

Following the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in December 2004, a group of leading individuals in The Cochrane Collaboration, the world's largest producer of systematic reviews, started to bring together information relevant to relief efforts and thus, Evidence Aid was born.



Evidence Aid is a coordinated, international initiative to provide effective and timely access to systematic reviews about interventions and actions of relevance before, during and after natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies.

Evidence Aid collates and analyses information so that it is easier to find, access, understand and use. Alongside this important work, the organisation identifies where new research is needed and facilitates systematic reviews.

There is increasing recognition of the need to use research-based evidence in decision-making before, during and after the response to disasters and humanitarian emergencies¹. Evidence Aid is the flagship organisation meeting this demand.

Evidence Aid provides free, rapid access to the knowledge needed through a single online database, to help people in the disaster sector make the best choices about interventions, actions and

strategies at any point in disaster-preparedness and response. Evidence Aid recognises that creating evidence reviews that run to thousands of words might not be the best way to share knowledge. Instead, more than 160 short evidence summaries of systematic reviews relevant to disasters have already been developed.

These have been identified in conjunction with the International Rescue Committee and currently cover a range of topics including fracture management, burns, improving water quality after flooding and when faced by poor sanitation, and post-traumatic-stress-disorder (PTSD). These summaries, and the full reviews that underpin them, are all freely available on the Evidence Aid website. New reviews are added and existing summaries updated as relevant Cochrane Reviews are completed and updated, and non-Cochrane systematic reviews are identified.

EVIDENCE AID IN PRACTICE

Evidence Aid's work encompasses three main areas of activity:

1. Providing an urgent response to the evidence needs that arise during and immediately after a natural disaster or humanitarian emergency. Evidence Aid creates and compiles brief summaries of relevant systematic reviews on, for example, the management of injuries.
2. Developing context-specific resources for the evidence needs that arise during the subsequent weeks and months following a disaster. These collections are also useful as part of disaster-preparedness planning and risk reduction.
3. Gathering information about the need for evidence and ensuring up-to-date systematic reviews of relevant research take place. Evidence Aid plays an important role by working with key actors in the field to highlight evidence gaps and to help fill them. These reviews highlight the interventions that work and those that don't, alongside those that require further research or that may be harmful.

As well as improving access to evidence produced by others, Evidence Aid identifies gaps and works with practitioners and researchers to fill these gaps with new systematic reviews and other studies to meet the needs of people involved in disaster resilience and risk reduction, planning, response and recovery.

The reviews provide the means for well-informed decisions that might affect people's health, no matter whether the topic area is water and sanitation, construction, engineering, education, shelter or any of the other components of humanitarian assistance.

¹ Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) 'Insufficient Evidence – The quality and use of evidence in humanitarian action' report, 2014. <http://www.odi.org.uk/events/3852-quality-use-evidence-humanitarian>

IMPACTING FRONTLINE TREATMENT

Since 2004, Evidence Aid has supported governments and frontline organisations around the world.

- One of Evidence Aid's first successes was to inform psychiatrists and psychotherapists responding to the Indian Ocean tsunami that counselors should not use 'brief debriefing' (a single-session counselling service designed to prevent psychological trauma) as a means of preventing PTSD, given Cochrane Review evidence that this intervention is not effective, and, if anything, might be harmful. This decision not only led to better health for the affected population but also saved resources that were used in the deployment of more effective interventions.
- Within 24 hours of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, Evidence Aid provided the World Health Organization (WHO) with a comprehensive list of effective and efficient interventions for wound management, mental health and infectious diseases. Evidence Aid worked with the WHO again in late 2010 to identify reviews that could assist with the widespread floods in Pakistan.
- On the day of the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami in March 2011, Evidence Aid provided access to its online resources via The Cochrane Library, which were subsequently translated into Japanese. Evidence Aid was approached by the WHO to assist with the drafting of new public health guidelines for large-scale radiation emergencies.
- Following Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, Evidence Aid packaged together a new set of relevant resources within 48 hours, providing responders in the Philippines with information on the health problems they might encounter. The link to the resources was promoted actively to those responding to the typhoon, both on the ground and at policy level, including those coordinating the United Nations and WHO responses. A consultant at A Single Drop for Safe Water, PHL said: *"Thank you for sharing this - very useful. Our lean network of independent humanitarian responders can definitely use this."*
- Evidence Aid worked with the Belgian Red Cross on its strategic priority to underpin all its activities with evidence, including its use of blood products, delivery of first aid and humanitarian activities.
- Evidence Aid has raised the profile of evidence-based actions in the humanitarian sector through international conferences in Oxford in 2011 with the Centre for Evidence Based Medicine, Brussels in 2012 with the Belgian Red Cross-Flanders, and a priority setting meeting in London in 2013.

Evidence Aid works with the United Nations aid agencies (UNHCR, Unicef and WHO), government organisations (US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, USAID and UK Department for International Development) and International NGOs (Save the Children, International Rescue Committee, the International Committee for the Red Cross, American Red Cross, Australian Red Cross and Belgian Red Cross), amongst others.

“Evidence Aid has provided governments, agencies, NGOs and individuals with the most reliable information, in order to take the right choices in difficult circumstances... the work you are doing is important for mankind.”

Herman van Rompuy

President of the European Council at the 2012 Evidence Aid Conference in Brussels

Evidence Aid also works with organisations that produce and publish evidence for example The Cochrane Collaboration, University of Columbia, University of Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, Public Library of Science and The Lancet.

There is no equivalent to Evidence Aid or the vision we have for the disaster management field.²

² Evidence Aid Needs Assessment Survey, preliminary results, 2011.

Donate to Evidence Aid at www.evidenceaid.org or email info@evidenceaid.org.

MORE INFORMATION

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