

Operations Research in Sexual and Reproductive Health

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What is operations research?

- “The application of systematic research techniques to improve programme operations”

(might also be called Health Systems Research in some settings)

Overall objective of OR

- To strengthen the evidence base for improving **programme** operations

What are “operations”

- Training
- Logistics (commodities)
- Interventions
- Capacity building

Who uses OR?

- Policy makers
- Programme managers
- Research community

Characteristics of OR

- Addresses specific not general problems
- Addresses problems amenable to programme-level interventions
- Collaborative process of evidence-gathering

Methods of OR

- Systematic data collection
- Quantitative and qualitative methods

Types of OR

- Exploratory studies
- Field intervention studies
- Evaluative studies
- Cost-effectiveness studies

Examples of OR in the field of SRH

- Examining the burden of HIV in an area
- Expanding the range of skilled providers
- Impact studies
- Decisions about resource allocation

Outputs from OR

- Enhances effective, efficient use of resources
- (More) Likely to result in scale-up of findings?

An example of the OR process

- Is HIV a problem?
- Who has the problem and how much of it?
- What is effective in terms of addressing HIV?
- How best to deliver the effective intervention?
- How much does it cost?
- How to monitor the effective intervention?

Group work

- The problem: congenital syphilis rates are unacceptably high
- The context: ANC care includes screening for syphilis among pregnant women
- Objective: Outline the design of an OR project to evaluate the integration of syphilis screening into antenatal care: why is congenital syphilis still a problem?