

# Systematic reviews in international development: closing the gap between evidence and policy

## Introduction

The use of systematic review to summarise and appraise literature on social and economic development interventions in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) is gathering pace.

There is a range of existing systematic reviews with relevance to low and middle income countries (mainly in the areas of public health, education and nutrition). In addition, over the last three years more than 80 systematic reviews on topics of relevance to international development have been funded.

Existing reviews are spread across different databases and journals, as well as in the grey literature. To avoid duplication and make systematic reviews of relevance to low and middle income countries easily available to users there is a need to gather all systematic reviews in one place.

## Objectives and target audience

The primary objective is to build an open access, searchable database which provides a single point of access for policy makers, practitioners and academics looking for systematic reviews of evidence on social and economic development interventions in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Through the database we aim to:

- Provide a resource for policy and programme designers on what works, what doesn't, why and in what contexts.
- Assess the quality of the existing systematic reviews literature in international development and provide methodological guidance.
- Avoid duplication of efforts and ensure systematic reviews of social and economic development interventions build on existing work.

## 3ie database of systematic reviews: What does it include?

The database includes systematic reviews meeting the following criteria:

- Relating to one or more social or economic development intervention(s), and assessing either effectiveness, or reasons underlying effectiveness (to be expanded to include all systematic reviews).
- Relate to, or include as a majority, evidence from low and/or middle income countries
- Published after 1993, the date that the Cochrane Collaboration was established.

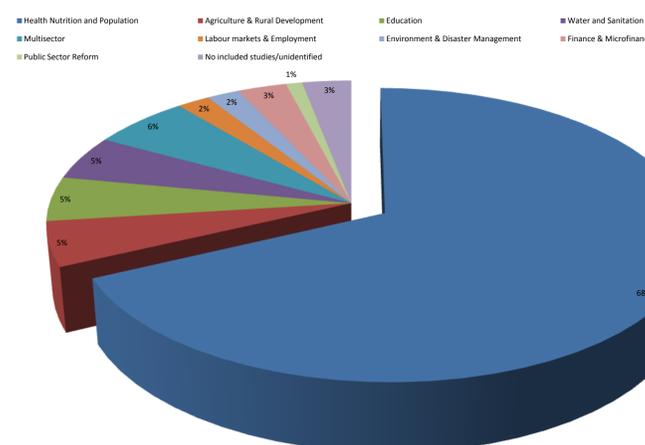
The following reviews are excluded:

- Reviews only containing evidence from high income countries
- Literature reviews which do not describe methods used for data collection and synthesis
- Systematic reviews of efficacy trials
- Systematic reviews published before 1993

## Database format

- Open access database of user friendly summaries of the findings and methodologies of existing systematic reviews, and protocols of ongoing studies.
- Systematic quality appraisal of all included SRs using adapted version of SURE checklist
- Summary of the quality assessment of the featured systematic reviews to assist users in determining the reliability of review findings.
- Regularly updated with new reviews.

## Sectoral distribution of SRs



## Bridging the gap between evidence and policy

- Highlighting Implications for policy and practice
  - summaries of high quality systematic reviews
- Policy briefs based on high quality systematic reviews
  - Identify lessons for policy and practice in collaboration with policy makers and practitioners
- Gapmaps: thematic evidence collections
  - Cover a range of thematic areas, including HIV/ Aids, maternal health, agriculture and climate change

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