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Supporting Holistic & Actionable
Research in Education

Integrating capacity exchange in international education research

An effort to move towards more equitable partnerships

Mar 11, 2024, CIES

Panelists



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Agenda



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1. Moving from capacity strengthening to capacity exchange in education research partnerships
2. The challenge of capacity strengthening in holistic and actionable research
3. Strengthening capacity for actionable research in education:
Reflection And Lessons Learned From The Case Of Cambodia



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Moving from capacity strengthening to capacity exchange in education research partnerships

Katharina Anton-Erxleben, PhD

Mar 11, 2024, CIES



PULTE INSTITUTE
FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

Supporting Holistic & Actionable Research in Education (SHARE) Vision



Outcome #1:

Targeted research to advance implementation of USAID education sector learning priorities conducted.

Outcome #3:

Highly specialized technical assistance to design and implement education research that supports country-specific priorities through providing buy-in services.



Outcome #2:

The capacity of the ecosystem to generate, translate, and use high quality, actionable data and evidence to inform programmatic and investment decisions in the course of addressing USAID learning priorities at the local, regional, and/or global levels, as relevant.

USAID/Washington-Funded Studies



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CREST

Contextually Relevant
Measurement Tools for
Student SEL and
Teacher Wellbeing

- Haiti
- Liberia
- Colombia
- Honduras



LITES

Language of Instruction
Transition in Education
Systems

- Kenya
- Philippines
- Mozambique
- Senegal
- Rwanda
- Mali



LIBROS

Book supply chain

- Rwanda
- Cambodia
- Honduras



HEIGHTS

Higher education: Innovation
ecosystem and financial
sustainability

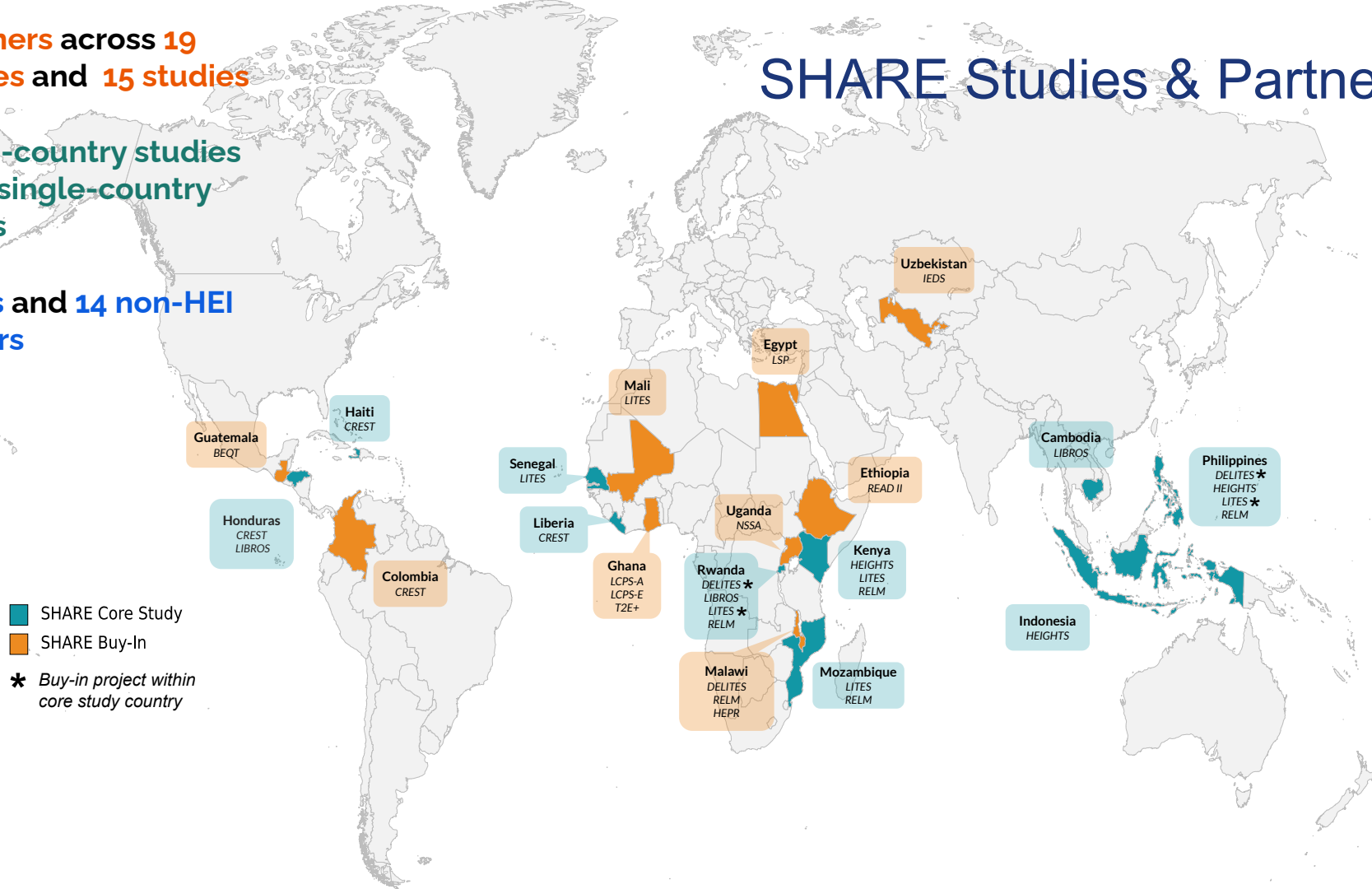
- Indonesia
- Philippines
- Kenya

27 partners across 19 countries and 15 studies

7 multi-country studies and 8 single-country studies

13 HEIs and 14 non-HEI partners

SHARE Studies & Partners

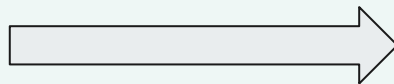


Evidence Ecosystem Engagement

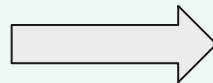


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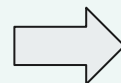
Phase 1: Surveys and KIs to understand roles, relationships, resources and rules of domain-specific system (DSS) and evidence ecosystem (EE)



Phase 2: Workshops to further deepen understanding of current DSS and EE around the nature of relationships, existing norms or rules, roles of actors, and available resources.



Phase 3: EE engagement and advice on study implementation and analysis through advisory groups.



The capacity of the ecosystem to generate, translate, and use high quality, actionable data and evidence to inform programmatic and investment decisions in the course of addressing USAID learning priorities at the local, regional, and/or global levels, as relevant.

Study timeline



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FY21 Q4 -
FY22 Q2

Study Design

Consultations with SMEs and participating Missions to narrow down study questions; development of a general methodological framework

Local Partner Engagement

Identification of local partners, sub-awards

FY22 Q2-3

Local Evidence Ecosystem Engagement

Stakeholder analysis and ecosystem baseline; ecosystem engagement in diagnostics and research co-design

FY22 Q4 -
FY23 Q4

Data Collection

Qualitative and quantitative data collection

FY23 Q2 -
FY24 Q2

Data Analysis and Reporting

Data analysis; ecosystem engagement to help contextualize findings; SME and Mission input; reporting

FY24 Q1-2

Dissemination

Local, regional and global dissemination via local evidence stakeholders, LTLGP Hubs, BE2 partners, conferences



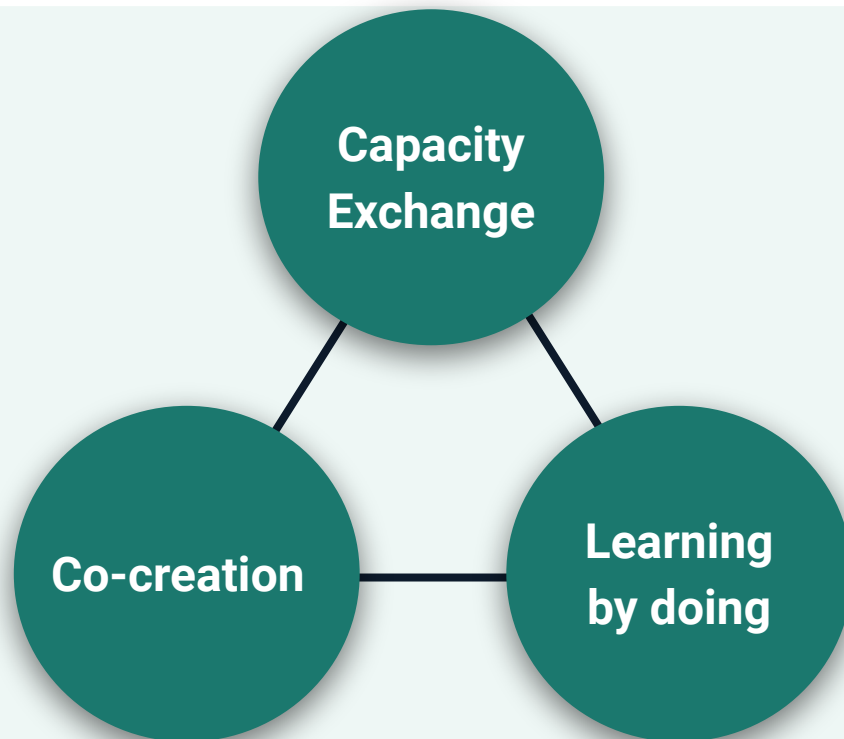
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Capacity Exchange: SHARE's Approach

Guiding principles



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Process: three phases



Self-Assessment

Performed by 18 partners across areas related to SHARE's work, selection of priorities for capacity strengthening and sharing of expertise

Joint Plan Development & Implementation

Tailored capacity exchange plans for each partner, inclusive of formal trainings and accompaniment

Monitoring & Measurement

- Feedback through partner feedback surveys and interviews
- Improvement measurement through repetition of self-assessments and tailored indicators
- CBLD-9: Percentage of USG-assisted Organizations with Improved Performance

Capacity Assessment Tool



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Collects information on:

- Partner's capacity assessment in 7 core competencies + 7 research sub-competencies
- Priority areas for capacity development
- Areas of expertise that partners are willing to share
- Target capacity levels
- Performance indicators

Completed as a team



Capacity areas assessed

Organizational core competencies:

- Proposal writing
- Research project management
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Equity within the organization
- Diagnosing the evidence ecosystem
- Research communication
- Supporting research uptake

Research sub-competencies:

- Qualitative research methods
- Quantitative research methods
- Mixed methods
- Participatory research methods
- Gender responsive and inclusive research
- Research in education
- Systems-thinking

Capacity rubrics



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CAPABILITY AREA & DEFINITION	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS TO CONSIDER*	LEVEL 1: DEVELOPING	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3: DEVELOPING	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5: EXCELLING
1. PROPOSAL WRITING: Capacity to identify funding opportunities, and submit high-quality proposals in a timely manner.	# of funding opportunities identified for consideration # of funding proposals submitted # of touchpoints with key donors # of staff contributing to proposals # of proposals funded # and \$ amount of proposals	Looking out for funding opportunities; Able to respond to some of the opportunities with a proposal.	(The organization demonstrates all of level 1 and some of level 3)	Submitting proposals for research related to your priorities. Starting to develop a systematic approach to identifying opportunities & managing proposal development. Building relationships with key donors in your region. Identifying areas that team members have some experience writing proposals or parts of proposals. Identifying donors' priorities & present the team's strengths to respond to those.	(The organization demonstrates all of level 3 and some of level 5)	Developing successful proposals to a range of funding bodies, including research councils, foundations, bilateral and multilateral donors. Having resources available within the organization to support proposal development, including identification of opportunities, coordination of proposal development, editorial and communications, quality assurance, budgeting. Putting a mechanism in place for assessing opportunities and deciding whether and how to pursue. Including co-writing with potential collaborators.
2. RESEARCH PROJECT MANAGEMENT: Capacity to manage research projects and the resources necessary for its production.	- Ratio of projects completed on time to total projects completed % variance budget-to-actual for projects completed - Net promoter score (NPS) based on partner-satisfaction surveys	Knows how to develop a project work plan. Knows how to develop a work plan to total projects completed. Identifies key project stakeholders. Commits resources within the project budget for project management. Has a system in place for expense tracking and reporting. Submits all project deliverables.	(The organization demonstrates all of level 1 and some of level 3)	Has systems, policies and procedures in place for project management. Establishes regular review budget and timelines for research projects. Assigns responsibility, support, information, consultation, and accountability roles for each task and deliverable of the project. Regularly communicates with key project stakeholders. Tracks and reports project expenses in an accurate and timely manner. Submits project deliverables of adequate quality within acceptable margin of deadline.	(The organization demonstrates all of level 3 and some of level 5)	Adheres to systems, policies and procedures established for project management. Successfully manages projects within budget and timelines. Submits timely and accurate expense reports within expected turn-around appropriate to the total timeline of the project. Produces high quality deliverables to the specifications and deadline required. Proactively initiates communication among key project stakeholders, anticipating needs for direction and information. Has a robust project team and institutional support with all of the technical competencies needed to support a project from initiation to closure.
3. MSE: Capacity to develop and implement a monitoring plan, draw most significant lessons and adapt accordingly.	% of project budgets dedicated to MSE # of learning sessions - Ratio of MSE reports to number of projects completed % of projects that underwent adaptation based on MSE insights	Knows how to develop a framework to organize the intended results of a project, clarifying output and outcome level results. Commits resources within its projects to coordinate MSE.	(The organization demonstrates all of level 1 and some of level 3)	Has developed a MSE plan for several projects, which specify intended results, indicators and methods for data collection and analysis. Schedules regular reflection meetings on monitoring data to draw out significant lessons, including challenges and opportunities. Produces timely reports which draw on insights from MSE and monitor progress against challenges towards intended results.	(The organization demonstrates all of level 3 and some of level 5)	Has developed a MSE strategy in place for several of its projects, which is informed by a comparative theory of change and oriented to intended users and aims. Includes a results framework defining output and outcome indicators, a data collection, analysis, sense-making and reporting plan, and data roles and responsibilities. Supports the implementation of MSE strategies in its projects, including providing capacity strengthening to staff and adapting the strategy when necessary. Uses insights from monitoring and evaluation to inform decision-making and project adaptation.
4. EQUITY IN THE ORGANIZATION: Demonstrates commitment to equity (Gender, race, ethnicity and other marginalized groups) in all organizational processes and has mechanisms in place to avoid discrimination and disparities.	% of research team that are female % of project leadership that are female # of dissemination products authored or co-authored by women % or \$ amount of research funding by gender	Less than 30% of research teams are female, and female team members are relegated to the lower status positions, such as enumerators. Female researchers are less likely to co-author dissemination products (reports, journal articles and conference presentations) than male team members. Research team members are not consulted about their changing responsibilities when scheduling research activities.	(The organization demonstrates all of level 1 and some of level 3)	30% or more of research team members are female. Regularly consults researcher team members about their scheduling and caregiving responsibilities, but these are not consistently considered when scheduling meeting times and making travel arrangements.	(The organization demonstrates all of level 3 and some of level 5)	50% or more of research positions are female. There are differences in the proportion of men and female principal investigators across the different phases of the project and female researchers are involved in every stage of the process including developing the research strategy, research design, data collection, analysis, action planning and implementation and/or evaluation of change initiatives. Multiple and diverse perspectives are represented from the group most impacted by and with influence on the issue at hand. Participants ultimately take ownership and control over local validation and decision-making stemming from research.
5. RESEARCH CAPACITY: Has the capacity to develop a high-quality, scientifically sound research proposal, to conduct the research and to analyze the results in a meaningful manner. (Capacity in specific research areas below)			(The organization demonstrates all of level 1 and some of level 3)		(The organization demonstrates all of level 3 and some of level 5)	Goals to make all of their research proposals responsive to gender. Is able to analyze existing research and identify gaps that need to be addressed in terms of gender, as well as the assumptions and stereotypes made. Can conduct a gender analysis that grounds the research design and analysis in the gender roles and relationships in the context of study, and propose concrete recommendations. A range of the methods to consider interrelationships in the analysis and is able to meaningfully analyze the interaction of sex, age, race, and other relevant characteristics.

*These are examples of possible indicators that an organization may use to measure performance in each capability area. Your organization may use different indicators. These are meant to be illustrative and not all inclusive.

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LEVEL 5: EXCELLING	LEVEL 5: EXCELLING
Is able to design a qualitative study, proposing a methodological approach, and designing a sampling strategy. Can code qualitative data, and is proficient in the use of coding software. Can analyze coded excerpts of data and identify key themes and patterns. Can write and present the results of qualitative research.	Can clearly and formulate research questions that would contribute to the global literature on education. Has a strong bias in theory, empirical evidence, concepts and variables of a specific education area (e.g. linguistics, educational psychology, schools as organizations, etc.). Is cognizant of theory and the empirical literature to interpret research results in a manner that is meaningful to education specialists. Is able to identify threats to validity and generalization of research results, specifically to education research. Draws knowledge to critique and interpret existing publications.
Can design and implement experimental and non-experimental research studies, including the proposition of a research methodology to achieve the identification of causality. Can design a sampling strategy. Knows various advanced statistical methods for dealing with clustering (such as hierarchical models) and managing different types of dependent variables. Can identify the limitations of quantitative studies conducted by others and provide alternative solutions.	Can use different systems thinking strategies. Can use systems thinking methods to break out the cycle of their problem solving. Can determine system intervention points for most effective change.
Can design a research study using a mixed methods approach, and lead the research process. Can interpret data from a mixed methods study meaningfully, and write project reports. Understands the epistemological foundations of mixed methods. Has knowledge of the variety, risks and implications of different sampling methods.	Ability to conduct and interpret a systems mapping process. Ability to diagnose and describe the current state of the evidence ecosystem. Ability to use information of the evidence ecosystem dynamics to propose strengthening activities.
Stakeholders and subjects are involved at every stage of the process including developing the research strategy, research design, data collection, analysis, action planning and implementation and/or evaluation of change initiatives. Multiple and diverse perspectives are represented from the group most impacted by and with influence on the issue at hand. Participants ultimately take ownership and control over local validation and decision-making stemming from research.	A communications strategy which presents your purpose and reasons for communicating, who you intend to communicate with, how you plan to do this and how you measure success. A dedicated communications function which can support a range of strategies such as events, publications, media and digital.
Goals to make all of their research proposals responsive to gender. Is able to analyze existing research and identify gaps that need to be addressed in terms of gender, as well as the assumptions and stereotypes made. Can conduct a gender analysis that grounds the research design and analysis in the gender roles and relationships in the context of study, and propose concrete recommendations. A range of the methods to consider interrelationships in the analysis and is able to meaningfully analyze the interaction of sex, age, race, and other relevant characteristics.	Supporting research update is a foundational priority and informs research design, implementation, communications and MSE. Collaborating with primary research users early and consistently in the research process to strengthen capacity to use research.



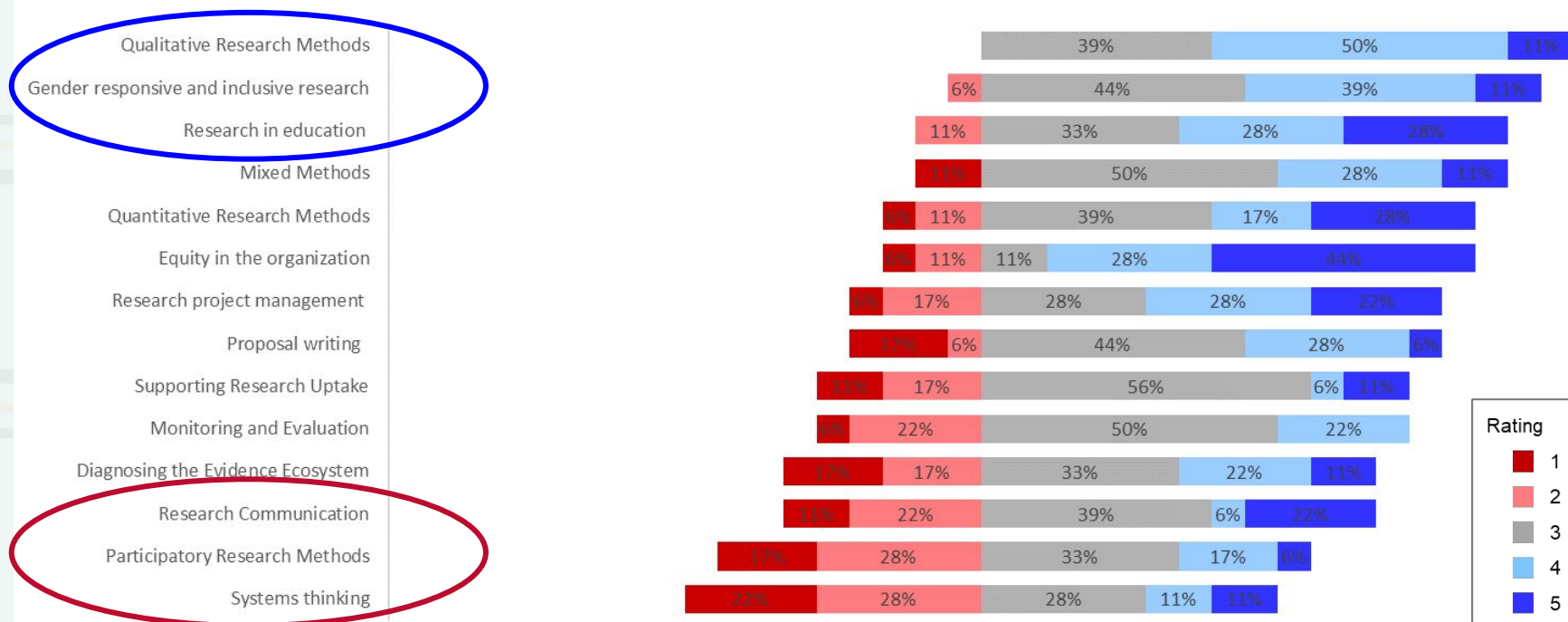
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Findings: Baseline

Self-assessment at baseline



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Areas of strength and priorities for growth



Areas of strength (# of mentions)



Priorities for growth (# of mentions)





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Activities Implemented

Capacity exchange activities



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- Resource mobilization:
 - Webinar
- Research communication:
 - Research communications workshop
 - Writing workshops (study-specific)
- Systems thinking approaches:
 - Training of trainers for evidence ecosystem workshops
 - Introduction to outcome mapping
- Data analysis:
 - Data for development course
 - Data analysis trainings (study-specific)



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Findings: Partner Feedback

Partner feedback survey & interviews



Midpoint of each study

- Survey for earlier country-level partners (27 partner staff, Feb 2023), interviews for partners who started later (5 partner staff, Sep - Nov 2023)
- Interviews with regional partners (2 regional partner staff, Feb 2023)

End of each study

- Survey will be sent to all partner teams

Themes: experience with the research process, mentoring & capacity exchange, equity & inclusion, partnership satisfaction

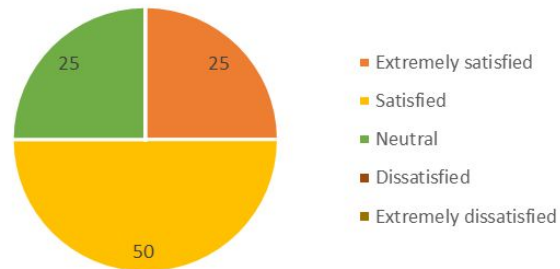
Partner feedback: quantitative



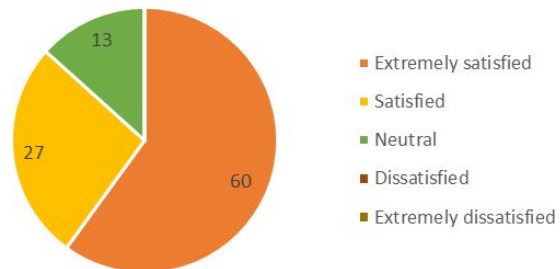
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- Overall, 81% of partner staff satisfied or very satisfied with mentoring received
- Partners rated their participation in SHARE as very useful or extremely useful for strengthening their skills in 13 out of the 14 areas
- Women and more junior team members indicate slightly lower satisfaction

% Female Respondents



% Male Respondents



Partner feedback: qualitative

- Partners generally expressed their **interest and willingness** to participate more **in capacity exchange activities**
- Most partners felt that they have not been able to participate as much as they would like due to **limited time and resources**
- Partners would have liked to see **better match in timing and content** between capacity exchange activities and needs of the studies
- Partners recommended establishing preferences for **how to receive guidance early on**
- Interest in more opportunities to **interact with each other**

Adaptations of the process

- Revisions to baseline/endline assessment, **focusing on the most important capacity areas** being mindful of partners' and our own bandwidth
- Plan to improve match with research project needs through **more in-depth capacity mapping** in each area
- Included **more targeted questions** in partner feedback surveys and interview guides **to better understand and address equity gaps**
- Plan to **communicate schedule of capacity strengthening activities** over entire research project
- **Strengthening exchange and sharing among partners** (e.g. virtual study summits)

Recommendations

- Balance project needs with partners' own interests and organizational priorities
- Plan for capacity exchange in timelines and budgets
- Set realistic expectations for capacity growth in line with timeframe of the project
- Design processes so that all members of a partner organization benefit



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For more information about SHARE's
capacity exchange, please contact
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Sign up for SHARE's mailing list!

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