

# Challenges to Turning Nutrition & Agriculture Research Into Action

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ERIN BIEHL

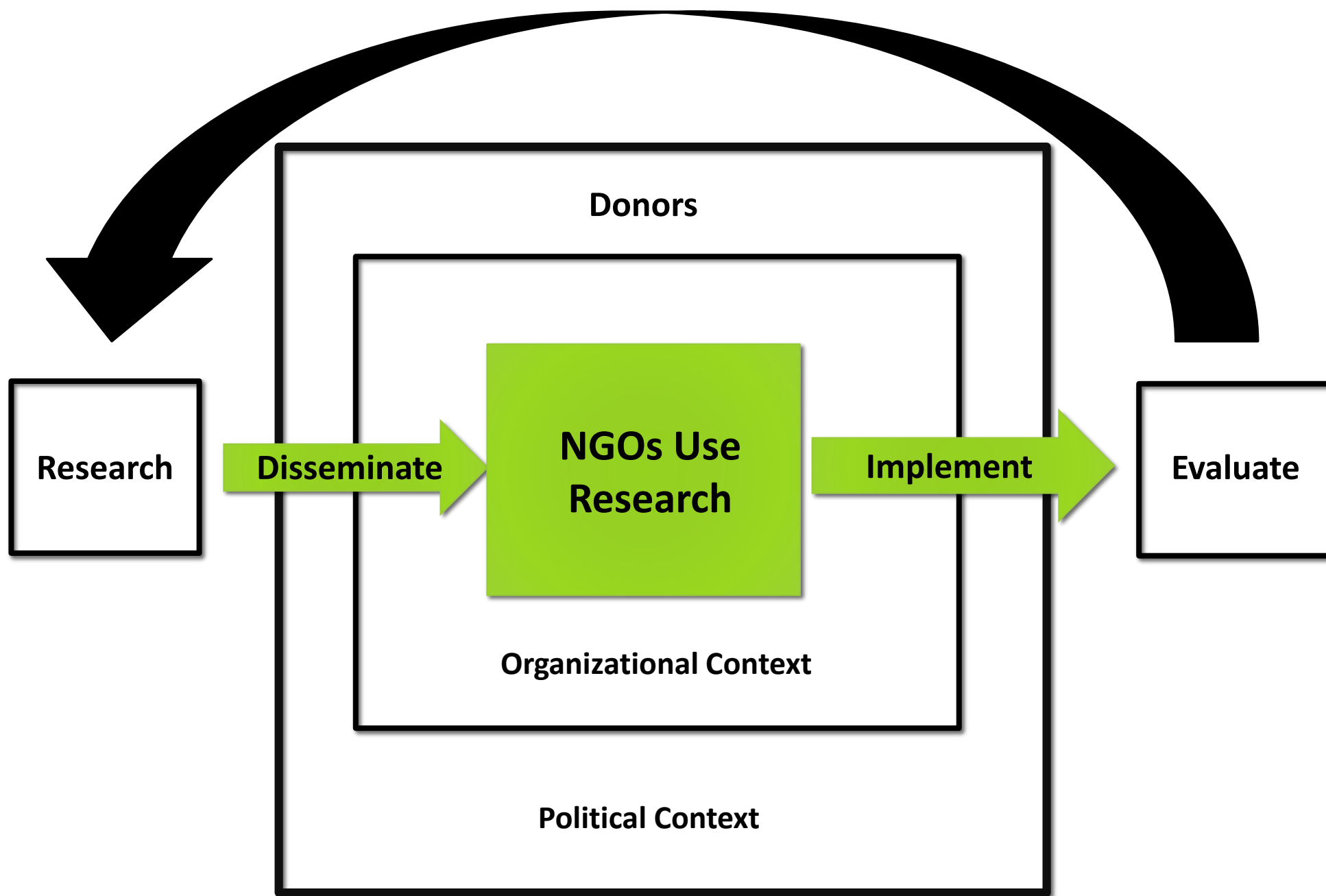
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# Introduction

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- In Nepal, many research initiatives, policies, interventions to improve nutrition through nutrition-specific & nutrition-sensitive interventions
- How can evidence most effectively be used to inform the design of such interventions?



# Research-to-Action Framework

# Objectives

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## **Identify:**

1. The key **factors** determining an NGO's use of academic research to design nutrition and agriculture programs in Nepal;
2. Common **barriers** to organizational research uptake for nutrition and agriculture program design; and
3. **Recommendations** for how to overcome these barriers.

# Methods

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## Qualitative Methods

- 15 Semi-structured key informant interviews
- Staff members from nutrition and/or agriculture-focused non-governmental organizations working in Nepal
- 1-2 informants from each organization

## Interview Guide

- 16 questions about program design considerations, evidence use, perceived barriers to evidence use, collaboration with researchers, recommendations

## Analysis

- Common themes in responses
- Coding of responses using Atlas.ti software & Microsoft Excel

# Participants

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World Food Programme

Care

United Mission to Nepal

Terre des Hommes- Germany

LI-BIRD

Helvetas

Heifer International

Lutheran World Federation

World Vision

World Bank- AFSP

CEAPRED

Helen Keller International

Suaahara

Unicef

Winrock International (KISAN)

# Results



# Evidence Strength

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*“What we really need is international institutions coming in and building the capacity of local researchers to actually design projects— and not just help with the field implementation.”—Public Health INGO*

- Need to improve quality of research generated in Nepal, by Nepalis



# Evidence Strength

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*"Traditionally if you look at the courses offered in Nepal, it's not research focused, it's very theoretical-- you can't really apply it." -- Public Health Program*

- Need to improve capacity of future Nepali researchers

# Evidence Strength - Recommendations

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- Start international-national research collaboration during study design
- More quantitative & critical analysis courses
- Provide practical research experience for students

# Applicability

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*“Sometimes [academic research] is too academic—more theoretical than practical.” – Nutrition INGO*

- Context is important
- Need more “how” evidence
- Differing ideologies between programs & researchers

# Applicability - Recommendations

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- More implementation research
- Involve programs in research
  - Conversations about on-the-ground needs, evidence gaps
  - Research-program partnerships

# Access

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*“I don’t have access to EPSCOHost and whatever those journal databases are that I used to have when I was associated with an academic institution.”– Public Health NGO*

Barriers:

- Cost of academic journals
- Nepali research not published online

# Access - Recommendations

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- Free or reduced-cost journal access (Eg. WHO – HINARI)
- Publish Nepali research online

# Awareness

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*“Where is all the research?” – Public Health INGO*

- Not disseminated in easily accessible form
- Limited communication between research & programs

# Awareness - Recommendations

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- Hold regular meetings between programs & researchers
- Research-program partnerships
- Intra-organization evidence sharing



# Internal Organizational Constraints

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*"How do you manage the information and prioritize?  
And...you're just so busy doing what you have to do that you  
don't have time or space to just read."- Nutrition INGO*

- Constraints: Time, technical skills, and funding

# Internal Organizational Constraints – Recommendations

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- Meta-analyses
- Dissemination meetings, evidence forums
- Nutrition/agriculture staff training
- Human resources: designated staff researcher

# External Actors - Government

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*"The government is very important because in most of the cases we design our programs aligned with the government programs and policies."* – Nutrition INGO

- Low government understanding/value of research
- Government agencies use outdated research

# External Actors - Recommendations

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- Increase government awareness/understanding of latest research
- Engage government throughout research process & program design
- Increase funding for program-initiated research

# Conclusion

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*“[Research] has to be translated into action. It’s not for the shelves.” – Public Health INGO*

Evidence not optimally used due to

- Lack of collaboration/communication between researchers & programs
- Limited access to evidence
- Limited technical capacity of researchers & NGO staff
- Time and funding constraints within organizations
- Need for more support from government & donors

# How to Turn Nutrition & Agriculture Research Into Action?

Academics	NGOs/INGOs	Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with programs &amp; implementing gov't agencies throughout research process</li> <li>• Practical experience for students</li> <li>• Curriculum development</li> <li>• Consider context in research, ask about end result</li> <li>• Knowledge gaps:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation</li> <li>• Meta-analyses</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HINARI: free journal access for local NGOs</li> <li>• Open Access Journals</li> <li>• Encourage information sharing within organization</li> <li>• Internal "Research training" workshops</li> <li>• Program research funding</li> <li>• Communicate evidence needs to researchers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate evidence sharing</li> <li>• Fund more public university research &amp; education</li> <li>• Infrastructure improvements to support internet availability</li> </ul>

**Organize collaborative working groups to discuss barriers and solutions, encourage regular communication between sectors**

# Communication & Capacity Building



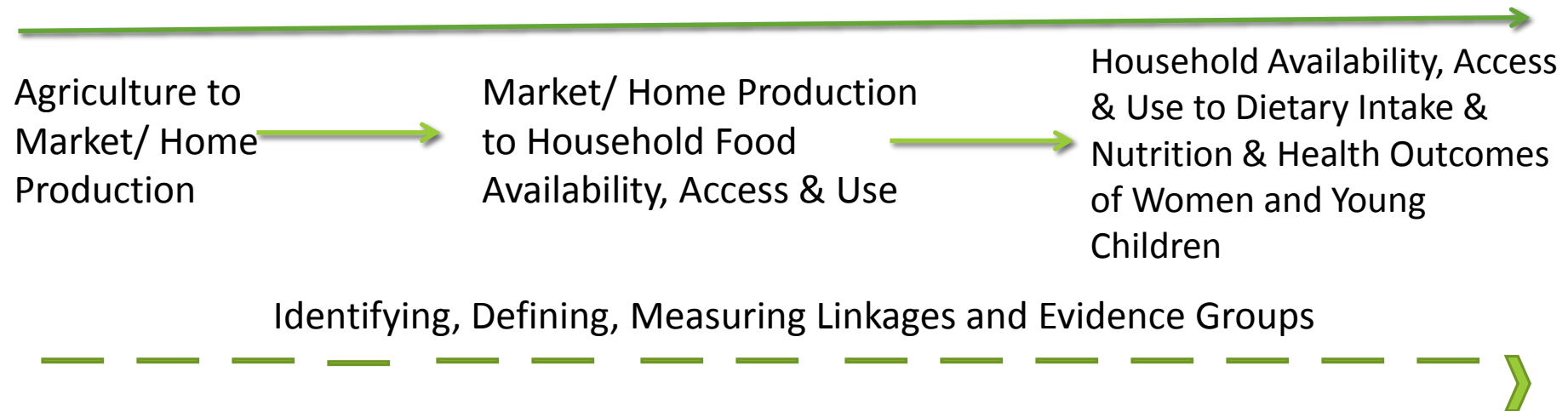
## Agricultural Research

(Agricultural colleges, research institutes, NGOs)

## Human Nutrition Research

(Public health institutes, universities, NGOs)

### Agriculture to Nutrition Pathway



# Thank You!

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