

# RAPID REVIEWS TO STRENGTHEN HEALTH POLICY AND SYSTEMS: **A PRACTICAL GUIDE**

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## **WHY DO WE NEED RAPID REVIEWS?**

Health systems worldwide face complex challenges that require the generation and synthesis of knowledge in limited amounts of time. Policy-makers require valid evidence to support time-sensitive decisions regarding the coverage, quality, efficiency and equity of health systems.

Systematic reviews and other types of evidence syntheses are increasingly employed to inform policy-making and produce guidance for health systems. However, the time and cost to produce a systematic review is often a barrier to its use in health policy and systems decision-making.

Rapid reviews have emerged as a useful approach to provide actionable and relevant evidence in a timely and cost-effective manner.

## **WHAT IS A RAPID REVIEW?**

A rapid review is a type of knowledge synthesis in which systematic review processes are accelerated and methods are streamlined to complete the review in a shortened timeframe.

Rapid reviews are an efficient approach to generating the necessary context-sensitive knowledge needed to inform decisions on health systems questions. This demand-driven feature also contributes to their usability to strengthen local health systems and respond to pressing policy decisions.

## **HOW WILL THIS PRACTICAL GUIDE HELP?**

There is a lack of guidance on “when” and “how” to conduct rapid reviews within the context of health policy-making and health systems strengthening.

This hands-on guide explores different approaches and methods for the expedited synthesis of health policy and systems research, and provides guidance on how to plan, conduct, and promote the use of rapid reviews, while highlighting key challenges including their application in low- and middle-income countries.



## PRIMARY TARGET AUDIENCE INCLUDES:

- Decision-makers (e.g. policy-makers, health systems managers and policy analysts)
- Researchers
- Commissioners and funders of reviews

## WHAT WILL USERS OF THE PRACTICAL GUIDE LEARN?

The practical guide aims to provide pragmatic recommendations on the conduct of rapid reviews to facilitate their use in decision-making. The publication offers guidance on:

- ✓ Selecting rapid review methods for complex questions related to health policy and system improvements
- ✓ Engaging decision-makers in the conduct of rapid reviews
- ✓ Reporting, disseminating and improving the uptake of rapid reviews

The guide also introduces key challenges and limitations in developing and using rapid reviews to strengthen complex health policy and systems.

## WHO DEVELOPED THE PUBLICATION?

The guide was developed by the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, an international partnership hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO).

The publication was edited by Andrea C. Tricco, Etienne V. Langlois and Sharon E. Straus, with contributions from authors and individuals with expertise in rapid response services, evidence synthesis and health policy and systems research.

## WHERE CAN I GET A COPY OF THE PRACTICAL GUIDE?

An electronic copy can be accessed from <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/258698/1/9789241512763-eng.pdf>

## TESTIMONIALS

*"The daily challenges of making sense of the complexity in modern day health care systems, calls on policy-makers to make a range of informed decisions to strengthen the systems they function in. This resource will be an essential part of a practical toolkit for policy-makers to function more effectively."*

**Dr Keith Cloete**, Chief of Operations, Western Cape Government, Health Department, South Africa


*"There is no better time than now, for producers of research evidence to arm themselves with the knowledge and skills to respond to the urgent needs of the policy-making world for evidence, and what better way than have a one-stop resource like the rapid review guide."*

**Dr. Rhona Mijumbi-Deve**, Public Health Physician, Research Scientist, and Health Policy Analyst, Makerere University, College of Health Sciences, Uganda.

## Need more information or share feedback, contact us:

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