INTRODUCTION

- The role of systematic reviews in health (Moher et al. 2007; Bastian et al. 2010) and other areas (Petticrew 2001; Petticrew et al. 2011) is increasingly well established.
- Systematic reviews are key to well-informed decision-making across health care and this recognition is growing in other areas where choices have to be made between different interventions or actions.
- There is growing recognition that better-informed decisions increase the impact of interventions and actions, and the value of money (DFID 2012).
- Knowledge is also needed about the key contextual elements relating to the health, environment, and culture of the affected populations, to select appropriate interventions (MacDonnell et al. 2007), and to encourage the use of research evidence.
- Evidence Aid is a global, independent initiative seeking to improve the use of systematic reviews in disaster risk reduction, planning, response and recovery.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- To identify the attitudes of those involved in the humanitarian response to natural disasters and other crises towards systematic reviews and research in such settings.
- To identify their priorities for evidence, and their preferences for how the information should be made accessible.

METHODOLOGY

- Humanitarian aid workers with a range of experience participated in this study and participants were encouraged to circulate the survey to others.
- The responses have been monitored online (Survey Monkey).
- The survey is still open (www.EvidenceAid.org).
- Responses from Survey Monkey were transferred directly into an Excel spreadsheet for data cleaning. After the first data cleaning, the data were transferred into SPSS 18.0 for a second data cleaning; then a descriptive data analysis was conducted.
- This preliminary data analysis includes responses for eighty participants who answered the English version of the survey and five responses from participants who responded to the French version.

RESULTS

- Degrees: MPH (32), MD (24), PhD (17), MA (13) and MBA (6)
- Location: Western Europe: 28%; North America: 25%; Sub-Saharan Africa: 13%; Asian: 13%; Australia/New Zealand: 8%; Middle East: 8%; Eastern Europe 2%; South-America: 2%
- Years of experience: 25% had 1-5 years experience, 19% had 5-10 years, 12% had 20-25 years, 6% had 30-35 years and 3% had 35-40 years of experience
- Types of disasters: Conflict (40%), natural disasters (40%), and 8% working only in natural disasters. 4% of respondents have worked in other types of disasters.
- Quantitative analyses for the first 85 respondents show that 83% think that systematic reviews are useful in disasters.
- Almost all ’agreed’ (25%) or ‘strongly agreed’ (71%) that humanitarian interventions should be based on reliable knowledge of which interventions work, which don’t work, and which are potentially harmful.
- Inadequate access was the most commonly reported barrier to the use of systematic reviews (70%).
- Respondents favour access to full reviews supplemented by comments from relevant experts (61%) to help place the findings of the review in context for the disasters setting.
- Respondents would like reviews to be online (83%).
- Of the 25 respondents who have worked for donor agencies, 83% said that systematic reviews could be used to assess the likely effects of interventions before providing funding.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall the opinions on the potential role of systematic review were positive. 69% of participants ‘strongly agreed’ that evidence from systematic reviews could have a positive role in humanitarian interventions and 29% ‘agreed’ with this statement. There is a strong need and desire for systematic reviews amongst humanitarian workers and donors to improve their interventions and actions, and to assess the impact of their efforts. They wish these reviews to be accompanied by contextual comments about the findings.

REFERENCES