

# Assessing and summarizing research

Rohan Samarajiva, PhD and Nilusha Kapugama

6 April 2013, Bangalore, India



This work was carried out with the aid of a grant from the International Development Research Centre, Canada and UKaid from the Department for International Development, UK.



# Methods of looking at literature

- Scanning or looking through the literature
  - To know what has been already been done in your area (or subject) of interest
  - To strengthen your arguments or substantiate your point of view
  - To learn about opposing view points
- Systematic Review of the literature
  - To understand what works best
  - To provide an exhaustive summary of literature relevant to a research question
  - To find gaps in the literature to identify future areas of research

# Some types of study design used

- Experimental design - where randomised assignment to the intervention is made (Randomised Control Trials)
- Quasi-experimental designs that include comparison groups etc
- Time series, cross-sectional and panel data studies
- Natural experiments
  - Only primary studies where impacts have been clearly identified and documented are used for systematic reviews

# Assessing study quality

- Is there sampling bias for cross section studies
  - How representative is the conducted survey and what population is represented
- Were the mechanism of assignment for control or comparison groups adequate
  - was the allocation or identification method able to control for selection bias?
- Were there any spill-overs or contamination
  - was the study adequately protected against performance bias?
- Are the conclusions reached in the study supported by evidence within the paper?

# For Synthesis

Before you begin

- Group the studies that you have found
- List out the aspects you would like to look at
  - Actors
  - Objectives
  - Methods
  - etc

For systematic reviews

- Meta Analysis (Quantitative methods)
- Narrative (or meta) synthesis (Quantitative, Qualitative, mixed methods)