

What happened next? Analysing the impact of studies presented at MSF Scientific Days 2021

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Background

Understanding the full impact of research studies and innovation projects is essential to improving the way we conduct and disseminate research. However, research impact can be complex and often difficult to measure.

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) hosts the annual MSF Scientific Days International conference, which is a platform to share findings from humanitarian projects around the world, explore new avenues for novel medical innovation and research collaborations, and ultimately help improve the quality of care provided to patients in need of humanitarian assistance.

A year after being presented at MSF Scientific Days, we looked back at the research and innovation projects presented at MSF Scientific Days International 2021 to follow up on their impact on programmes, policy, and beyond.

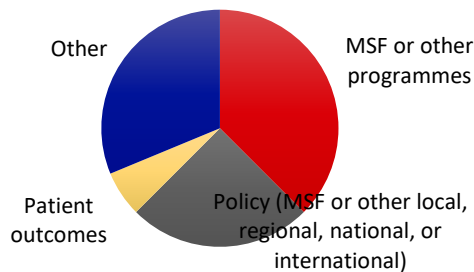
Methods

In April 2022, 23 people who presented their research or innovation abstracts at MSF Scientific Days 2021 were asked to fill in a short online questionnaire. The following were the main areas that each presenter was asked to report on:

- Whether information from their study had been published or disseminated
- Whether the study made an impact on MSF/other programmes, policy, or patient outcomes
- What they thought helped their research have impact, and barriers (if any) that may have prevented the research from having their intended impact

Follow up emails were sent to those who did not respond initially. Data recorded from the survey was analysed in Microsoft Excel.

Areas where studies/projects made an impact

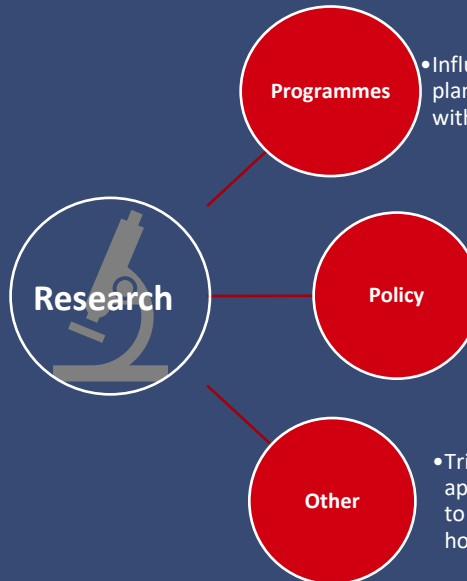
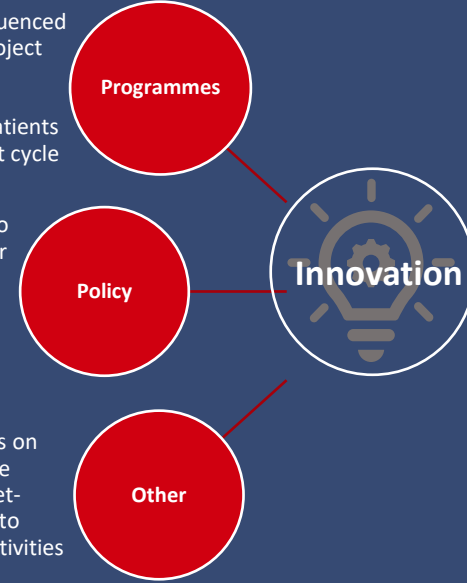


Wider dissemination of innovation projects: 4 of 6 (66%) presenters reported dissemination beyond the conference. Of these, 2 (33%) were published in a scientific journal, 3 (50%) were presented at other conferences and 2 (33%) were shared as toolkits and project reports.

- Informed and influenced practice at the project level and made participation/engagement of patients part of the project cycle

- Empowered patients to be responsible for their care and accepted by the MoH as a standard tool for the national programme

- Drove discussions on positive and more patient and planet-friendly changes to programmatic activities



- Influenced programme planning and integrated within MSF programmes

- Shared with local authorities to influence policy; recommended by WHO in treatment guidelines (reported by 2 of 8, 25% of research studies)

- Triggered a task shifting approach from doctors to midwives in study hospital

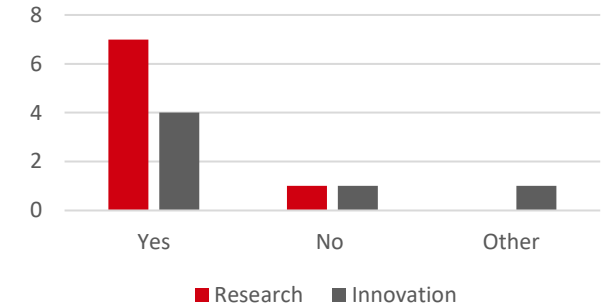
Wider dissemination of research studies: 7 of 8 (88%) presenters reported dissemination beyond the conference. Of these, 5 (62%) were published in a scientific journal or press release and 3 (37%) were presented at other conferences or workshops.

Enablers and barriers to impact

Enablers reported by respondents included the involvement of international and local stakeholders, as well as local MoH/ MSF clinical and management staff in study sites.

Barriers reported by respondents included delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic (reported by 5 of 14, 35%), one-year funding models, and institutional and financial limitations.

Studies/projects reported to have been disseminated further after MSF Scientific Days 2021



Limitations

Results may not be representative of the impact of studies due to the low response rate for the survey.

While most (85%) respondents reported that their study or project benefitted from being presented at MSF Scientific Days 2021, the low response rate may be an indication that the intended impact was not achieved, or that there was no significant impact to report.

Recognising that achieving impact takes time, full impact of studies may not be represented in the survey given that it only records impact over the past year.

Conclusion

Most research and innovation projects were disseminated beyond MSF Scientific Days and impacted programmes, policy, and beyond. Local and international collaboration enabled projects to have impact while COVID-19 and institutional limitations were barriers to impact.

Acknowledgements

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