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Pathways to impact in the pandemic



The Covid Collective offers a rapid social science research response to inform decision-making on some of the most pressing Covid-19-related development challenges. The platform combines the expertise of 28 global partner organisations across 34 countries and is coordinated by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). The research portfolio and work are supported and overseen by the UK FCDO.

COVID CIRCLE – COVID-19 Research Coordination and Learning is a partnership between the UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR) and the Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness (GloPID-R) harnessing current activities, including continual mapping and analysis of global Covid-19 funding through the COVID Tracker. COVID CIRCLE coordinates funding efforts, connects networks of researchers, and collates learning to inform future epidemic and pandemic responses with a focus on lower-resource settings.

CORE is a three-year rapid research initiative that brings together 21 research projects to understand the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, improve existing responses, and generate better policy options for recovery. The research portfolio is funded and overseen by IDRC and supported by a knowledge translation project provided by IDS.

A rapid review of Covid-19-related research engagement strategies in low- and middle-income country settings

- Analysis of 90 research projects supported by the Covid Collective, COVID CIRCLE, and Covid Response for Equity (CORE) initiatives.
- How different funders and initiatives were working to facilitate change in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Capacity building	Networks	Conceptual	Instrumental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened capacities of either researchers or intermediaries New or improved approaches or strategies to support research uptake Capacity of beneficiary groups to participate or engage with research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder platforms or spaces that bring different voices together Engagement with key stakeholders Partnerships with civil society / practitioners / policy or other relevant groups Opportune alliances with diverse groups that inform the research process or expand the reach of the evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approaches that have built awareness of an issue or put it on an agenda Engagement with media and civil society to shift attitudes or create public pressure Evidence of a shift in the dialogue and discourse around a particular issue Uptake of an approach or use of evidence to inform design of interventions Stronger training methods and tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of having influenced a policy document or statement Shifts in practice – application of new approaches, methods and practices

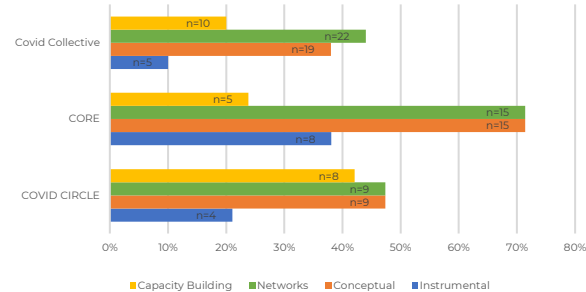
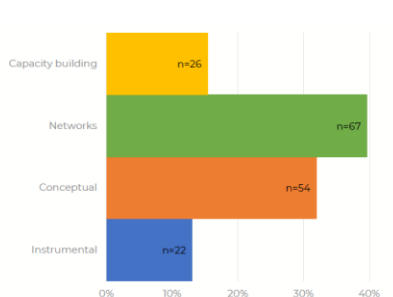
A total of 169 outcome examples were collected from the 90 research projects analysed

Key Learning

- No obvious disciplinary divergence.
- Cognitive and relational outcomes dominate
- Impact on practice is equally important as it is on policy.
- Researchers and donors should value diverse pathways to impact.
- flexible forms of funding and possibilities to reframe projects in real time during a pandemic.
- The importance of systems-level, longer-term support was highlighted through several project examples that were able to deliver rapid research in a crisis due to their ability to quickly mobilise research funding.

Domination of cognitive and relational outcomes Outcome divergence between the initiatives

Figure 2: Percentage of outcome examples for each outcome category



COVID CIRCLE initiative reported a higher percentage of projects with capacity-building outcome examples (42 per cent) than the other two initiatives (Covid Collective: 20 per cent; CORE: 24 per cent).

There was a greater proportion of instrumental outcomes reported from CORE (38 per cent) compared to the other two initiatives (Covid Collective: 10 per cent, Covid Circle: 21 per cent).

71 per cent of CORE projects exhibited conceptual outcome examples. By contrast, 47 per cent of the COVID CIRCLE projects and 38 per cent of the Covid Collective projects reported the same.

Areas for further investigation

- Longer term impacts and intended versus actual outcomes?
- Development of outcome harvesting methodology for impact of life sciences?
- Design of programme level impact support?
- Southern leadership and innovation in engaging research with policy and practice?

