

PARTOS Innovation Festival – 14 October 2022, Amsterdam

How to promote evidence-informed practice? Experiences from Breaking Down Barriers.

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Summary – learning session discussions

The topic of the learning session was how to promote evidence-informed practice within the international development sector. Sofka shared experiences from the multi-annual research trajectory of Breaking Down Barriers. After the presentation, participants were invited to form 5 groups, identify 1 specific challenge per group and provide solutions for tackling the challenge.

A number of overarching points emerged from the discussions:

- The importance of involving practitioners and clients/communities in identifying learning/research needs and research agendas, as well as contributing evidence from one's own work and personal experiences.
- The need for flexibility and openness among the donors to take learning and developing evidence-informed practice as part of the regular funding cycle.
- The importance of producing actionable and accessible knowledge, presented in diverse attractive communication forms (visuals, videos, etc.).
- The need to shift the power in the relationships among practitioners, academics and clients both in the North and the Global South with regards to knowledge development, by focusing more on co-creation, complementarity and shared understanding.

Each specific challenge and solutions that were discussed and presented by the groups can be found in the document below.

Group 1:

Challenge: How to value practitioner knowledge as evidence?

Solutions:

- Collection of best practices and what works well in the field.
- Developing new models and forms of collecting and sharing knowledge, apart from writing publications.
- Engage practitioners in setting the research agenda and in the sensemaking and validation of evidence.
- Stimulate multi-disciplinary teams of academics, practitioners, and community members (clients) that can benefit from the evidence-informed practice directly.
- Set aside funding for learning and dissemination of evidence.
- Create space and time for learning and sharing knowledge.
- Establish more mindful and equal partnerships among researchers and practitioners → pracademic experiences.

Group 2:

Challenge: How to overcome strict donor requirements, pre-fixed ideas and priorities of donors in which rigid structures prevent adaptation based on evidence.

Solutions:

- Design evidence generation from the start and involve all the important stakeholders.
- Agree and create understanding of what is evidence and what that means in practice.
- Use participatory approaches.
- A reality check is necessary, be present in the communities in which you work.
- Understand the needs of the community members and what they want to learn.
- Language and interpretations are important to be considered in how certain things are communicated.

Group 3:

Challenge: How to establish inclusive actionable research communication?

Solutions:

- Aligning/ making timelines, interests and goals explicit.
- Citing and including more diverse research perspectives.
- Employ diverse and more creative means of communication such as: visuals, videos, etc.
- Fund knowledge brokering as a position within organisations.

Group 4:

Challenge: How to promote more evidence-driven programme development?

Solutions:

- More collaboration between practitioners and academics.
- Create more learning programmes
- Start reasoning from practice.
- Start reasoning from local knowledge.
- Attract PhD students.
- Share knowledge in accessible form.
- Put aside funding for learning and evidence dissemination.

Group 5:

Challenge: How can you shift the power in the knowledge development and brokering?

Solutions:

- Create a common group and shared understanding.
- Stay open for difficult conversations and listen.
- Do not judge.
- Use tools to understand the position of the other, be able to get into “someone else shoes”, try to see the other side.

Below you can find few photos from our learning session. Thank you all for taking active part in it and contributing with your knowledge and insights on how we can further promote and invest in evidence-informed practice.

If you want to stay informed and involved please check our website: **barriersfree.org** and **Breaking Down Barriers Liliane Foundation (LinkedIn page)**.

