

Evidence in the media, Keith Albright

Eternally curious international public servant bringing passion about evidence-informed decision-making, systems thinking, and helping others understand the value of evidence to international development

I want to celebrate the many successes we've collectively had with using evidence to address societal challenges – both prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic – and to encourage all of us to re-double our efforts now to institutionalize what's going well and improve in other areas. We have come a long way in the past, say, five years in different parts of the UN system, and we still have a long way to go in supporting evidence use by government policymakers and other decision-makers in member states, in using evidence in the UN's normative guidance and technical assistance, and in making the most of partnerships with global public-good producers, which are the subject of many sections in chapters 5 and 6.

On the evidence-supply side, we need to recognize two points. First, there is a tension for researchers between promoting single studies (often their own, with case studies of impact often being linked to enhanced university funding) and promoting bodies of evidence, including the work of 'competitors.' As we address in [section 4.2](#) and [22 and 23](#), we need to re-visit the incentives created by academic institutions and journals to ensure that in future we support a focus on bodies of evidence and open science. Second, there is a tension for evidence intermediaries between distinguishing discrete forms of evidence and finding language that can capture more holistic approaches. In UNICEF, we are increasingly using a definition of implementation research that speaks to the generation and use of evidence being co-led by decision-makers, being integrated across all steps in decision-making (not just step 3 in [section 4.2](#)) including feeding into adaptive programming, and incorporating the types of complementary systems and political analyses described in [section 5.4](#), as well as what I would call broader contextual analysis. This contextual analysis includes analyses of culture, relationships and power differentials, and can draw on tools such as situation analysis, social-network analysis, and power analysis.