus on this third method of institutional repositories, the text-box below contains a brief discussion of the alternatives.

Author Website and Disciplinary Archives

For years now, various authors have posted articles on their *personal websites* as a way to make them available to the public at large. While such a strategy has the potential to increase access, it suffers from a number of disadvantages. First, searching for such material using search engines such as *Google* or *Yahoo!* is like looking for a needle in a haystack – the chances of actually locating it are slim. Second, due to the fact that websites often change and links can become “broken,” materials posted on personal websites have a shorter lifespan than ones posted on formal archives.

The first free on-line *disciplinary archive*, arXiv.org, was created in 1991 as a *preprint archive* for physicists. Today, disciplinary archives have grown in number and are very similar to institutional repositories. The only difference between the two is that the former only house information relating to a particular subject or academic discipline. With the advent of OAI search engines, however, the difference between the two tends to become irrelevant as these will locate any articles that match our search criteria, regardless of which type of archive/repository they are located in.

IRs are databases that host the literature produced by a particular entity, be it an academic institution or a research organization. As opposed to disciplinary archives, IRs offer the advantage of being cross-disciplinary. In terms of their content, IRs house preprints and/or postprints of articles submitted to scientific journals.

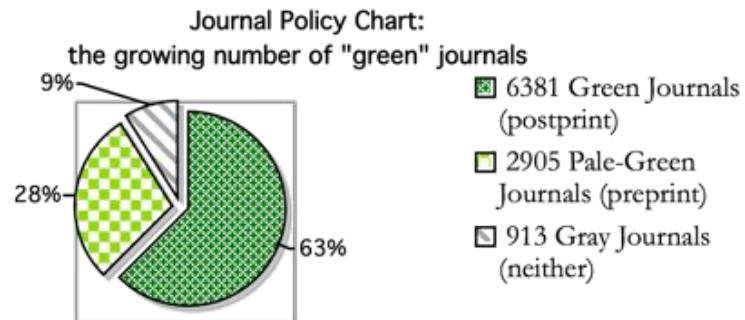
Preprints are versions of articles that have yet to be peer-reviewed and published. Often, this is the version that we will submit to a journal for review.

Postprints are versions that have been approved by the peer-review process. These do not necessarily have to be copy-edited – some journals, for example, will only allow authors to archive the version of their postprint that has not been edited and formatted – the “author-manuscript”.^{xii} Similarly, some journals will only allow us to post the preprint version of an article that appears in their subscription-based publication, or allow us to post the postprint only after a predetermined embargo period. To distinguish between journals’ self-archiving policies, a color code is often used, as illustrated below.

Gold	OA is provided to all articles without delay. Articles are freely available at the time of publication.
Green	Authors are allowed to self-archive their article (postprint) after it has appeared in the subscription-based version of the journal. The delay between the initial publication and the permission to archive varies from one publisher to the other.

Pale Green	Authors can only self-archive preprint versions of their articles
Gray	None of the above.
Source: Peter Suber. <i>Open Access Overview</i> . March 2006.	

While some journals still do not allow authors to self-archive their work, the proportion of journals that permits either preprint or postprint archiving has risen substantially in recent years. The most recent survey of the 278 publishers registered with the SHERPA/RoMEO project – which provides a listing of publisher copyright policies and self-archiving – reveals that 91% of their journals (over 8,000) are “green”.^{xiii}



Source: <http://romeo.eprints.org/stats.php>

Interoperability

The major advantage of IRs is that they are *interoperable*. What this means is that we don't have to search every individual IR if we are looking for information on a specific topic. Instead, as most IRs comply with the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH), we can simultaneously search most repositories as if they were “one, big, seamless, virtual archive.”^{xiv} In other words, using specialized search engines that aggregate the content of thousands of archives, we can search and retrieve documents from any IR.^{xv} Today, such OAI “Googles” are being created, the most notable of which is the University of Michigan's OAIster (<http://oaister.umdl.umich.edu/o/oaister/>). Even standard search engines such as *Google Scholar* and *Yahoo!* have started indexing metadata from IRs and favour OA copies of articles. In other words, if an OA copy of a document has been indexed by *Google*, our search will lead us first to this copy, instead of to those for which we would have to pay.^{xvi}

BOX 4: The OAI-PMH and Interoperability

“The Open Archives Initiative develops and promotes interoperability standards that aim to facilitate the efficient dissemination of content.”

The OAI-PMH has created a shared code, or framework, that can be used to create metadata tags. *Metadata* is information – data – about the content of an electronic document, in this case the author(s), title, data, journal, and more. All journals and repositories that comply with the OAI therefore agree to use the same tags to identify the different data contained in their articles. By creating a uniform code, the OAI-PMH allows articles that use its predefined tags to be *interoperable* – jointly searched and retrieved. The code allows the metadata to be harvested – gathered together – from a number of different sources by a single search engine that also complies with the OAI.

Source: *Open Archives Initiative Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*, June 2002, www.openarchives.org/documents/FAQ.html.

For more information, see:

OAI for Beginners – the Open Archives Forum online tutorial, Open Archives Forum, www.oaforum.org/tutorial/

OA in Practice: Frequently Asked Questions

When should we self-archive our work?

As discussed earlier, not all publishers (or journals) have the same policies with regards to the self-archiving of preprints and postprints. As such, our ability to self-archive our work will depend on whether the journal to which we have submitted our work is considered “gold,” “green,” “pale-green,” or “gray”. How do we know what a journal or publisher’s policy is? To assist us, the SHERPA/RoMEO project has put together an extensive list of various publishers’ policies with regard to self-archiving (<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo.php>).

- Legally speaking, we can self-archive any preprint version of our work without having to seek the permission of the journal to which we are submitting it or have submitted it to in the past. As long as we haven’t signed any agreement with a publisher stating otherwise, we are still the sole copyright holders of our work. In some cases, however, specific journals can decide not to consider for peer-review an article that has been previously circulated to the public or submitted to another publication, *including anything that has been posted on the internet*. This has nothing to do with copyright law, but can be applied by any journal as part of their institutional policy. Referred to as the *Ingelfinger rule*, this policy was first put in

place in 1969 by the then-editor of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Franz J. Ingelfinger. While few journals now impose such requirements, we should always check a journal's policy if we intend to submit an article for peer-review.

- In the case of postprints, the situation is slightly more complicated as copyright is typically given to publishers who now own the rights to our work. Let's look at four likely scenarios:
 - (1) The journal allows us to self-archive the final, ready-for-publication, peer-reviewed version of our article without any delay, i.e. as soon as it appears in the subscription-based version.
 - (2) The journal allows us to self-archive, without delay, our "author-manuscript": the final, peer-reviewed version of our work that has not been copy-edited and formatted for publication.
 - (3) The journal allows us to self-archive the final peer-reviewed version of our article (or our author-manuscript) but only after a certain embargo period that usually ranges between six months and a year.
 - (4) The journal denies us the right to self-archive anything other than the preprint version of our work.
- The *when* and *how* of self-archiving our work will vary on a case-by-case basis. Luckily, we can refer to such resources as those provided by the SHERPA/RoMEO Project to find out a specific publisher's self-archiving policy and act accordingly. Today, 64% of publishers and 91% of all journals inventoried by the SHERPA/RoMEO list allow us to postprint our work.^{xvii}

By depositing our paper in a repository, are we signing away all copyright to that paper?

- NO. The act of depositing our article in a repository in no way interferes with copyright law. All that is required is for the copyright holder – be it the author or the publisher – to agree to make his/her work OA. The copyright holder will retain rights to the article as defined in the copyright agreement.
- In the case of a preprint, we, as authors, will retain all rights to our work.
- When our article is accepted for publication in a scientific journal, most publishers will demand that we sign a copyright agreement, which means that they now own the rights to our work. In that case, we will need to seek their permission before depositing our postprint – either the "author-manuscript" or the final, type-set and formatted version as it appears in the journal – in a repository. Self-archiving in a repository, however, will in no way affect the pre-existing copyright agreement.
- Before signing any copyright agreement with a publisher, authors should ensure that the agreement will not prevent them from providing OA to their work. One useful resource here is the *Creative Commons licenses* which can help us manage our

copyright in a more flexible, open way (www.creativecommons.org).^{xviii} Such licenses can also be used by authors to create an OA-compatible copyright for the preprint version of their work. The SHERPA project also provides a template that authors can use to request permission to place their work in a repository from publishers who do not usually grant such a right (<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/guidance/submission.html#requests>).

Does mounting our work in a repository require a lot of time and specific skills?

- NO. Depositing an article in a repository will take about 10 minutes of our time. And the more we do it, the easier it gets. We do not even need to be computer-savvy to do so. Once we have registered with a specific repository all that is required of us is that we upload our work, fill-in a few simple fields, and hit the “submit” button.

Where can we deposit our papers? What are some good Institutional Repositories?

- It is important to note that we cannot self-archive our work in any institutional repository of our choosing. Though this may change in the future, at present institutional repositories generally limit their content to work produced by staff, students, grantees, funded projects, and other funding recipients. Thus, if we are interested in self-archiving our work, the first step we need to take is to find out whether our university, research institute or funder already has an IR. How do we find this out? Apart from the obvious and easy step of asking them directly, we can also turn to a variety of online resources, namely websites that provide searchable databases of existing IRs. These include:
 - The Directory of Open Access Repositories, *OpenDOAR*: <http://www.opendoar.org/index.html>; and,
 - The Registry of Open Access Repositories (ROAR): <http://roar.eprints.org/index.php>.

If we find out that we already have access to an IR, then our next step should be to find out how we can upload documents onto it.

If, on the other hand, the organization or institution to which we are affiliated does not already have an institutional repository, we can turn to other types of archives, mainly subject-based ones. In the field of public health, however, there are not that many such archives available. Here, the most well known digital archive is **PubMed Central** (PMC, <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/index.html>), a “free digital archive of biomedical and life sciences journal literature.”^{xix} PMC, by its definition, only archives previously peer-reviewed materials. In most cases, PMC enters into

agreements with publishers that agree to make some or all of the content of their journals freely available on PMC. In some circumstances, however, PMC will accept material directly from authors when this has been mandated by their funding agency. At all times, however, articles must meet PMC standards of quality, both in terms of the “scientific and editorial quality of its content, and on the technical quality of its digital files.”^{xx}

Another option at our disposal is to submit our work to **Eldis**, one of the knowledge services provided by the Institute for Development Studies (Sussex). The website offers full-text access to over 22,000 documents, 30 resource guides, an email newsletter, and more. Eldis offers us the opportunity to host documents that are already online elsewhere and for which copyright permission is available. After completing a simple submission form, our document will then be reviewed by an editorial team who will determine whether or not it is suitable for inclusion on their site. If the document is not already available online, we must confirm that we are the sole copyright holder and give permission for Eldis to make it publicly available. For detailed instructions, see <http://www.eldis.ids.ac.uk/about/contribute.htm>.

Note that IDRC has recently launched its own Institutional Repository, the “Digital Library”. This resource aims to “provide the international research community with access to a current and comprehensive collection of research results and documents generated by IDRC-funded projects, IDRC funding recipients, and IDRC staff about a wide range of subjects related to international development”.^{xxi}

The final option would be to create our own IR. While we do not have the time nor space in this toolkit to go through the various steps needed to do so, the following web sites, documents and software are available to assist us in such an endeavor:

- The SPARC Repository Resources offers a variety of readings and links concerning IRs, including how-to guides and discussion forums: <http://www.arl.org/sparc/repositories/>
- The CARL *Guide to Setting up an Institutional Repository* discusses the various steps involved in the process: http://www.carl-abrc.ca/projects/institutional_repositories/setup_guide-e.html
- Three free software packages are available for use for institutional repositories: GNU EPrints (<http://www.eprints.org/software/>); DSpace (<http://www.dspace.org/>); and CDSware (<http://cdsware.cern.ch/>)
- Richard Jones, Dr Theo Andrew and John MacColl. 2006. *The Institutional Repository*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing. In this book, the authors discuss IRs, including their set-up and maintenance

Do IRs only provide access to peer-reviewed papers?

- NO. While some IRs or archives, such as PubMed Central, only host e-prints, or peer-reviewed articles, others host a variety of other types of documents,

including drafts and working papers, books and monographs, non-published digital objects, reports, and other grey literature. IRs are free to determine what types of works they want to host, but will usually differentiate quite clearly between documents that are peer-reviewed and those which are not.

- If we are interested in finding repositories that only host peer-reviewed publications, the *OpenDOAR*'s searchable database allows us to limit our search to repositories that host preprints or postprints. The Registry of Open Access Material Archiving Policies (ROARMAP) for its part allows us to find out what a specific repository's policy is with regards to archiving.

If we provide OA to our work, will it be easier for others to plagiarize it?

- NO. By providing OA to our work, we are simply consenting to the “unrestricted reading, downloading, copying, sharing, storing, printing, searching, linking, and crawling of the full-text of the work.”^{xxiii} By using copyright agreements, such as those provided by the *Creative Commons*, we ensure that our work can only be used for these purposes, and nothing else. Secondly, plagiarism is in fact easier to detect once our work is online as search engines can be used to find out whether entire segments of our article are being used by others.

Will work published in OA journals or made available in repositories be less credible?

- NO. Contrary to what some people might think, OA is not incompatible with peer-review.
- OA journals use the same standards of quality as do subscription-based publications. What this means is that they too use peer-review as the basis for selecting which articles they will publish. Again, the only difference is that the costs involved with such procedures are not borne by the reader.
- Posting our work in a repository in no way interferes with the peer-review process. While repositories do not perform peer-review – they are, after all, not a refereed publishing medium – they can opt to host only peer-reviewed works. In fact, most repositories and archives that exist today limit their content to peer-reviewed research literature. And those that also house non-peer-reviewed works, for example preprints, will clearly label them as such, thus distinguishing them from refereed works. Making our work available in a repository doesn't decrease its value or credibility; in fact, it enhances it by increasing its readership and citation count.

What can we do to forward the OA movement?

If possible, publish in OA journals. Because this might not always be feasible due (among other factors) to the unavailability of a suitable journal, we should make our work available in a repository as early as possible. To ensure that we are able to do so, we should attempt to publish in non-OA journals whose publishers will allow us to self-archive preprints or postprints. The power to increase the percentage of OA articles rests, after all, in the hands of individual authors who are willing to make their work freely available online.

Be familiar with our rights as authors and not relinquish our copyright unless it is absolutely required. If that is the case, we should make use of freely available licenses such as those provided by the *Creative Commons* to ensure that our copyright agreement does not forbid OA. Always retain a copy of our “author-manuscript” – the peer-reviewed version of our article that has not been type-set and formatted – in case our publisher does not allow us to self-archive the version that appears in their publication.

Sign the *Budapest Open Access Initiative*, a public statement in support of OA – both self-archiving and OA journals – for scholarly journal articles. It was launched in February 2002.

What role can research funders and governments play to increase the acceptance of OA?

- These actors have a critical role to play in the uptake of OA. For instance, they can require that the research findings they have funded be OA, making it a precondition of providing funding in the first place.^{xxiii}
- Today, a number of funding organizations are mandating OA as part of their funding agreements with new grantees. For example,
 - The U.S. *National Institute of Health* has had a “Public Access Policy” in place since May 2005. Self-archiving must be done in PubMed Central, but authors are allowed an embargo period of up to one year if that is required by the journal in which they have published. For more information, see: www.nih.gov/about/publicaccess.index.htm
 - The *Wellcome Trust's* “Position Statement in Support of Open and Unrestricted Access to Published Research” took effect in October 2005. Under this new policy, all grant holders must place a version of any peer-reviewed paper in PubMed Central (PMC), and eventually UK PubMed Central (UKPMC). An embargo period of up to six months is permitted. In addition, recognizing that authors might not be able to cover the extra costs of publishing in OA

journals, the policy also provides for extra funds to cover processing fees. For more information, see: www.wellcome.ac.uk/doc_WTD002766.html

- Other research funders are now coming on board, including the Research Council UK and Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. A number of governments are also introducing legislation to put research findings funded by government money into the public domain.^{xxiv}

Key Online Resources

Search Engines (or service providers):

- OAIster, University of Michigan Digital Library Search Service: www.oaister.org
- Arc, Old Dominion University, Digital Research Library Research Group: www.arc.cs.odu.edu
- Citebase, Open Citation Project: www.citebase.org
- Citeseer: <http://citeseer.ist.psu.edu>
- Scirus: www.scirus.com/srsapp
- Google Scholar: www.scholar.google.com
- The Open Archives Initiative (OAI) maintains a list of other service providers: www.openarchives.org/service/listproviders.html

OA Statements and Definition

- Budapest Open Access Initiative: www.soros.org/openaccess/
- Bethesda OA Statement: www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/bethesda.htm
- Berlin OA Statement: <http://oa.mpg.de/openaccess-berlin/berlindeclaration.html>
- OECD Declaration on Access to Research Data from Public Findings: www.oecd.org/document/0,2340,en_2649_34487_25998799_1_1_1_1,00.html

Directories, databases and more

- Open Access and the Developing World: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/developingcountries/>
- Directory of Open Access Journals: www.doaj.org
- SHERPA/RoMEO Project: www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo.php
- Directory of Open Access Repositories: www.opendoar.org
- Open Society Institute: www.soros.org
- Create Change: www.createchange.org
- Creative Commons: www.creativecommons.org
- SPARC: www.arl.org/sparc

OA Overviews:

- Peter Suber. *Open Access Overview*. March 2006. www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm

- “Authors and Open Access.” Nottingham, SHERPA Project, 2006.
<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/guidance/authors.html#whatoa>
- *Budapest Open Access Initiative: Frequently Asked Questions*. February 15, 2007.
www.earlham.edu/~peters/foa/boaifaq.htm

Glossary of Key OA Terms

Author manuscript: This is the version of an article that has been accepted for publication, including revisions made by the author but generally excluding final copy-edits and other small changes made by the journal’s editorial staff prior to publication.^{xxv}

Creative Commons: A non-profit organization that “provides free tools that let authors, scientists, artists, and educators easily mark their creative work with the freedoms they want it to carry.”^{xxvi} The creative commons licenses allow authors to hold on to their copyright and control how their work can be accessed and used.

Disciplinary Archives: A repository that is created to house postprints and/or preprints in one or more specific fields.

Embargo: In the context of OA, this refers to a pre-determined period of time during which, after publication in a subscription-based journal, authors are not allowed to self-archive their work (i.e. make it available OA). During that period, the publisher holds the sole right to publication.

E-prints: the digital texts of peer-reviewed research articles, before and after refereeing.^{xxvii}

Free Access: a situation where particular individuals, groups or institutions are given access to one or more publications free of charge or at a lower cost.

Gold Route: publication in an OA journal.

Green Route: used interchangeably with the term “self-archiving”, the green route to OA refers to “the electronic posting, without publisher mediation, of author-supplied research.”^{xxviii}

Ingelfinger Rule: a policy according to which specific journals can decide not to consider for peer-review an article that has been previously circulated to the public or submitted to another publication, including anything that has been posted on the internet.

Institutional Repository: an online database that houses the full text of the literature produced by a specific institutions and its affiliates (i.e. staff, students, etc.).

Interoperability: “the ability of two or more systems or components to exchange information and to use the information that has been exchanged.”^{xxix}

Metadata: information – data – about the content of an electronic document (e.g. author, title, journal title, etc.)

Open Access: “free availability [of research literature] on the public internet, permitting any user to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraints on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.”^{xxx}

Open Access Journals: are journals that “use a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access.” Readers are furthermore allowed to “read, download, copy, distribute, search, or link to the full texts of these articles.”^{xxxi}

Postprints: versions that have been approved by the peer-review process. These do not necessarily have to be copy-edited – some journals, for example, will only allow authors to archive the author-manuscript.

Preprints: versions of articles that have not yet been submitted for peer-review or publication.

Self-archiving: the electronic posting, without publisher mediation, of author-supplied research.^{xxxii}

Endnotes

ⁱ Stevan Harnad. “Fast-Forward on the Green Road to Open Access: The Case Against Mixing Up Green and Gold.” *Ariadne* Issue 42, January 2005.

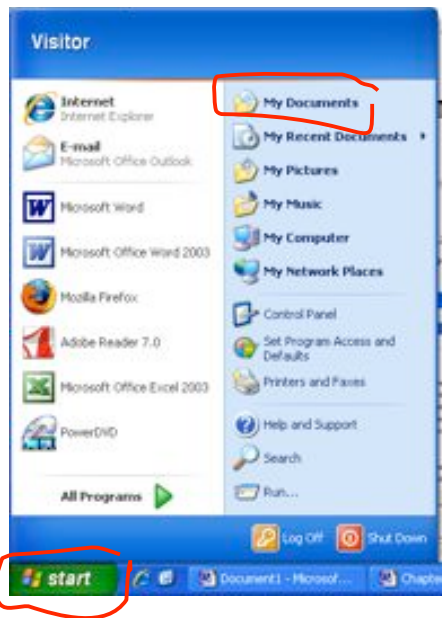
ⁱⁱ Stephen Pinfield and Bill Hubbard. *The Move Towards Open Access of Research Outputs: Briefing paper*. SHERPA, May 2004. Available at: www.sherpa.ac.uk/documents/open_access_briefing3.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ *The effect of open access and downloads ('bits') on citation impact: a bibliography of studies*. The Open Citation Project. Available at: <http://opcit.eprints.org/oacitation-biblio.html>

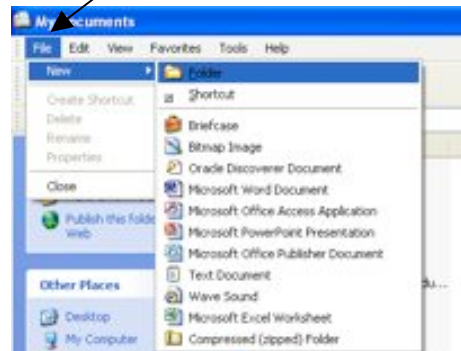
^{iv} Budapest Open Access Initiative. February 14, 2002. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml>

^v Steve Lawrence. “Online or Invisible?” *Nature* 411(6837), p.521, 2001.

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- ^{vi} Stevan Harnad, quoted in Richard Poynder, “Poynder on Point: Ten Years After.” *Information Today* 21(9), October 2004.
- ^{vii} Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). Available at: www.doaj.org
- ^{viii} Susan R. Owens. “Revolution or Evolution?” *EMBO Reports* 4(8), 741-743, 2003.
- ^{ix} Peter Suber. *Open Access Overview*. March 2006. Available at: www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm
- ^x Raym Crow. *The Case for Institutional Repositories: A SPARC Position Paper*. Washington: SPARC, 2002.
- ^{xi} Keith G. Jeffery. “Open Access: An Introduction.” *ERCIM News* 64, January 2006. Available at: http://www.ercim.org/publication/Ercim_News/enw64/jeffery.html
- ^{xii} Peter Suber. *Open Access Overview*. March 2006.
- ^{xiii} “Journal Policies – Summary Statistics So Far.” *Eprints*. <http://romeo.eprints.org/stats.php>
- ^{xiv} Stevan Harnad. “Free at Last: The Future of Peer-Reviewed Journals.” *D-Lib Magazine* 5(12), December 1999.
- ^{xv} Richard Poynder. “Poynder on Point: Ten Years After.” *Information Today* 21(9), October 2004.
- ^{xvi} Kristin Antelman. “Do Open-Access Articles Have a Greater Research Impact?” *College and Research Libraries*, September 2003: 379.
- ^{xvii} Fifteen Common Concerns – and Clarifications. SHERPA. <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk>
- ^{xviii} Creative Commons: Frequently Asked Questions. <http://www.creativecommons.org>
- ^{xix} <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/index.html>
- ^{xx} PMC Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/about/faq.html#q5>
- ^{xxi} See <http://idl-bnc.idrc.ca/>.
- ^{xxii} Peter Suber. *Open Access Overview*. March 2006.
- ^{xxiii} Stevan Harnad. “Fast-Forward on the Green Road to Open Access: The Case Against Mixing Up Green and Gold.” *Ariadne* Issue 42, January 2005.
- ^{xxiv} Charles W. Bailey Jr. *Open Access Bibliography: Liberating Scholarly Literature with E-Prints and Open Access Journals*. Washington: Association of Research Libraries, 2005.
- ^{xxv} Author manuscript, PubMed Central, <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/about/authorms.html>
- ^{xxvi} www.creativecommons.org
- ^{xxvii} Self-Archiving FAQ, www.eprints.org/openaccess/self-faq/
- ^{xxviii} Raym Crow. *The Case for Institutional Repositories: A SPARC Position Paper*. Washington: SPARC, 2002.
- ^{xxix} Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. *IEEE Standard Computer Dictionary: A Compilation of IEEE Standard Computer Glossaries*. New York, NY: 1990.
- ^{xxx} Budapest Open Access Initiative. February 14, 2002. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml>
- ^{xxxi} How do we define Open Access, Research Journal, Quality control? DOAJ FAQ, <http://www.doaj.org/doaj?func=loadTempl&templ=faq#definition>
- ^{xxxii} Raym Crow. *The Case for Institutional Repositories: A SPARC Position Paper*. Washington: SPARC, 2002.



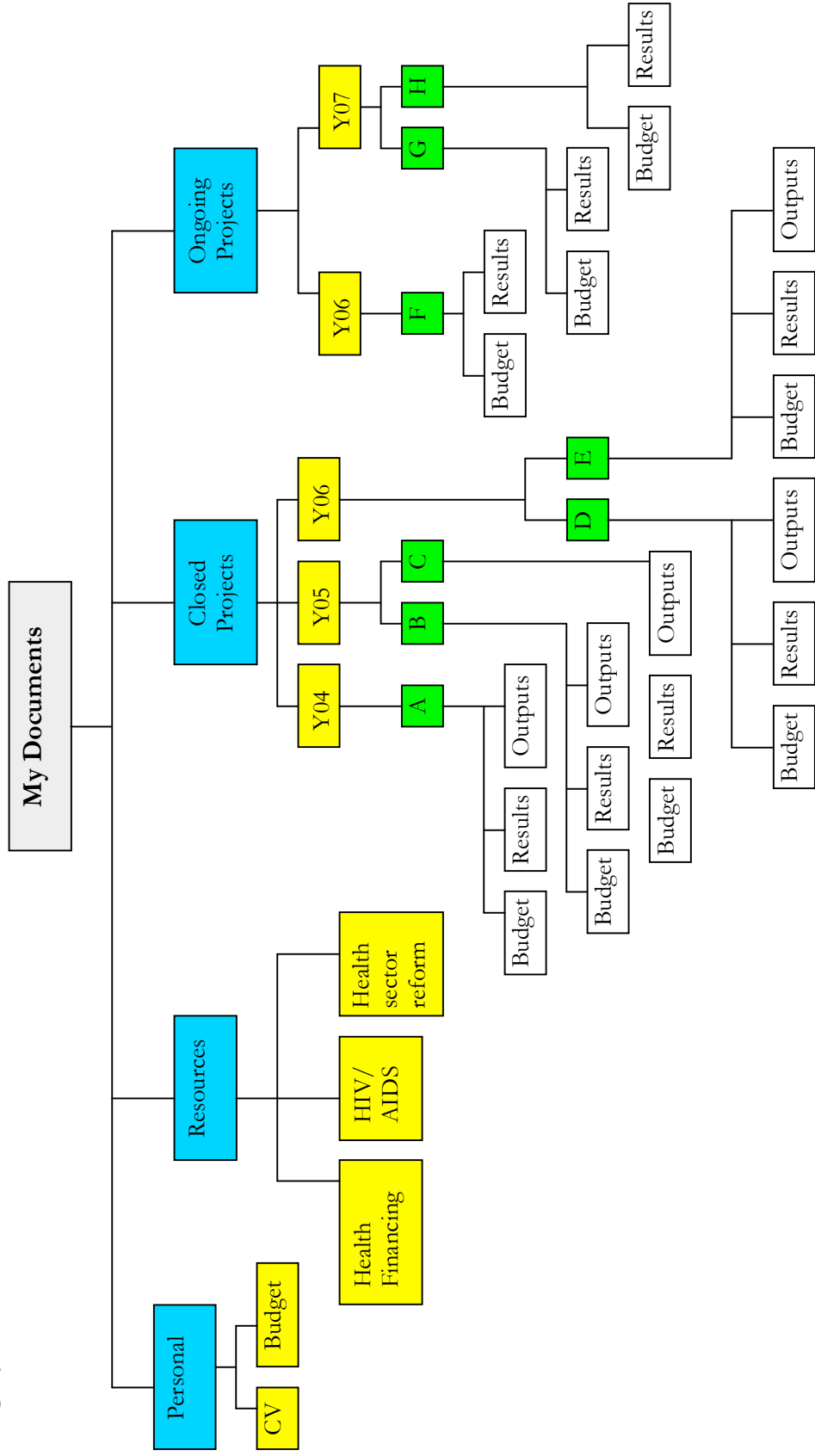
Select 'File', then 'New' and 'Folder'. Give the folder a distinctive, descriptive and specific name. "Project" is a vastly inferior folder name to the richly evocative "Equity Project Chilopo District June 07".



Creating folders is a crucial first step. This is not the creation of a system, but it is strong ground upon which to proceed. We still need to create a system that is logical and adapted to our needs and ways of thinking – after some experimentation, everyone will arrive at a different answer that satisfies them. In designing a “folder structure,” we might want to envisage an inverted pyramid, or an upside-down tree structure. As such, we will have fewer folders at the top than at the bottom, allowing us to narrow down our filing – and our eventual searching – according to specific criteria. We need to be strategic and think about the different types of folders/files we will want to store on our computer, creating a system that will allow us to classify them in an easy-to-use form. If we are already using a paper filing system, it’s a good idea to follow the same structure to avoid confusion.

In the example below – which shows only our folders and not our actual files – the first layer contains only four folders. First, our ‘Personal’ files have been separated from our work documents. Similarly, ‘Resources’ that we find useful – such as journal articles, reference lists, websites, etc. – are held in a different folder than documents related to the projects we manage. Again, projects are divided into two categories, depending on whether they are current or closed. To keep things simple, a sub-folder has been created for each distinct project, labeled ‘A’ to ‘G’ here for example purposes. As we move down the tree, similar labels have been used for each project to distinguish their various components (budget, outputs and results). By using such a system, we can easily locate a file by thinking through its characteristics or, if need be, going through a process of elimination.

Filing System



Naming our files and folders

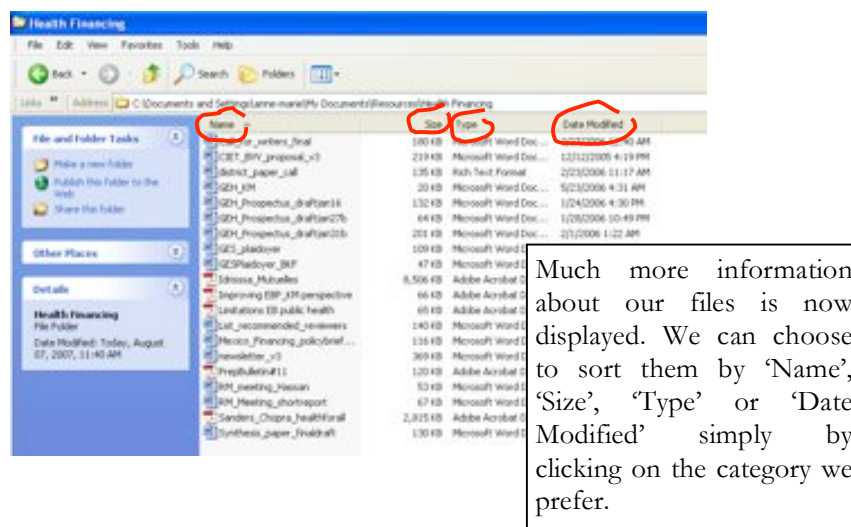
Obviously, efficient and clever filing depends upon how we label our files and folders. The more illuminating, the more precise we can be – especially in our choice of folder – then the easier the task of retrieval becomes. The names of both files and folders should evoke the content of what’s inside. We shouldn’t have to open a file to know what it’s about – that wastes time. For that reason, let’s avoid using generic names such as “Paper1.doc” or “Letter.doc.” Our goal should be remembering what’s in a file or folder by looking at its name alone.

That is not an invitation to write an essay when naming a file or folder. Let’s keep our names short and to the point. While most programs will allow us to use over 200 characters when naming a file, there is no good reason for doing so. Instead, we should try to keep our file names under 20 characters long. This will avoid clutter and will make it easier to know what we’re looking for at a glance. When needed, common abbreviations can be helpful shortcuts.

All of this is particularly germane when working on collaborative documents – a document that will have several different iterations by different authors. Though the group may wish to name the document “WHO paper-v1.doc” we might have already written a WHO paper and thus wish to be even more specific when saving this collaboration to our hard drive – perhaps something like “WHO-TB adherence paper-v1.doc”. The ‘Save As...’ function in MSWord is a very useful way of creating multiple versions of the same document – especially if we want to edit something but maintain a copy of the original. Thus after opening the article “WHO-TB adherence paper-v1.doc” and making some changes, we may wish to ‘Save As...’ and give the edited document the title “WHO-TB adherence paper-v2.doc”. Note that “v1” “v2” “v3” is a very popular way of denoting different versions of the same document. We may also wish to add our initials to anything we edit collaboratively, so that, again at a glance, we can tell which iteration of the collective document we’re looking at.

Viewing files

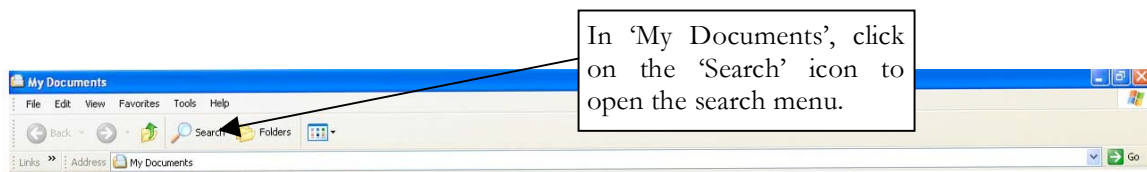
Within ‘Windows Explorer,’ a number of options are at our disposal when viewing our files: *Thumbnails*, *Tiles*, *Icons*, *List*, and *Details*. To change our current view, we simply need to click on ‘View’ in the toolbar and select one of the five options. While we should stick to the type of view that best suits our needs, learning how to use the ‘Details’ option can come in handy. As such, it allows us to sort our files by *Name*, *Size*, *Type*, or *Date Modified* and displays much more information about each file than do other views.



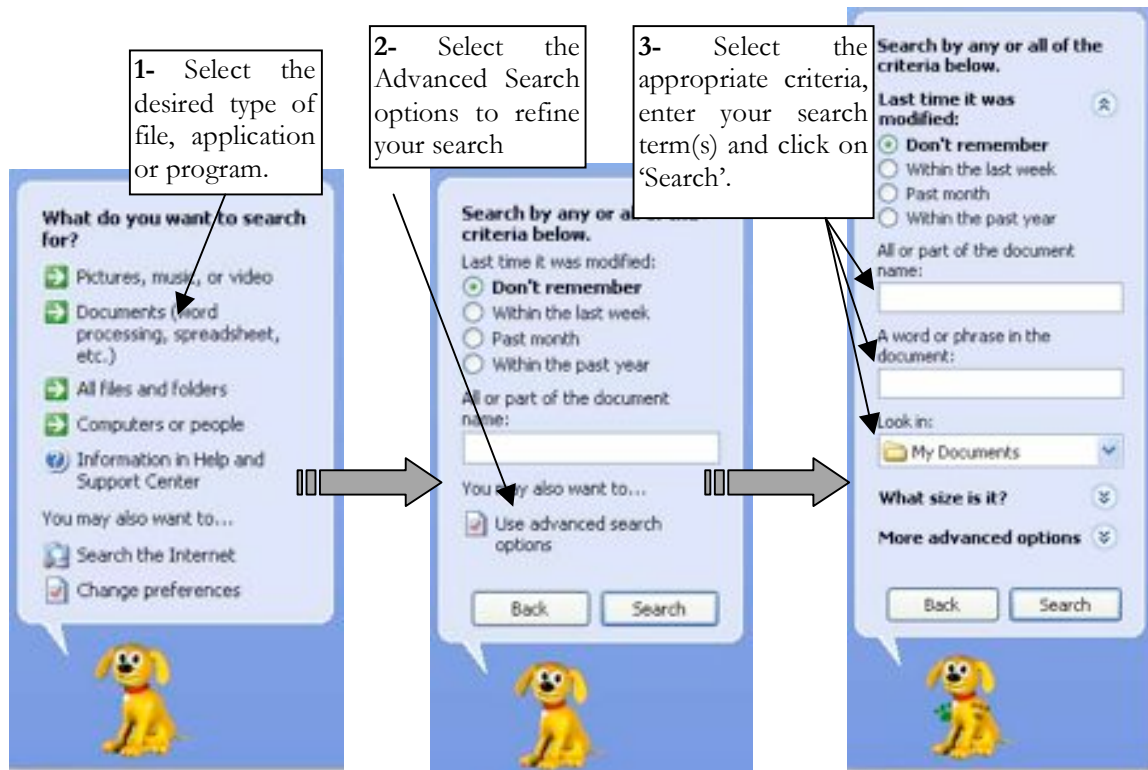
Searching for files

Even after our best efforts at creating a logical filing system, we might still find ourselves unable to locate a specific file. What options are at our disposal then?

As a first step, we could use our computer's search engine. We access it through the Start menu – by selecting the 'Search' option – or directly in 'My Documents', by clicking on the 'Search' icon. Once we've accessed it, we can select the type of item we are looking for (is it a document? A picture? A song?), as well as narrowing our search according to a predefined set of criteria.



The following menu will now appear in the left-hand side toolbar in 'My Documents'.

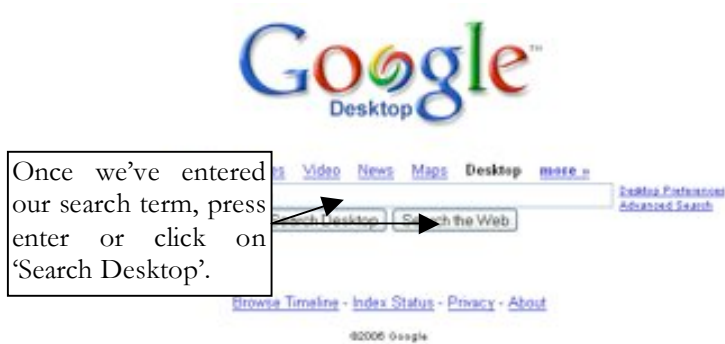


Google Desktop

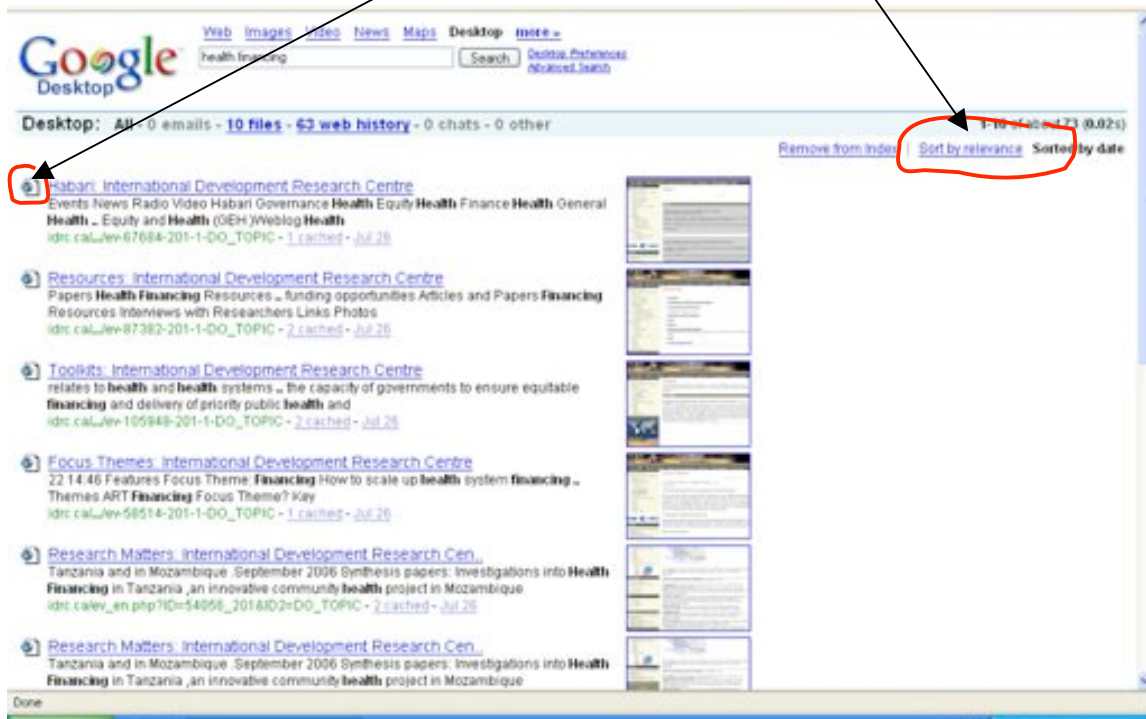
While the built-in search option in Windows has its uses, it also has strong limitations – chief among them being its speed and accuracy. For those reasons, we might want to consider a more advanced search engine such as **‘Google Desktop’**, which allows us to search our computer in much the same way as we search the web. Google Desktop uses an interface similar to Google’s, allowing us to search files and emails, web pages we have visited in the past, and more.

Once we download and install the software on our computer, Google Desktop will retroactively index all the files, emails and web history found on our computer. From that point onwards, the software will do the same for any new web page, email or file that we read. An interesting feature of Google Desktop is that it also creates “cached copies” of our files, allowing us to search for old or deleted copies of a document or older versions of a website. What that means is that every time we view a document, Google Desktop will take its snapshot and allow us to view it in the future even if we didn’t actually save that particular version.

Searching with Google Desktop is very simple: all that is required is that we enter our search terms into the designated query box. While there are many ways of accessing that box, the easiest way is to double-click on the ‘Ctrl’ (or Control) button on our keyboard. The query box will appear in the middle of our screen (to get rid of it, click on ‘Ctrl’ twice again).



Once we have performed a search, results will be displayed by time and date – starting with the most recent – unless we select the **'Sort by relevance'** option on our screen. To make things easier, **unique icons** are used to identify the type of document being listed – indicating a webpage, MSWord document, and so on.



Google Desktop also offers a variety of gadgets to be placed on our desktop that display new emails, weather updates, photos, personalized news, and more. This is not a program for everyone, but for many it can certainly make our computing experience less painful and less difficult.

Backing-Up Files

Of course, all of this filing and searching and retrieving is meaningless if the unthinkable happens and our hard-drive or laptop corrupts or crashes or (gasp!) is stolen. Nonetheless, all of these scenarios are possible, and indeed it is very likely that it will happen to us one day. Though we cannot foresee this event, we can plan for it. The only real way of protecting ourselves is to be vigilant and to take the time **every month** to back-up our files. We needn't back-up every file every month, but we do need to back-up the files that our organization might depend upon. It is of course up to us to decide which files are sacrosanct, and which will be backed-up every month.

Fortunately, there are all kinds of ways of backing up key documents. Probably the easiest and most cost-effective way is to write an email, every month, to ourselves. Let's call this email "File Back-up [Month] [Year]" and then attach the documents we consider invaluable. That way the documents can sit on our internet server, and a trip through our inbox will be enough to recover them. Note that some internet email services like www.gmail.com have all kinds of available storage space. However, this strategy does not work very well if we have a number of documents that need backing up.

A second way is to burn a CD or a DVD every month with key documents, naturally being sure to label the disk smartly and then to store it in a different location from where our computer usually sits (in case of, for instance, flood or fire or theft). A third way, and probably the best, is to purchase a small external hard-drive. These retail for around US\$100 and typically plug into computers through the USB port. They have the strong advantage of storing modifiable contents (whereas removable disks like CDs and DVDs usually cannot be written over). Most of us who have been "stung" by lost files now have several external hard drives, finding a way to work them into project budgets – they should not be seen as an "extra" but as part of our core business.

A fourth way is to store key documents on our flash or USB-drives. A fifth way is to access a website such as www.drivehq.com or www.box.net, where users can store large quantities of data for free on remote servers. This depends on a strong internet connection, and also on some user diligence as these commercial sites may well disappear.

No matter which strategy we select, we should consider giving the task of "file back-up" to one of our staff members. Now more than ever, backing-up files is just as important as creating them in the first place.

Email strategies

There is no denying that email is one of those brilliant, terrible tools. It allows us to communicate effortlessly with friends and colleagues around the globe. It keeps us connected. It allows for a blazingly fast exchange of ideas yet it must be used and managed carefully lest it turn into an ominous presence in our working life. Improper or unthinking use of this tool can lead to lawsuits; unprofessional content or behaviour may convince our key recipients not to open future emails from us. Even a decision to send a stream of emails to certain recipients may be enough to informally “blacklist” us in important in-boxes. However, by following a few simple rules and understanding how, why and when we should use email, we can best capitalize on this highly useful resource.

Email Etiquette

Many people tend to assume that there is no formal etiquette to be followed when using email. These people are wrong. Email is no different from any other means of communication: a certain set of rules and conventions – even if often unwritten – must be followed at all times. Why? First, we can be held liable for anything that we put down on paper, and that includes email. Second, what we write in an email reflects on our professionalism and that of our organization. If we write a sloppy and disorganized message, chances are strong that we won’t be taken seriously.

Top tips:

- *Keep our message short, concise and to the point.* We’re not trying to write a novel here; we simply want to get our message across as effectively and concisely as possible.
- *Limit our message to one subject.* If we must address more than one item, let’s consider writing a second email – or at least using bullet points or a numbered list, as we might in an MSWord document.
- *Grammatical rules apply to email.* Unless we are writing to a friend, we should always use proper grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- *Never write in CAPITAL letters* – except of course when starting a new sentence.
- *Never send a message without proofreading it first.* This is a crucial way of catching mistakes like typos or correcting poorly expressed sentences or ideas.
- *Always check the “To”, “Cc” and “Bcc” fields before we hit the send button.* There’s nothing worse than sending a message to the wrong recipient, especially if it contains sensitive information.
- *Answer emails promptly.* Even if it’s only to inform the recipient that we’ll respond to them at a later point in time.
- *Never assume that any message will be kept private.* It may be forwarded to others without our knowledge, so let’s be careful about what we write.

- *Write something meaningful in the subject line.* If we want your recipient to read it, let's entice and intrigue them with a strong, concise and illustrative subject line – an email they simply must open.
- *Use the 'Reply to All' option sparingly.* If we're sending a response to a mass email, odds are strong that everybody on the list does not need to read our answer. Usually replying to the host will suffice.
- *Use plain text.* Not all mail programs can handle fancy fonts and formats, so keep it simple.
- *Limit our attachments to 1MB.* Unless we know that our recipient has a high-speed internet connection, let's keep our emails as small as possible. This is especially important to consider when sending photographs.
- *Don't send attachments at all.* Instead – consider copying and pasting the attachment into the body of the email. This reduces the number of steps a recipient must follow to read our important message.
- *Do not overuse the 'Priority' email function.* If we keep using it when it's anything but a priority, people won't open and respond to our urgent message the day we really need them to.
- *If our email is time-sensitive, put an "expiry date" in the subject line.*
- *Avoid personal emails sent to listservs!!!*

Resources:

- "Email Etiquette Rules for Effective Email Replies." www.emailreplies.com/
- "Email Etiquette." 1997. *I Will Follow Services.* At: www.iwillfollow.com/emailetiquette.html.
- Thorton, Sam. "Rules and Regulations: Email Etiquette." 1998. At: www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/ITS/rules/email.htm.
- Jessica Bauer and Dennis G. Jerz. 2004. "Writing Effective E-Mail: Top 10 Tips." <http://jerz.setonhill.edu/writing/e-text/e-mail.htm>
- Marco Kuntze et al. 2002. "Communications Strategies for World Bank- and IMF-Watchers: New Tools for Networking and Collaboration." At: <http://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/strategy/Commsreport.doc>

Who needs to receive our message?

'To': This field should be used for our direct audience: those from whom an action or response is expected. It should not, however, be used when sending a message to a massive mailing list (see 'Bcc' below).

'Cc' (or Carbon Copy): This field is meant for our indirect audience, those who are receiving the email for their reference. Be discerning when using this field: only send it to those who will gain from the content of the email.

'Bcc' (or Blind Carbon Copy): This field allows us to hide our list of recipients. It should be used when sending to a list of people whose privacy we want to respect.

The Gilbert Email Manifesto (GEM)

Michael Gilbert's *Email Manifesto* tells us that email is a vital strategic tool – an easy and highly effective tool, especially for a small non-profit organization. In any electronic communication strategy, email must come first, with precious resources not wasted on other, more intensive forms of communication like websites. By following Gilbert's three golden rules, organizations can significantly increase their web presence, and their impact:

- **Rule 1:** Resources spent on email strategies are more valuable than the same resources spent on web strategies.
- **Rule 2:** A website built around an email strategy is more valuable than a website that is built around itself.
- **Rule 3:** Email-oriented thinking will yield better strategic thinking overall.

For more information, see: Gilbert, Michael. 2001. 'The Gilbert Email Manifesto (GEM)' at [http://news.gilbert.org/features/featurereader\\$3608](http://news.gilbert.org/features/featurereader$3608)

12 ways to fail at email, by Michael Gilbert

- 1) Not collecting email addresses;
- 2) Buying email addresses (When you buy a list of email addresses you start your relationship with everyone on that list from a position of distrust and disrespect);
- 3) Investing more in websites than in email;
- 4) Not having an email strategy at all;
- 5) Not responding to email;
- 6) Communication lacks a human voice (genuine language is what connects people);
- 7) Not converting people to online communication;
- 8) No email newsletter;
- 9) Not testing;
- 10) Not giving stakeholders control;
- 11) Not acting upon the Profile, Preferences or Behaviours of Stakeholders;
- 12) More concerned with content than the relationship.

Source: Michael Gilbert. 2003. "Twelve Ways to Fail at Email" at <http://news.gilbert.org/12Ways>

Managing our Emails

While we would never think of leaving old letters, bills and advertisements lying around in our physical mailbox, many of us tend to do exactly that with our 'Inbox'.

We let it get cluttered with old messages, some of them answered, some left unanswered, and some which were spam in the first place. If we want to make effective use of our email, however, our 'Inbox' should be reserved for action items only – in other words those emails that require our attention and, in most cases, a reply.

All other emails should be filed away or deleted. We can create sub-folders in our 'Inbox' and create a filing system in much the same way as we did for our computer files. That way, we will know where to locate an old email when we need to refer to it, and we'll know that whatever is still in our 'Inbox' deserves our immediate attention. The exact procedure for creating folders will depend on the email software we use, and we should therefore refer to the help menu when in need of assistance.

One thing most of us forget to do is to delete unnecessary sent items that have large attachments and that take up space on our computer, thereby slowing it down. To that end, we should regularly empty our 'Deleted Items' folder – until that folder is emptied, deleted items will actually remain in our email application. In most email programs, we can set the 'Deleted Items' folder in such a way that it is emptied at regular intervals, for example every time we exit the program.

Thunderbird: Developed by Mozilla, Thunderbird offers an alternative to proprietary and expensive email software such as Outlook, Eudora, Entourage, and more. It is a freely available and open source email program, which we can download at www.mozilla.com.

Internet Tips & Tricks

First things first. Stop using Internet Explorer. To repeat: *stop using Internet Explorer!!* Yes, this is the web browser that came with our computer, and yes, this is the browser we've always used. Well, it is time to evolve. Time for something new. Before reading any further, we highly recommend a download of Mozilla Firefox. This is an open source web browser (software that any coding expert can modify and as such is fully supported and always evolving) and the highly preferred alternative to proprietary software such as Internet Explorer. It can be downloaded at www.mozilla.com. There are no compatibility issues. There is nothing that works in Internet Explorer that won't in Firefox. There is, in short, absolutely no excuse not to change.

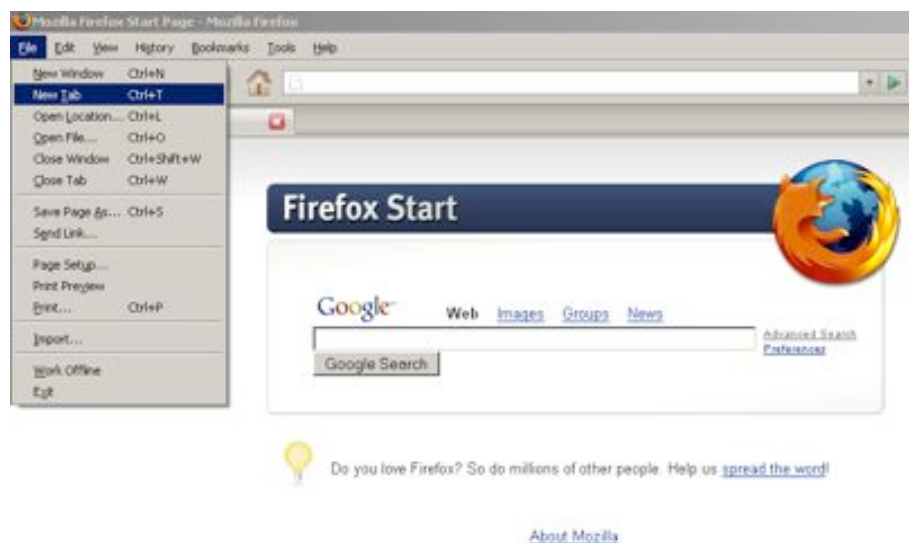
Everything that follows in this sub-chapter relates to Firefox, so let's stop here if we haven't already downloaded Firefox...

Tabbed browsing

This feature and this feature alone will change dramatically the way we surf the internet. It is especially valuable for those using a slow connection, as we can load web pages into our browser-window without interrupting our session. Instead of opening up a new window every time we want to view a new page, we can open a new tab, which will be displayed in the same window. This greatly reduces clutter, improves our computer's performance, and saves us all kinds of time.

By simultaneously downloading a number of different web pages in separate tabs, we save time by reading whichever page is downloaded first. This may seem like a small advantage, but once we get accustomed to tabbed browsing, we see – especially with an old and slow internet connection plugged into our old and slow computers – just how dramatic the change in our web behaviour is.

To open a new tab, simply select 'File > New Tab' in the Toolbar.



One of the great advantages of using tabbed browsing is that we can open a link in a webpage we are viewing without having to close that initial page. That way, instead of moving away from the original page and having to come back to it later, we can have both pages open at the same time. This will not only help us save time and frustrating web maneuvers, but it is also a great tool to use when working with a slow connection.

Let's say for example that we are reading a news article on the BBC website (www.bbc.co.uk/news) and that we want to open up a particular news story – without of course closing the “front page” of the news. All we have to do is to right-click on the desired link and select the ‘Open Link in New Tab’ option.



This screenshot shows the BBC News website. A context menu is open over a link in the 'KEY DEVELOPMENTS' section. The menu options include 'Open Link in New Window', 'Open Link in New Tab', 'Bookmark This Link...', 'Save Link As...', 'Send Link...', 'Copy Link Location', and 'Properties'. The 'Open Link in New Tab' option is highlighted. A text box on the right explains the purpose of this action.

We are interested in recent key developments so we decide to open one of the links offered below. By right clicking on one, we can open a new tab.



This screenshot shows the BBC News website with multiple browser tabs open. The active tab is highlighted in bold text. A context menu is open over a link, with 'Open Link in New Tab' highlighted. A text box explains that the initial page remains open. Another text box explains that multiple new tabs can be opened.

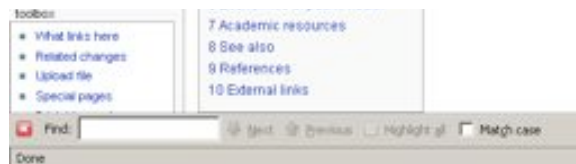
The active tab is always, by default, in bold font.

Notice that while we are now viewing a new web page, the initial page remains open.

We can open as many new tabs as we wish.



A new dialogue box will appear in the bottom left-hand corner of our browser – all we need to do now is insert our keywords to launch the search.

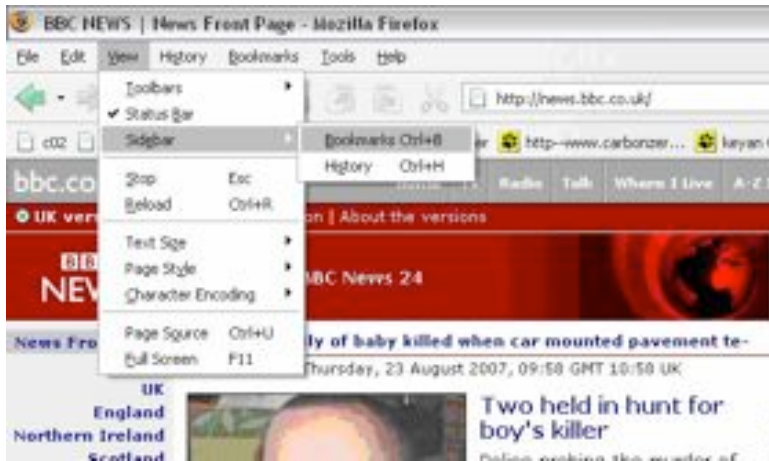


Bookmarks

Most of us have a set of web sites we visit routinely. Instead of entering the web address every time, “bookmarks” provide one-click trips to our favoured sites. These are particularly useful for websites that have confusing or lengthy addresses.

When visiting a webpage whose address we’d like to save for future visits, let’s select ‘Bookmark > Bookmark This Page..’ in the toolbar. We can also organize our bookmarks by creating thematic folders. We can furthermore display the Bookmark toolbar in our browser window, turning our favourite sites into buttons for easy clicking.





If we wish, we can display our various bookmarks as a sidebar in the browser's window. To do so, click on 'View > Sidebar > Bookmarks'. Bookmarks and folders will now be easily accessible, as shown below.

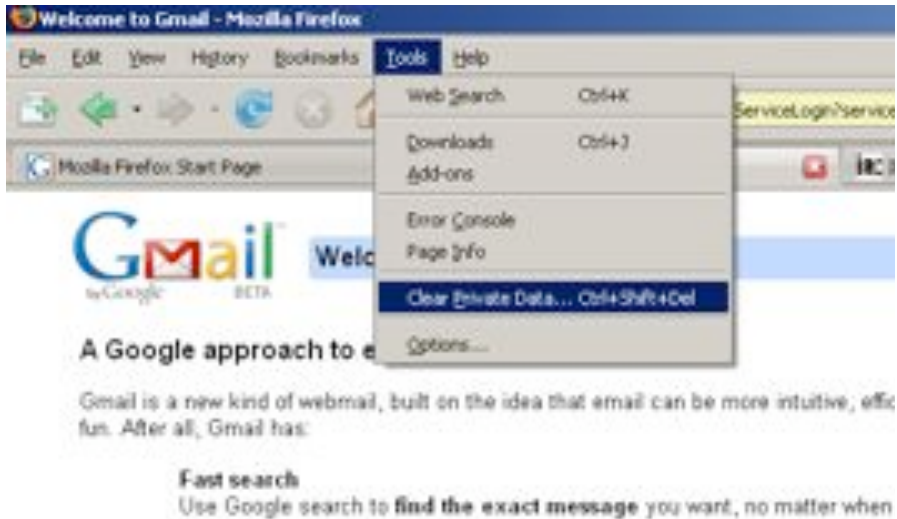


Emptying our Cache

Unless we are using a private computer to which no one else has access, we should always make sure that we empty any personal and sensitive information from our web browser before we end our web session. Whenever we visit a webpage and enter personal information – be it our name, email address, password, banking information, etc. – this information will be temporarily saved into the computer's memory. It will

therefore potentially be available to the next user of a shared computer. To protect ourselves from fraud or theft, we should empty our browser's 'cache' after each use.

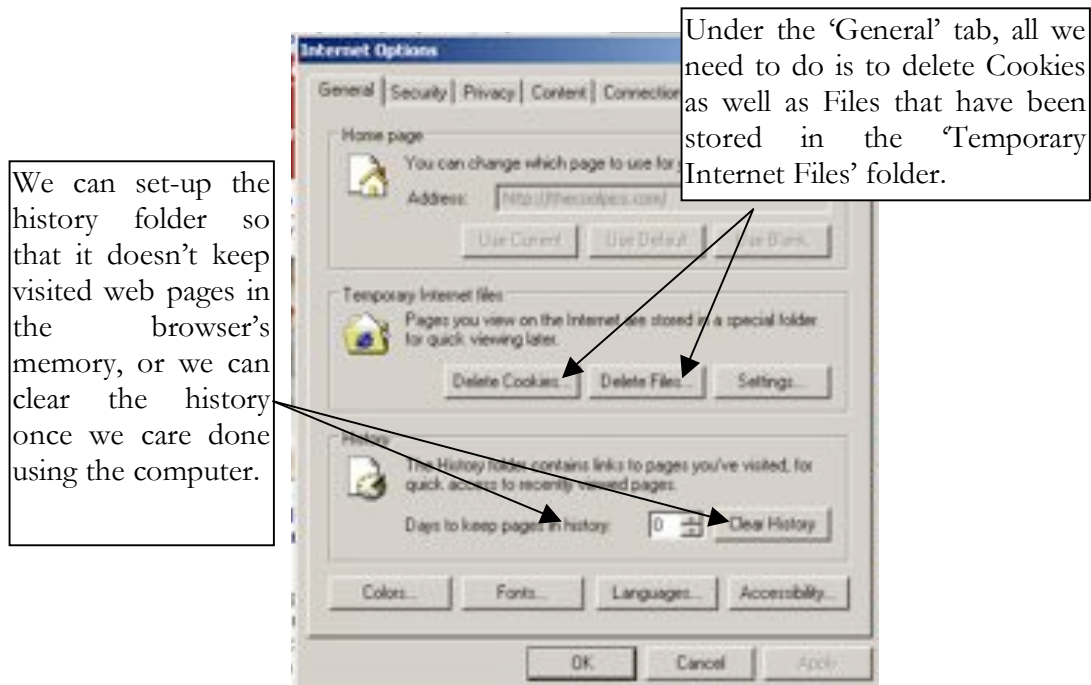
If using *Firefox*, simply select 'Tools > Clear Private Data...' in the toolbar. Once the 'Clear Private Data' menu opens, we should select all available options before clicking on 'Clear Private Data Now'.



If using Internet Explorer, the procedure is slightly different, yet not much more complicated. In the toolbar, select 'Tools > Internet Options'.



A new dialogue window will appear, as shown below.



Creating a Blog

The word “blog” means different things to different people, but we can think of blogs as being an easy and free way of creating our own website. Setting up a blog requires very little computer expertise, and, to repeat, is a *free* way of creating a site for others to visit and learn about our activities. Often likened to electronic journals or diaries, blogs allow their authors to easily post entries on a website, from posts to photographs to articles. Many are interactive, encouraging visitors to leave a comment.

Why create a Blog?

- A blog (or a website more generally) can extend an institution's influence by attracting audiences in a way that is far more interactive than email. **BUT BE CAREFUL:** blogs and websites must be routinely updated to be effective. If this seems an unlikely event, then perhaps a website or blog isn't the right fit.
- Blogs can create a forum for expert commentary and analysis on hot policy issues;
- Easy-to-read, informal writing can demystify key concepts;
- Blogs can help set the media agenda – authoritative comment and analysis on under- or un-reported issues can lead journalists or others to follow up and write about it;
- For those interested in a specific topic, relevant blogs could eventually become a leading supplement to traditional print and online news.

- The feedback loops created by the blog could lead to new audiences and collaboration opportunities (e.g. for op-ed pieces).

Source: Ingie Hovland. 2005. *Successful Communication: A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations*. London: ODI. At:

www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Publications/Documents/Comms_tools_web.pdf

Today, anyone who wishes to set up a blog has a range of options at his or her disposal. As such, blogs can be freely set-up at any of the following addresses: www.civiblog.org; www.blog.co.uk; www.livejournal.com; www.mindsay.com; www.blog.com, and more. For the purposes of the following demonstration, we will use a Blogging software hosted by Google, *Blogger*, which is easy-to-use and, most centrally, is free.

But wait a minute – why are we setting up our own blog? We’re creating one because we’ve already had lengthy discussions with others in our organization and determined that the time is right to gain greater visibility for our work (especially globally). Importantly, we already have some good, web-ready content; we anticipate the monthly creation of more content; based on some of the responses to our listserv posts, we’re confident we have an attentive audience out there who will likely respond and interact with our blog; and, most importantly, we have someone in the organization who can add “blog maintenance” to her weekly set of activities. If we didn’t have this last point, we probably wouldn’t proceed.

Five Common Web Mistakes

1. No clear identification of what we want from our site
2. Not understanding the importance of good design
3. Not editing or updating our content
4. Failing to use the web as an interactive platform
5. Not assembling an in-house web team

Source: adapted from Christine Hershey, 2005. *Communications toolkit: A guide to navigating communications for the nonprofit world*. Available at:

<http://www.causecommunications.org/clients-cause.php>

Along the same lines, we are not going to set up a blog until we’ve sat down as an organization and thought through our overall communications strategy – visit *Chapter Four* for a fuller discussion on this. Such strategizing will help us identify the proper audiences, as well as determining good content for our web site – often by simply “co-opting” material we have already produced, for an annual report for instance, or a report to a donor. But let’s bear in mind that web sites are very different sources of information, in sharp contrast to a newsletter or a journal article or a book. People tend to skim when reading content on the web, and as such too much content can be a killer – people will not come back to our site or, worse, may think of our

organization as unprofessional and incapable of producing good content. So let's be careful here. Let's seek out some professional advice if we're not sure.

Assuming we wish to proceed: let's surf over to the *Blogger* website (www.blogger.com). As we can see, the process behind setting up an account is very straightforward. Our first step is to create a Google Account – if we don't already have one – by filling in all the appropriate fields.

1 CREATE ACCOUNT 2 NAME BLOG 3 CHOOSE TEMPLATE

1 Create a Google Account


This process will create a Google account that you can use on other Google services. If you already have a Google account perhaps from Gmail, Google Groups, or Orkut, please [sign in first](#).

Email address (must already exist)

Enter a password [Password strength](#)

Retype password

Display name

Word Verification 

Acceptance of Terms I accept the [Terms of Service](#)

CONTINUE

First, let's enter our existing email address

Second, select a password that is easy to remember. Let's consider creating **one password** for every website we visit. That way, we'll never forget it.

Once our account has been created, our next step is to select a name and address (URL) for our blog. Let's select a name that reflects the content and purpose of the blog as well as a URL that is easy to remember. Here, we will set up a blog for Dr. Bight's NGO, National Health = National Development (see section on budgets).

Blogger Push-Button Publishing

1 CREATE ACCOUNT 2 NAME BLOG 3 CHOOSE TEMPLATE

2 Name your blog

Blog title Enter a title for your blog.

Blog address (URL) You and others will use this to read and talk to your blog. [Check Availability](#)

Word Verification 

OR

Advanced Setup Want to host your blog somewhere else? Try [Advanced Blog Setup](#). This will allow you to host your blog somewhere other than Blogspot.

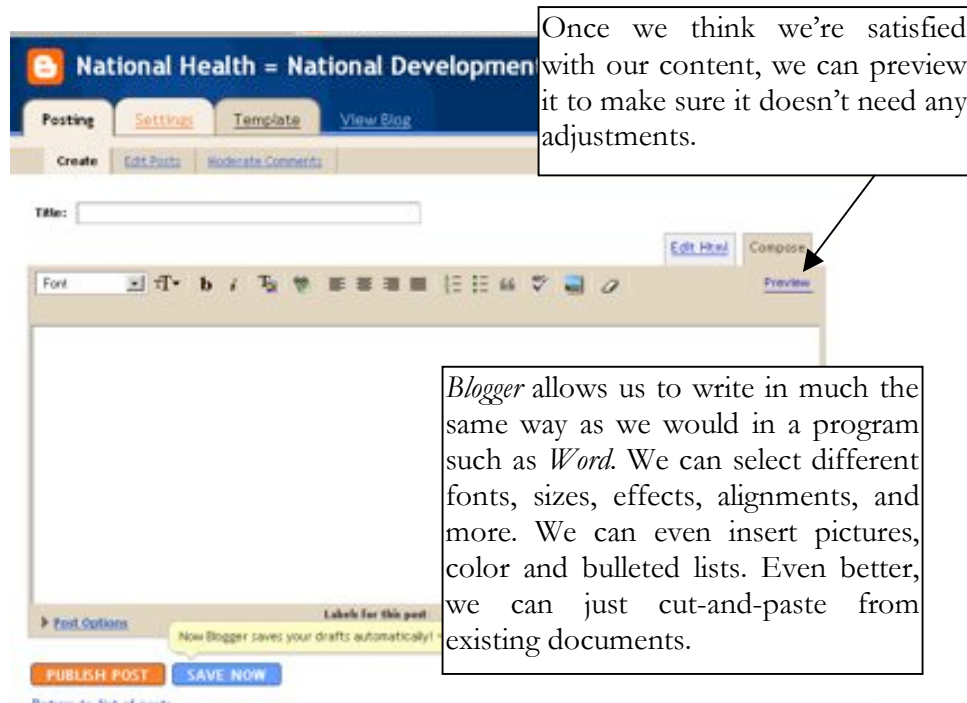
CONTINUE

We've named our URL nhnd.blogspot.com. By keeping it short and linked to our organization's name, we make it easier for our readers to remember it.

At this point, we're almost done setting up our Blog. All that's left for us to do is to select a template. Do we want to give it an informal and contemporary look? Do we want it to look like a series of newspaper articles? Or are we looking for an attractive yet professional look? When selecting the template, we should think about our audience and the purpose of our Blog.



Blogger offers us a very easy-to-use interface for posting our content. As such, all we need to do is to fill-in the required fields with our desired information, hit the 'Publish Post' button, and voilà!



Blogger also allows us to personalize our blog by modifying the set-up of the page as well as the fonts and colors of our template. We are also free to change the template at any point in time.

We can easily modify the template's Fonts and Colors, or simply pick a new one.

We can move elements around on our page to make it more customized. All we have to do is 'click and drag'.

In addition, we can add elements to the page by clicking on the “Add a Page Element” option and selecting from the list menu shown below.

Choose a New Page Element

- Poll (New!)** Survey your visitors by adding a poll to your blog. [ADD TO BLOG](#)
- List** Add a list of your favorite books, movies, or anything you like. [ADD TO BLOG](#)
- Picture** Add a picture from your computer or from somewhere else on the web. [ADD TO BLOG](#)
- Text** Add some words to your blog - like a welcome message - with our rich text editor. [ADD TO BLOG](#)
- Feed** Add content from an RSS or Atom feed to your blog. [ADD TO BLOG](#)
- Logo** Choose from a variety of Blogger items to add to your page. [ADD TO BLOG](#)
- Link List** Add a collection of your favorite sites, blogs, or web pages. [ADD TO BLOG](#)
- AdSense** Earn revenue by displaying relevant ads on your blog. [ADD TO BLOG](#)
- HTML/JavaScript** Add third-party functionality or other code to your blog. [ADD TO BLOG](#)
- Labels** Show all the labels of posts in your blog. [ADD TO BLOG](#)
- Profile** Display information about yourself. [ADD TO BLOG](#)

Once we've made all the modifications we see fit and posted to our blog, it should look something like this:

National Health = National Development

Monday, November 1, 2004

Indoor Residual Spraying of DDT for Malaria Vector Control

DDT has over the years been the subject of much discussion and controversy. In 1955, the WHO championed DDT's use in disease vector control when it launched a program to eradicate malaria. While it was at the time highly effective in reducing mortality rates, doubts began to emerge as to the negative environmental consequences of its use and the risk that mosquitoes would develop resistance to the chemical. During the 1970s and 1980s, its agricultural use was banned in most countries. Even when using it for public health purposes, countries often came under heavy criticism from international health and environmental agencies and were not always able to secure funding. In 2001, 98 countries signed the Stockholm Convention, which came into effect in 2004 and called for the total elimination of DDT and other persistent organic pollutants. Although the use of DDT for public health purposes is currently exempt from the ban, the treaty nonetheless aims to completely phase out its use on a global scale.

In our opinion, however, the evidence to date does not justify the

Here, we've added some information about NH=ND for our first time readers.

About Us

National Health = National Development (NH=ND) is a small research NGO based in T----- whose work focuses on pressing health issues affecting vulnerable populations. Building on the invaluable knowledge that we create through our various projects, we devise evidence-based recommendations that seek to influence policy.

Links

- [Generosus](#)
- [Eids](#)
- [British Medical Journal](#)

Blog Archive

We've also added some links to useful websites.

By scrolling down the page, our readers can see previous entries as well as posted comments, as illustrated below.

With that in mind, we are now embarking upon a new research study in T----- which will assess the cost effectiveness of DDT when used for malaria control. This research, funded by Generosus, which cover 15 villages in three districts where malaria transmission rates are high and have remained constant for the past decade. We hope to, in the process, dispel doubts and misconceptions about this malaria control strategy. We invite you to follow the links below to find out more about the benefits of indoor residual spraying.

posted by Dr. Bight at 3:19 PM | 0 comments

Friday, October 1, 2004

NH=ND Welcomes a new Senior Researcher to its team

We are pleased to welcome Dr. V. to our small team. Dr. V. completed his medical degree at Hampford University, in N-----, Having practiced in district hospitals for many years, he then returned to Hampford where he obtained his PhD in Public Health. Dr. V. comes to us with years of experience as a field researcher and advisor to the Ministry of Health of N-----.

posted by Dr. Bight at 4:19 PM | 0 comments

Wednesday, September 1, 2004

Welcome to the NH=ND blog!

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to our new blog, which will hopefully allow us to exchange information, research results, thoughts, ideas, and more. National Health = National Development (NH=ND) is a small research NGO based in T----- whose work focuses on pressing health issues affecting

For further tips on setting up a Blog, see:

- “How to Start a Blog.” WikiHow, at www.wikihow.com/Start-a-Blog
- *Simple Guide to Setting Up Your Blog*. 2004. Tracy Yates/E-Book Emporium, at: <http://rwebsdesigns.com/downloads/simpleblog.pdf>

Budgets and Spreadsheets: Tips & Tricks

At one point in all of our careers, we must prepare a project budget. This can be a daunting task, especially if (as often happens) the entire project is assessed on the strengths and weaknesses of the budget. Some have maintained that budgets are the only things that prospective donors read, an opinion that, whether right or wrong, underlines yet again the sheer importance of getting a budget right. Fortunately, doing so has really never been easier.

When creating a budget, the number one question we must keep asking ourselves is “why?”. When we state that dissemination costs, for instance, \$2,000, we must say: why \$2000? Why not \$10,000? Why isn’t it free? This will force us to answer, “It’s \$2000 because we want to create a policy brief and print 250 of them on glossy paper, and we know that hiring a consultant to write it will cost \$500, printing costs \$500 and the high-quality paper is \$500 and mailing them out is another \$500”. We need to distill that answer into a spreadsheet, because this is the kind of detail that most donors want – this is also the kind of explanation that most donors like to see in a “Notes” column. If we fail to provide an explanatory column in our budget – if we fail to break down our costs, and sensibly – donors are likely to put into question the sincerity and validity of our budget. And rightly so.

Using software that most of us have access to – Microsoft Excel – we can easily create a professional looking and detailed budget. In the demonstration below, we

INDOOR RESIDUAL SPRAYING OF DDT FOR MALARIA VECTOR CONTROL

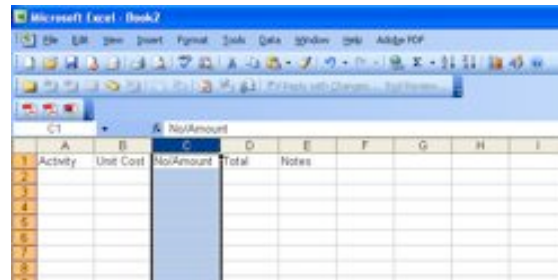
In November 2008, NH=ND will conclude a two-year research study assessing the cost-effectiveness of DDT when used for malaria control. NH=ND is now seeking additional funding to effectively disseminate the results of their research to government officials as well as to local communities. In that respect, they have devised a three-pronged strategy:

- The production and distribution of a policy brief targeted at government officials within the Ministry of Health;
- The organization of Village Meetings as well as the training of local facilitators who will then organize Town Hall Meetings;
- The production of 3 radio spots (each in two languages) to raise awareness and sensitize communities about DDT.

will use a *fictional* scenario to provide examples that will help illustrate our tips and recommendations. The same scenario is also used in *Chapters Three, Four, Five and Eight*.

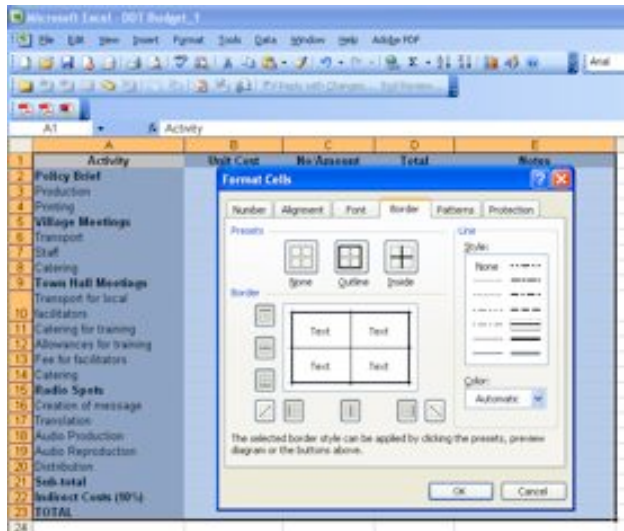
Let's create a budget that will incorporate all the activities listed above and that will detail the various costs associated with each.

After opening Excel, the first step in creating our Excel Spreadsheet is to label our different rows and columns. As illustrated here, we use five simple columns to list the different components of our budget: Activity, Unit Cost, Number/Amount, Total, Notes. Subsequently, we will use rows to list the different activities – and their various components.



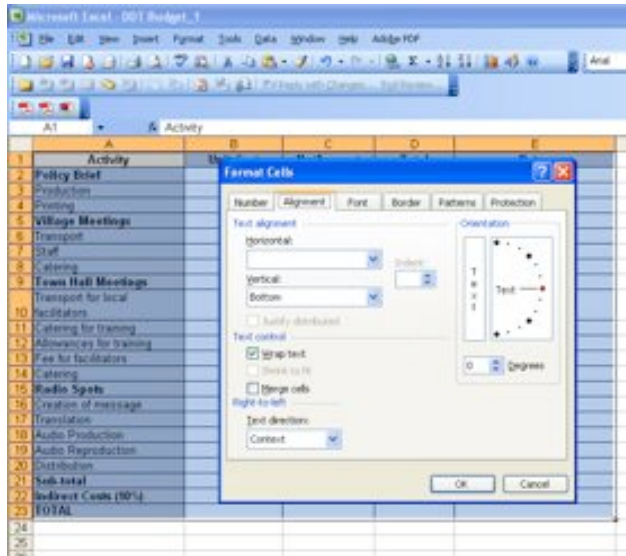
Once we have inserted our column titles, we can play with their width to ensure that we will have sufficient space to include our text and numbers. Similarly, we can also modify our text's font, size and alignment as well as change the "fill" (i.e. colour) of our cells.

Now that we have labeled all our columns and rows, we can add borders and lines to our budget to make it easier to read and understand.



First, select the area to which we want to add borders by clicking on Cell A1 and dragging it to our last cell in the bottom-right hand corner – in this case Cell E23. Second, right-click on the highlighted area and select the 'Format cells' option to open the menu.

In the same menu, we can also adjust the alignment of the text within each cell, format our numbers, and modify the font, patterns and level of protection of our cells. To make things easier, in the 'Alignment' tab, select the 'Wrap Text' option.



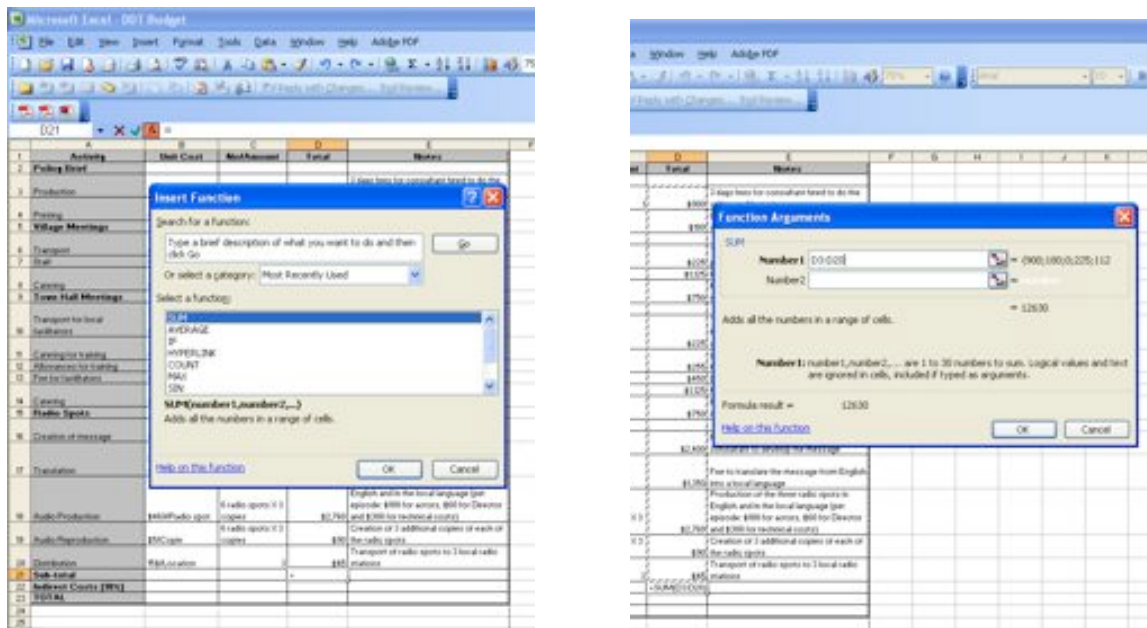
That way, our cells will automatically adjust in size to fit the text which we add to them.

Now that we've inserted all our categories and formatted our spreadsheet, we're ready to start inserting numbers, with the exception of the sub-total, indirect costs and total. For each budget line, we must explain our costs. For example, in Rows 6 to 8 we detail the costs associated with holding Village Meetings. These include costs for transportation, staff and catering. Again, for each of these sub-categories, we list the unit cost, the number of units, as well as the final cost. Finally, we justify all of these in our 'Notes' column.

Activity	Unit Cost	Qty/Amount	Total	Notes
Policy Brief				
Production	\$100	1	\$100	3 days fees for consultant hired to do the writing and lay out
Printing	\$1000/copy	200 copies	\$2000	Costs printing of 1 page, 2-sided document on high quality paper
Village Meetings				
Transport	\$100/meeting	6 meetings	\$600	Transport (for and from) of one facilitator per meeting in each of the 6 villages
Staff	\$150/meeting	6 meetings	\$900	Fee per facilitator per meeting
Catering	\$100/meeting	6 meetings	\$600	Provision of refreshments for community members in attendance
Town Hall Meetings				
Transport for local facilities	\$100/individual	6 individuals	\$600	Transport (for and from) of 6 local facilitators to the offices of M&M for a one-day training
Catering for training	\$100/individual	17 individuals	\$1700	Lunch, tea and coffee for 6 local facilitators and 11 staff members
Allowances for training	\$100/copy	6 individuals	\$600	Daily allowance for local facilitators
Fee for facilitators	\$150/meeting	6 meetings	\$900	Fee per local facilitator per meeting
Catering	\$100/meeting	6 meetings	\$600	Provision of refreshments for community members in attendance
Radio Spots				
Creation of message	\$1000/radio spot	2 radio spots	\$2000	Fixed fee per radio spot for the hiring of a consultant to develop the message
Translation	1000 words/radio spot @ \$10/word	2 radio spots	\$1,700	Fee to translate the message from English into a local language
Audio Production	\$4000/radio spot	6 radio spots (1:1 copies)	\$24,000	Production of the three radio spots in English and in the local language (per episode: \$200 for actors, \$50 for Director and \$200 for technical costs)
Audio Reproduction	\$50/copy	6 radio spots (1:1 copies)	\$300	Creation of 2 additional copies of each of the radio spots
Distribution	\$40/copy	0	\$0	Transport of radio spots to 2 local radio stations
Sub-total				
Indirect Costs (10%)				To cover administrative costs, occasional support/printing, communications, etc. and office rent
TOTAL				

Instead of having to use a calculator to obtain our sub-total, indirect costs and total, we can use *functions* within Excel that will calculate them for us.

First, let's select the cell where we would like this total to appear: in this case, we will start with cell C21 (for our sub-total). Next, in the toolbar, select 'Insert' > 'Function'. In the menu that is now open, we can select the type of function we need – in this case SUM, for summation – and the cells that need to be summed together (here, D3 to D20).



Our total will now appear in Cell C21.

20	Distribution	15\$Location	3	\$45	Transport of radio spots to 3 local radio stations
21	Sub-total			\$12,630	
22	Indirect Costs (10%)				
23	TOTAL				
24					

Similarly, we can use formulas to calculate our Indirect Costs as well as our final Total. For our Indirect Costs, we want to calculate 10% of the total in cell C21. Our function for cell C22 would therefore be ‘=SUM(C21*10/100)’. In the case of our final Total, we want to add cell C21 with C22, so our function would be: ‘=SUM(D21+D22)’ or ‘=SUM(D21:D22)’. For help on using functions, consult the Help menu in Excel.

Having followed all the steps listed above and entered the appropriate labels and numbers in our spreadsheet, our final budget should look something like this:

Activity	Unit Cost	No/Amount	Total	Notes
Policy Brief				
Production	US\$900	1	US\$900	3 days fees for consultant hired to do the writing and lay out
Printing	US\$0.60/Copy	300 copies	US\$180	Color printing of 1 page, 2-sided document on high quality paper
Village Meetings				
Transport	US\$15/Meeting	15 meetings	US\$225	Transport (to and from) of one facilitator per meeting in each of the 15 villages
Staff	US\$75/Meeting	15 Meetings	US\$1,125	Fee per facilitator per meeting
Catering	US\$50/Meeting	15 Meetings	US\$750	Provision of refreshments for community members in attendance
Town Hall Meetings				
Transport for local facilitators	US\$15/Individual	15 Individuals	US\$225	Transport (to and from) of 15 local facilitators to the offices of NH=ND for a one-day training.
Catering for training	US\$15/Individual	17 Individuals	US\$255	Lunch, tea and coffee for 15 local facilitators and 2 staff members
Allowances for training	US\$30/Day	15 Individuals	US\$450	Daily allowance for local facilitators
Fee for facilitators	US\$75/Meeting	15 meetings	US\$1,125	Fee per local facilitator per meeting
Catering	US\$50/Meeting	15 meetings	US\$750	Provision of refreshments for community members in attendance
Radio Spots				
Creation of message	US\$800/radio spot	3 radio spots	US\$2,400	Fixed fee per radio spot for the hiring of a consultant to develop the message
Translation	3,000 words/radio spot@US\$0.15/word	3 radio spots	US\$1,350	Fee to translate the message from English into a local language
Audio Production	US\$460/Radio spot	6 radio spots X 3 copies	US\$2,760	Production of the three radio spots in English and in the local language (per episode: \$100 for actors, \$60 for Director and \$300 for technical costs)
Audio Reproduction	US\$5/Copy	6 radio spots X 3 copies	US\$90	Creation of 3 additional copies of each of the radio spots
Distribution	US\$15\$/Location	3	US\$45	Transport of radio spots to 3 local radio stations
Sub-total			US\$12,630	
Indirect Costs (10%)			US\$1,263	To cover administrative costs, secretarial support (printing, comms, etc.) and office rental.
TOTAL			US\$13,893	

Note on Currency

Whenever we create a budget, we need to clearly identify the type of currency we are working with. There is obviously quite a strong difference between, for instance, a Zimbabwean and an American dollar (not to mention a Zambian and Malawian kwacha) and if we fail to specify which unit we are working in, this could lead to all kinds of confusion. Usually, we should work in our local currency – i.e. the one in which our bank account is held (many organizations do hold a US\$ account, meaning that budgets can certainly be submitted in US\$). If we base our request on a foreign currency, we risk getting affected by any fluctuation in the exchange rate. However, to facilitate our donor’s understanding of the scale of our budget, it is advisable to add an extra column to our budget that converts our totals into the donor’s local currency. That way, they won’t have to do the math themselves and can concentrate on the content of our proposal and budget without wasting precious minutes.

Our column headings could therefore look something like this:

Activity	Unit Cost (local currency)	No/Amount	Total (local currency)	Total (donor currency)	Notes
...

PowerPoint Presentations: Tips & Tricks

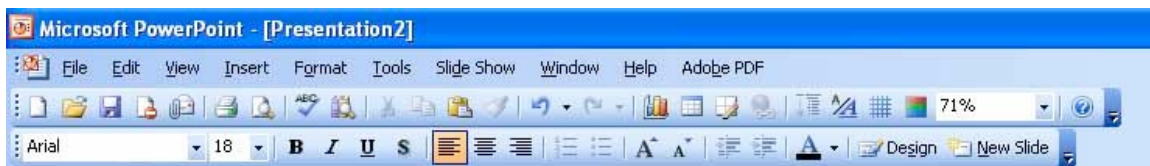
Whether to pitch our proposal, communicate our results, or sensitize communities, we are routinely making presentations. That said, capturing and keeping our public’s attention – ensuring they follow our arguments and explanations – is not always a simple matter. Enter the use of visual supports. When used properly, graphics, charts, pictures and bulleted text can enhance the presentation experience for the public as well as the presenter. Today, we have easy-to-use programs like Microsoft PowerPoint to incorporate all of these visual supports into a presentation.

To be sure, PowerPoint has, over the years, had its detractors. The main argument against PowerPoint presentations is that presenters all too often use it as a crutch, packaging far too much information on each slide and not focusing on their audience. Some believe that PowerPoint has irreparably damaged the art of public speaking. While this is likely too strong an assessment, we can make our presentations all the more effective by following a few simple guidelines:

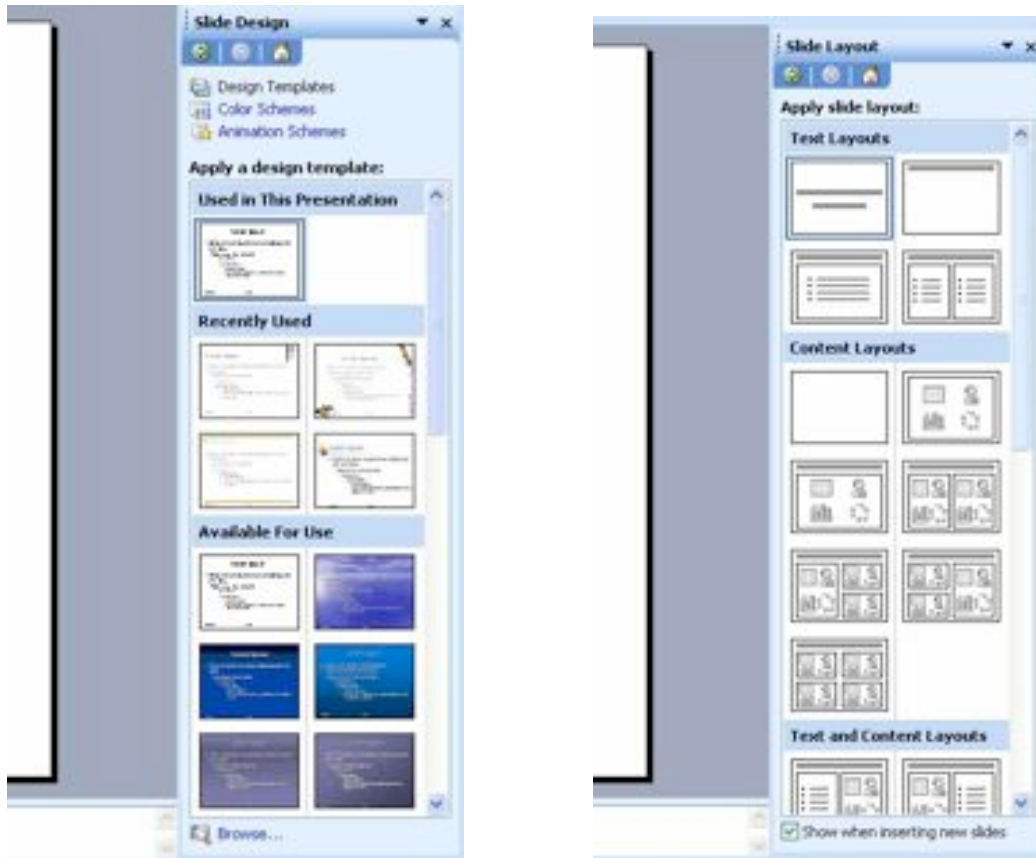
- *Use bulleted lists, not straight text.* The slides should only be used to **highlight** key points: we do not want our audience to read our presentation. We want them to listen to it.

- *Limit each page to 3-5 bullet points.* We want our public paying attention to what we're saying – and not getting distracted by what's on the screen.
- *Include graphics, images and pictures.* Every so often the eye needs a rest, and using such visual supports will help illustrate the points we need to make.
- *Limit presentations to 15 slides max.* Let's encourage some question-and-answering after our presentation: let's ensure there's time remaining and keep our PowerPoint short and sweet. Remember, there can always be supporting documents (e.g. an article or brochure) for those who want more information.

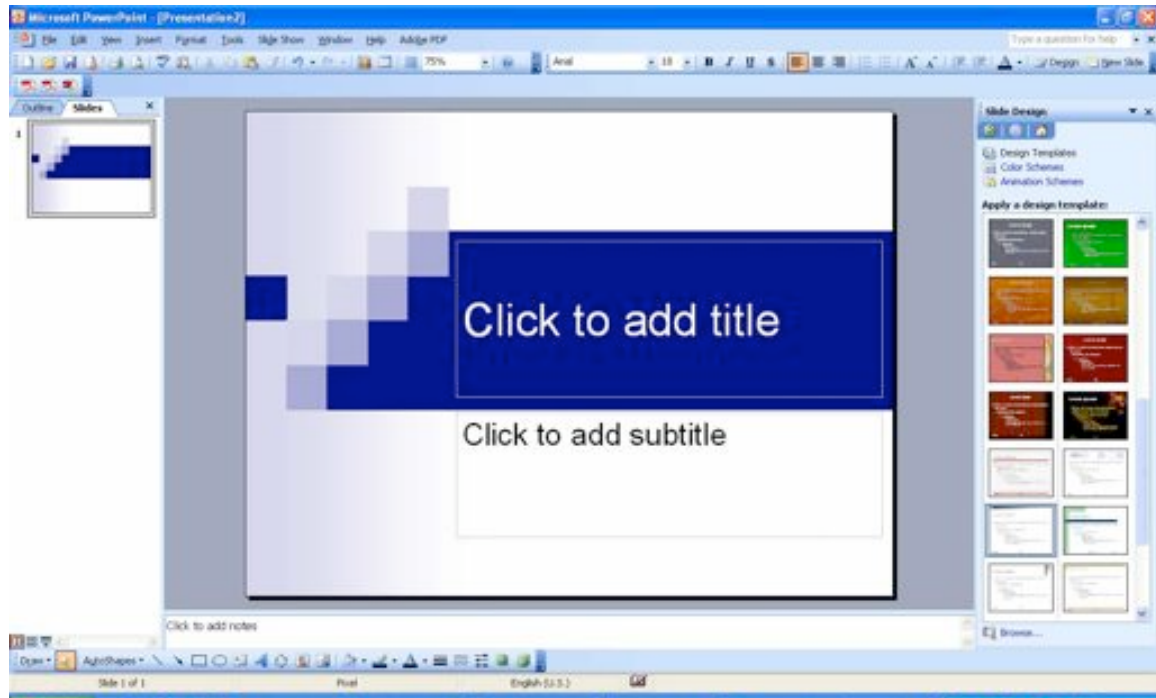
Part of the Microsoft Office suite of programs, PowerPoint was created in much the same way as Word and Excel. As shown below, the toolbar is similar to those found in other programs and offers many of the same options.



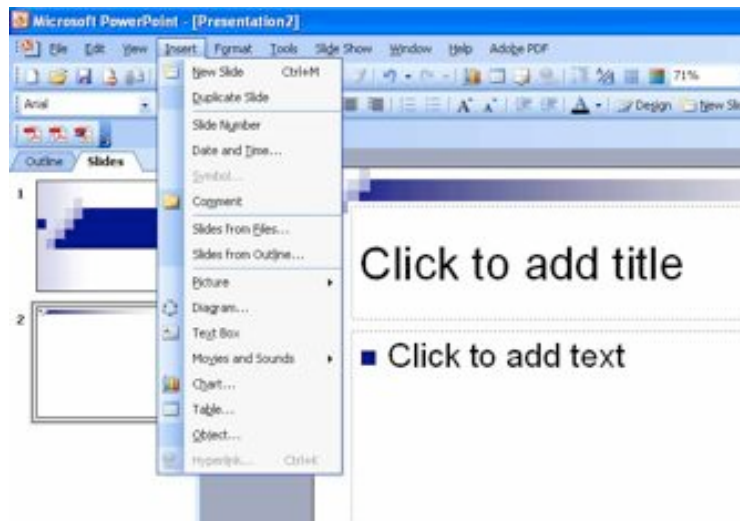
Once we've opened a blank document in PowerPoint, we can select the design of our slideshow by clicking on 'Format > Slide Design...' We should pick a template that suits our topic as well as our audience: think about the tone we want to give to our presentation (i.e. scientific, informative, entertaining, etc.). In a similar way, we can select our preferred layout by clicking on 'Format > Slide Layout...'



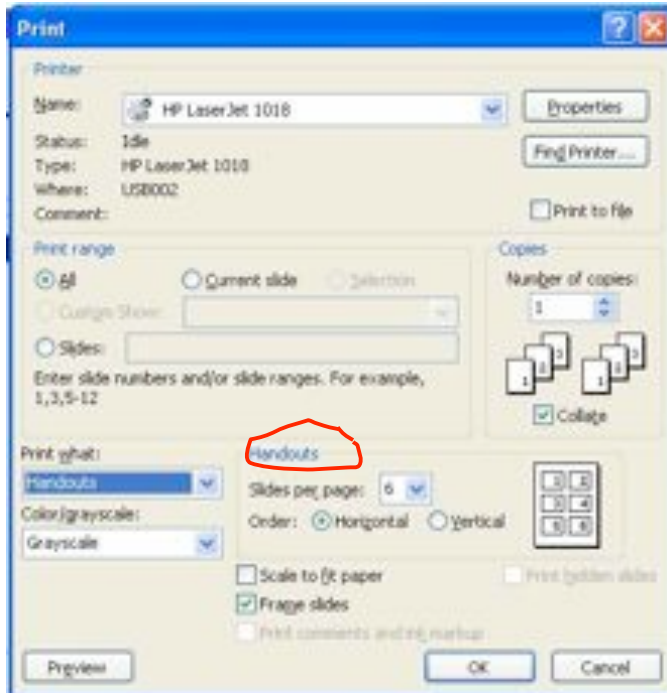
PowerPoint offers an easy-to-use interface where all we have to do is fill in the predetermined field. Our title page, for example, allows us to add a title and a subtitle into preformatted fields. Obviously, we are free to modify the font, size and color of our text at any point in time.



In addition to plain text, we can also add a variety of other visuals to our slides, including graphics, tables and pictures. To do so, simply scroll down the 'Insert' menu and select your preferred option, or click on the relevant icon in the toolbar.



Finally, we can create handouts of our presentation which we can distribute to our public, place in our resource centre, or more. To do so, simply select the 'Handouts' option in the Print menu and specify the desired number of slides per page.



Note: For further tips on using PowerPoint, or any other Microsoft Office software, you can always refer to the Help Menu or the Office Assistant. When connected to the Internet, you can also visit Microsoft Office Online for tips and tutorials.