



Evidence-based civil society advocacy in the field of international migration of health personnel

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Based on contributions by:

Giulia De Ponte, Amref Italy, HW4All

James Pfeiffer, University of Washington

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Nathalie Sharples, Health Poverty Action

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Evidence-based civil society advocacy...

“**Evidence-based advocacy** has become an increasingly common idea in international development. It is used by donors, NGOs, UN organisations and academics. But discussions with NGO staff in Malawi and reviews of organisational literature suggest interpretations of each component of this phrase - **evidence**, **evidence-based**, and **advocacy** - vary within and between NGOs.”

Kate Gooding, University of Leeds (2014): What do we mean by evidence-based advocacy? Ideas from NGOs in Malawi about the role of research in advocacy. Not yet published.

Evidence-based civil society advocacy...

“First, research plays different roles in advocacy. In some cases, research is used to **identify advocacy issues**, in others, to **understand advocacy issues in more detail**, and in others, to **prove the issues**. It is not clear which role makes advocacy evidence-based.”

Kate Gooding, University of Leeds (2014): What do we mean by evidence-based advocacy? Ideas from NGOs in Malawi about the role of research in advocacy. Not yet published. Order the paper at umkg@leeds.ac.uk

Evidence-based civil society advocacy...

“Second, NGOs use **different types of evidence** in their advocacy, for example, personal experience as well as research. These other kinds of evidence are often seen as more persuasive and relevant than research.”

Kate Gooding, University of Leeds (2014): What do we mean by evidence-based advocacy?
Ideas from NGOs in Malawi about the role of research in advocacy. Not yet published.
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Evidence-based civil society advocacy...

“Third, when NGOs share research findings, this sometimes involves **sharing results** rather than **promoting change**, and there are different ideas about whether this focus on **informing** rather than **influencing** constitutes advocacy.”

Kate Gooding, University of Leeds (2014): What do we mean by evidence-based advocacy?
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...in the field of international migration of health personnel



We asked some advocates / researchers to provide insights in the **making of recent papers** on international migration of health personnel and the implementation of the WHO Global Code of Practice.



Giulia De Ponte

Yoswa Dambisya

Linda Mans

Natalie Sharples

James Pfeiffer



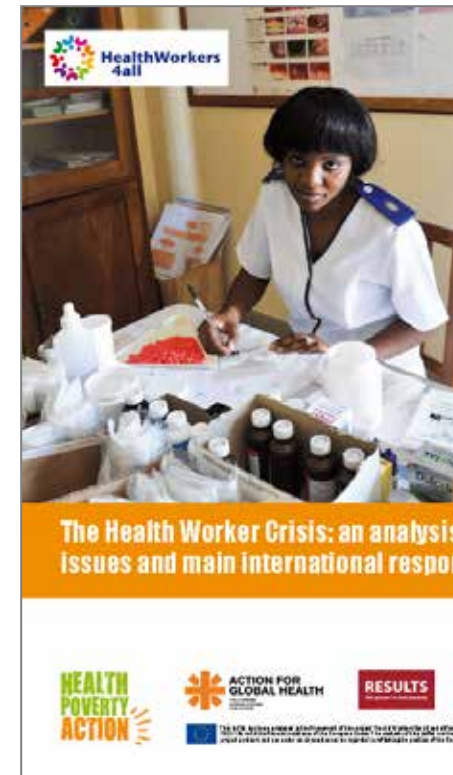
- § What is the background and main purpose of your paper?
- § Do/did you intend the paper to influence policies?

“With the information booklet we want to **promote the responsible recruitment of health personnel** both within the European Union (EU) and beyond. We **present a number of general recommendations and recommendations** targeting specific parties for actions.” Linda Mans, Wemos



- § What is the background and main purpose of your paper?
- § Do/did you intend the paper to influence policies?

“HRH has low priority in the UK and there was a sense that **we needed new evidence to get it on the agenda**. The publication was intended to underpin our influencing on this issue. We hoped the report **would provoke debate on more robust solutions** - such as compensation.” Nathalie Sharples, Health Poverty Action



- § What is the background and main purpose of your paper?
- § Do/did you intend the paper to influence policies?

“We were concerned about internal brain drain and felt that there were no good systematic studies to quantify the phenomenon. We wanted to first see what the data showed, and then on that basis share it with others in the health sector to generate a discussion about policy. We hoped that the paper would stimulate discussion on funding mechanisms and their impact on public sector health systems.” James Pfeiffer, University of Washington



- § What kind of evidence did you use for / refer to in the paper?
- § Were there any particular challenges in the making of the paper?

“The source of evidence is **pre-existing evidence, gathered by authoritative sources** (WHO, EU, the Lancet...): the value of the publication is that this evidence is discussed from a specific point of view. Actually in some sections the focus is primarily on policies, and therefore **the ‘evidence’ is not constituted by data, but by policies themselves**, which are analysed and discussed.” Giulia De Ponte, Amref Italy / HW4All



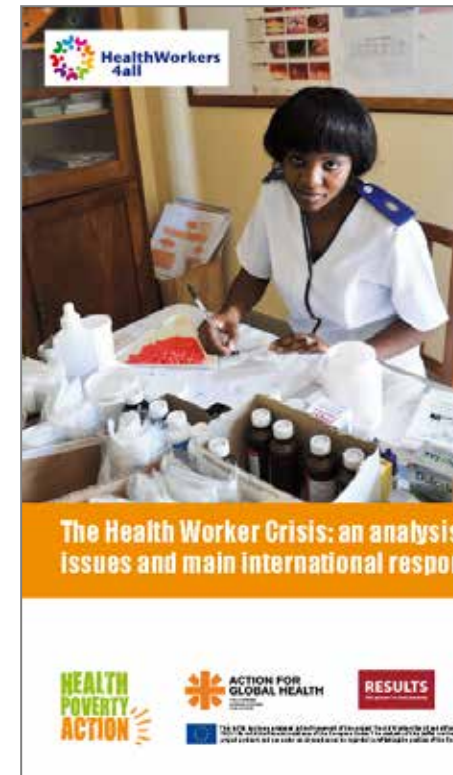
- § What kind of evidence did you use for / refer to in the paper?
- § Were there any particular challenges in the making of the paper?

“We gathered **original data from several Ministry sources and databases** to capture objective facts about where physicians had gone in Mozambique. **Tracking down where individual doctors actually were** at the time was challenging in some cases and required fairly significant follow-up. We had good collaboration from our Ministry counterparts and physicians themselves.” James Pfeiffer, University of Washington



- § What kind of evidence did you use for / refer to in the paper?
- § Were there any particular challenges in the making of the paper?

“There is some issue with data as the UK Nursing and Midwifery Council data reports on the number of new registrants but it does not say if they are working or where (e.g. NHS, private sector, care homes). In addition, whilst the review reports if new registrants are from the EU or outside of the EU, it does not give any further information on the source countries of new registrants. Also there is not much recent research on compensation or analysis of how this might work in practise.” Nathalie Sharples



- § How relevant are data and scientific evidence for policy makers compared with political interests and power relations?
- § How would you define evidence based policy?

“As civil society we use data and scientific evidence to supporting our human rights perspective. This might be coloured as well (as I don’t believe in ‘objective’ data), but it should be in an open and verifiable way.”

Linda Mans, Wemos



- § How relevant are data and scientific evidence for policy makers compared with political interests and power relations?
- § How would you define evidence based policy?

“Unfortunately, data and evidence are frequently trumped by power and political interests. However, good solid objective evidence is still vital but must be channelled to the right folks to be used and promoted effectively.” James Pfeiffer, University of Washington



- § How relevant are data and scientific evidence for policy makers compared with political interests and power relations?
- § How would you define evidence based policy?

“Evidence is useful if your counterpart is very competent. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case with policymakers. So, overall, the right political environment and a coherent advocacy strategy may often be more relevant.” Giulia De Ponte, Amref Italy / HW4All



- § What evidence is missing when it comes to translating commitments (e.g. WHO Code of Practice) to political action?
- § Or is the lack of evidence rather used as an excuse for inaction?

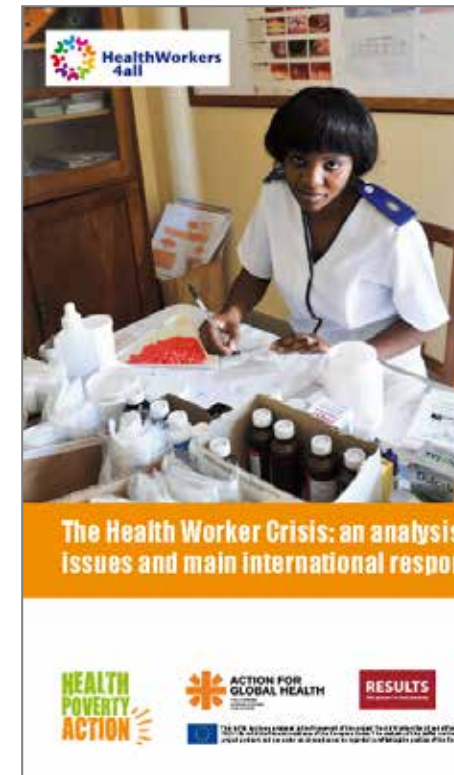
“More data and evidence is welcome. **But the ‘lack’ of it is also used as an excuse not to put commitments into political action.** I appreciate for instance the Finnish delegation clearly defining their steps towards a sustainable health workforce.”

Linda Mans, Wemos



- § What evidence is missing when it comes to translating commitments (e.g. WHO Code of Practice) to political action?
- § Or is the lack of evidence rather used as an excuse for inaction?

“The issue I come up against most frequently is the **conflicting evidence** – i.e. the Michael Clemens argument that international brain drain is not an issue. If we are really going to listen objectively to the evidence, this is something those of us who disagree should probably explore further.” Nathalie Sharples, Health Poverty Action



§ What role does evidence play for your own advocacy work?

“We try to ground all of our work and outreach in solid evidence, data, and studies. **Evidence is not sufficient but it is necessary to good advocacy.**”

James

“I would rather say that **accurate documentation of any advocacy statement is key** (must be backed by research, be it pre-existing or originally produced).” Giulia

“The important role of evidence is **guidance.**” Linda

“It underpins it all.” Natalie

The researcher's conclusion:

“Given the increasing prominence of evidence-based advocacy and donor and NGO interest in this approach, **there may be value in greater clarity about what is meant by evidence-based advocacy**, including the appropriate role of both research and other kinds of evidence.” Kate Gooding



...and some inspirations (provocations?)
regarding «evidence based advocacy»
and the role of «advocates» and NGOs
in political transformation:

Imagine this, back in 1994...



HealthWorkers
4all



What do
we want?!!



Evidence based change!

Evidence based change!

Evidence based change!

Evidence based change!



When do we
want it?!!!



After peer review!

After peer review!

After peer review!

After peer review!



What evidence is needed for political change?





THE DIVISIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CAPE

WHITE AREA


BY ORDER SECRETARY

DIE AFDELINGSRAAD VAN DIE KAAP

BLANKE GEBIED

OP LAS SEKRETARIS

What evidence is needed
for political change?

A man with a mustache and a dark cap is lying in a bed made of animal skins and blankets. He is looking upwards and to the right. The bed is situated in a structure with a wall made of vertical wooden poles and a ceiling of woven reeds. The background wall is made of rough, grey concrete or plaster. The overall scene suggests a simple, possibly temporary, living arrangement.

What evidence is needed
for political change?

What is needed at all for political change?

- Evidence? Advocates?? NGOs???

“Real political resistance offers no short cuts. **The NGO-ization of politics threatens to turn resistance into a well-mannered, reasonable, salaried, 9-to-5 job.** With a few perks thrown in. Real resistance has real consequences. And no salary.” Arundhati Roy, Blog, 2014



What is needed at all for political change?

- Evidence? Advocates?? NGOs???

“NGOs have to understand that **Human Rights are not given by governments, but must be taken in possession by the people themselves.**” Only if NGOs continue to be aware of being rooted in movements that oppose the prevailing political system they can really make a difference.

Thomas Gebauer, People’s Health Assembly, 2012





Thank you!

This input and references are available on the MMI website and will also be published on the website of the HWAI working group on migration.

www.bit.ly/hwai-evidence

www.hwai.org/our-work/migration



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