



Research for health
in humanitarian crises

An introduction to blogging for researchers

Webinar, January 8, 2020





We are a global charity that finds solutions to complex humanitarian problems through research and innovation.



R2HC aims to improve health outcomes by strengthening the evidence base for public health interventions in humanitarian crises.



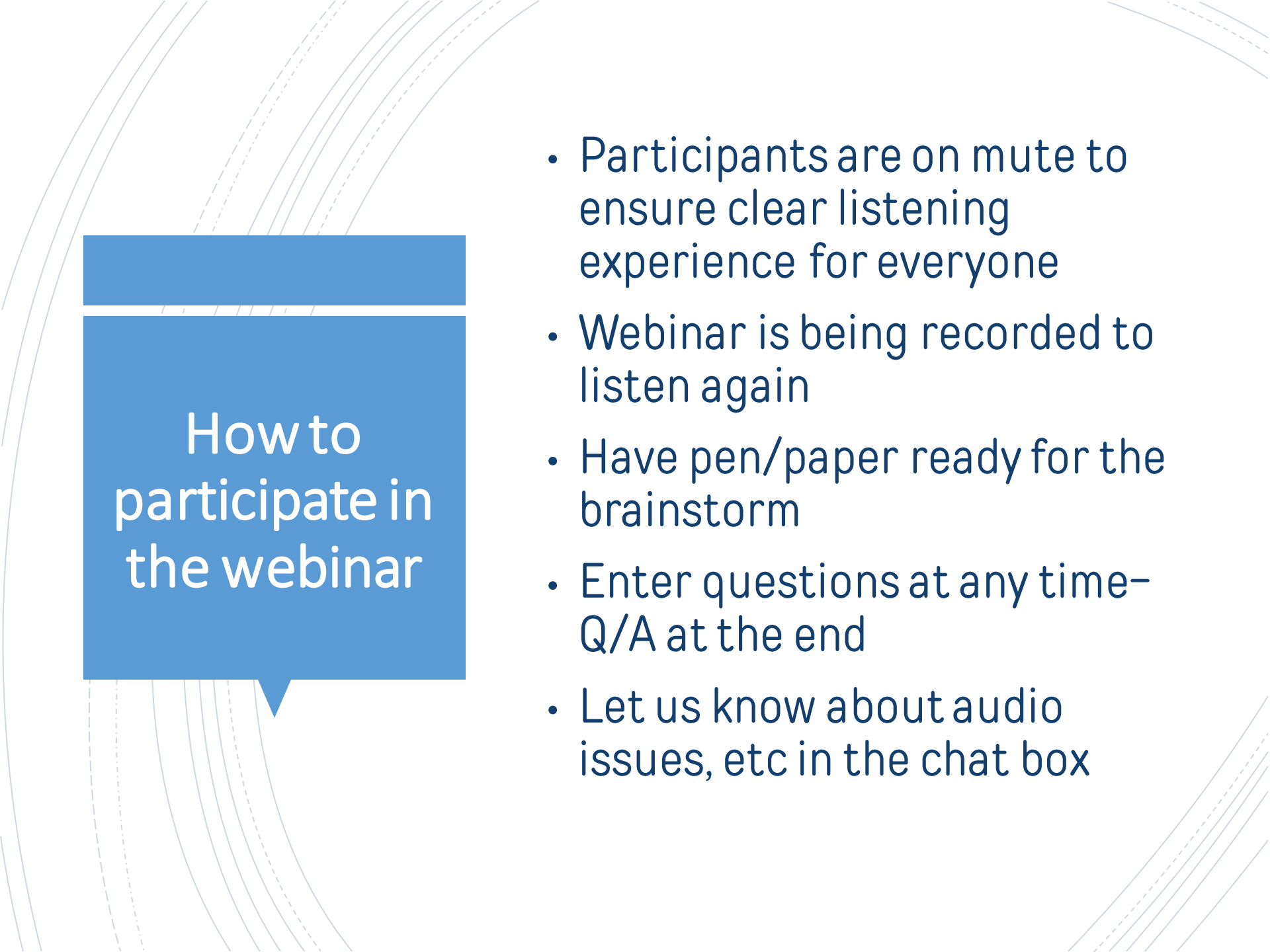
Presenters:

Cordelia Lonsdale
Research Impact Manager
(R2HC)



Heather Arnold
Communications Officer



The background of the slide features several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey, creating a modern, abstract design. A blue speech bubble shape is positioned on the left side, containing the title text.

How to participate in the webinar

- Participants are on mute to ensure clear listening experience for everyone
- Webinar is being recorded to listen again
- Have pen/paper ready for the brainstorm
- Enter questions at any time– Q/A at the end
- Let us know about audio issues, etc in the chat box

Purpose of this webinar...

Help researchers get the most out of blogging (for the research and for you as professionals)

Inspire you to write a blog post about your research

Give you some manageable approaches and starting points for future blogging efforts

Sharing resources (handout)



1 hour duration

Welcome +
intro



What is a
blog?
Why
should I
blog?



How to
blog: tips
and
basics



Exercise:
Brainstorm
blog ideas



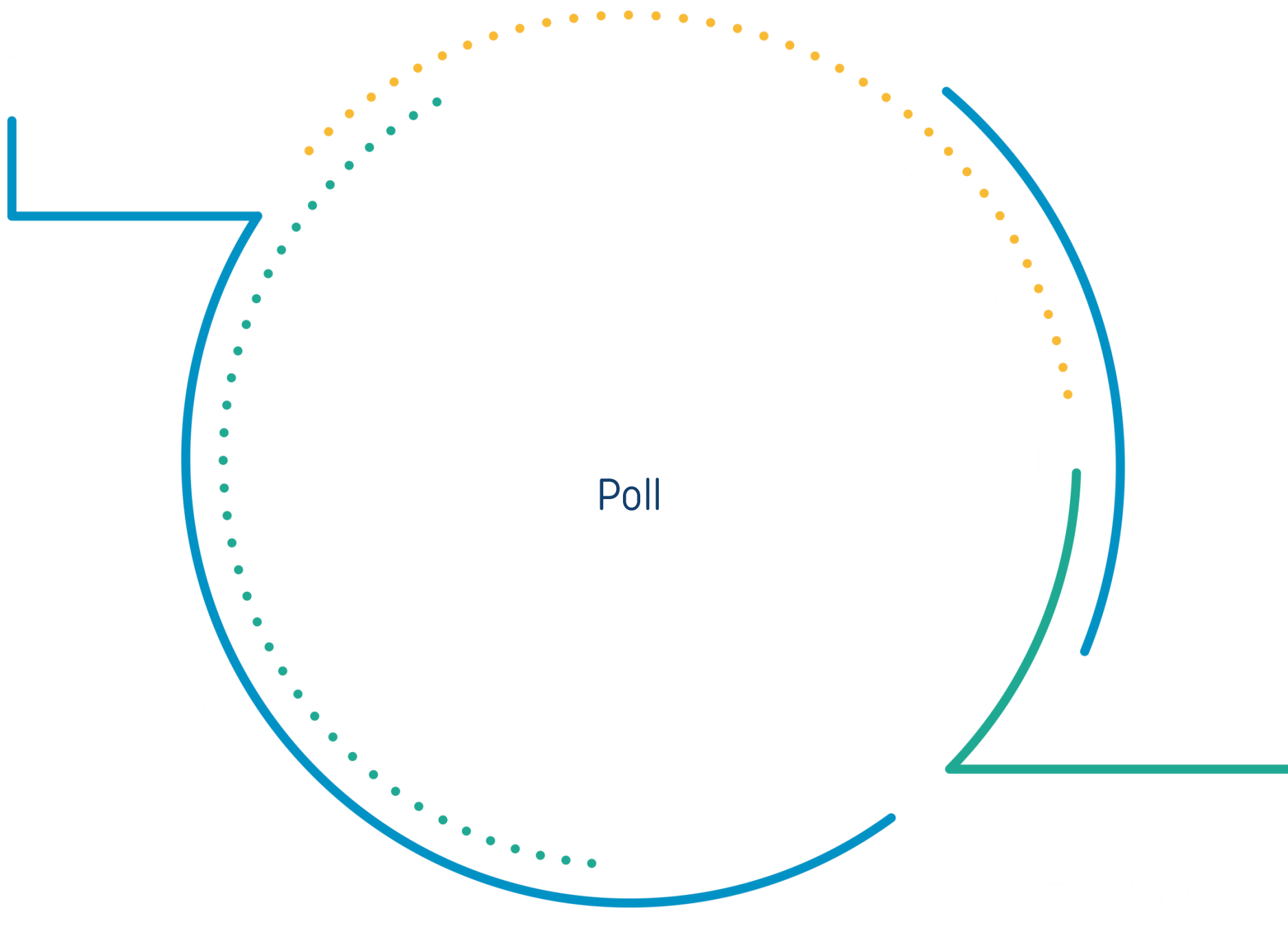
Q/A,
wrap up



Research for health
in humanitarian crises

What is a blog?





blog

[blog] 

NOUN

1. a regularly updated website or web page, typically one run by an individual or small group, that is written in an informal or conversational style.

blog post

[blog post] 

NOUN

a piece of writing or other item of content published on a blog.

"I've read your previous blog post on this topic"

Characteristics of a blog [post]

- Online content
- Personal voice (a name attached)
- Informal conversational style
- Addressed to a specific audience
- Brief / focused: ~ 300–2000 words (Elrha project blogs are 300–800)
- Chronological (recent blog posts presented first)
- Covering every topic you can think of!
- **But generally:** blogs don't just relate facts – they share opinion, commentary, reflection or analysis – can also be personal or introspective



26 years of blogging (mid-90s to now)

- Early adopters: 'Weblogs' (online diaries)
- Golden age 2003–2008: individual influencers, citizen journalists, monetisation, blogs= serious news
- Print journalism moves online: more online content, different online platforms for expression
- Now blogging is mainstream/professionalised and part of core business

In 2020:

- 500 million + blogs; 2 million new posts per day
- Audience segmentation (search engines...)



Research for health
in humanitarian crises

Why blog about research?



Reason #1: Increase your impact



Be visible to a wider audiences (including policymakers, practitioners and infomediaries)



Engage with users of research outside of academia



Increase public access to your research

Don't just listen to me....

“Academically a blogpost **boosts citations** for the core article itself. [...if the blog is accessible], your writing may also **circulate widely in other disciplines and in the external world outside universities**, enhancing your reputation there”.



Professor Patrick Dunleavy (LSE) ‘How to write a blogpost from your journal article’

Writing for Research Blog



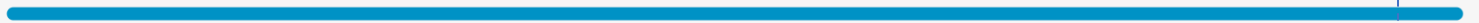
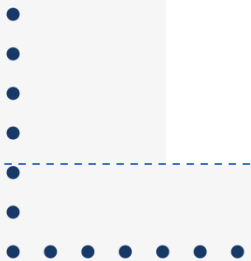
Reasons to blog #2: repository of ideas

“Regular blogging builds up a handy, time-saving archive. I’ve been blogging daily since 2008. [...] essentially I have a download of my brain activity over the last 7 years – almost every book and papers I’ve read, conversations and debates. [...] And raw material for the next presentation, paper or book.”



Duncan Green (Oxfam), ‘An antidote to futility: Why academics (and students) should take blogging / social media seriously’,

LSE Impact Blogs



Reasons to blog #3: Improve writing skills

“Like any other craft, writing needs to be practiced and blog posts are good sites to do so.”



Professor Pat Thomson (Nottingham), ‘Blogging helps academic writing’, Patter



Don't expect too much

- One blog post won't make you famous
- Limited space for new 'big influencers' in blogging
- Use blogs strategically to complement your core work– don't let them be a distraction



Welcome+
intro



What is a
blog?
Why
should I
blog?



How to
blog: tips
and
basics



Exercise:
Brainstorm
blog ideas



Q/A,
wrap up
and next
steps



Research for health
in humanitarian crises

Basic blogging tips



elrha

What
makes a
good
blog?



A good blog is one which serves your target audience's needs



You must know **who** your audience is and **what** they could be interested in learning from **you**

You should also consider how these people use the web, what they will read and how they will read it





Research for health
in humanitarian crises

Deciding on your blog post topic



Principles of selecting a blog post topic

- A topic you are personally passionate about /interested in
- Write about what you know well (credibility)
- One main idea per blog post
- You can write several blog posts covering multiple topics under a single theme or unpacking a complex topic

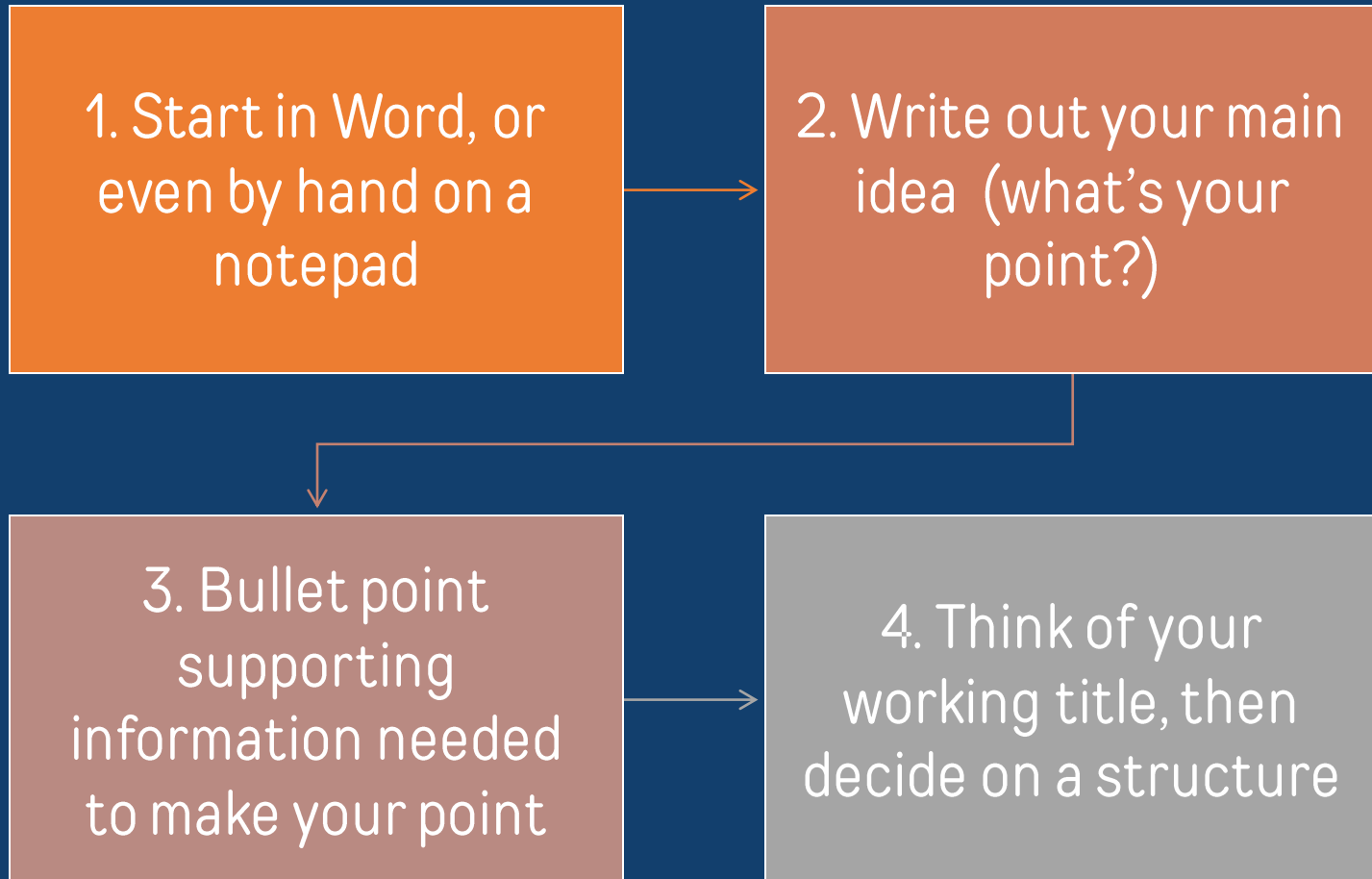
.....



Planning and structuring the blog



Starting your blog (we'll brainstorm shortly!)



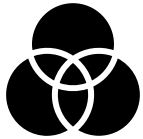
One simple 5 paragraph blog structure



1. Scene setting/opener: Introduce yourself/your expertise
Introduce the main idea of your blog



2/3/4: Unpack your main idea. Use one paragraph per point

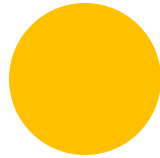
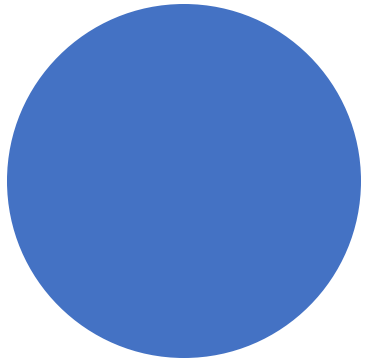


5. Conclude by reaffirming your main idea –pull out any lessons, considerations, implications for your audience



Footer: Invite connection if you want it! Link to resources/papers, social media channels etc; pose questions or invite comment





Writing



How to write a decent blog post

- Personal voice
- Language appropriate for audience– conversation with them
- Short sentences
- Active not passive
- Don't be boring!
- Get to the point– quickly. (Title / first paragraph!)
- Less text usually = more impact

It was found

*We found
that*



Research for health
in humanitarian crises

Polishing/reviewing



Polish up your blog

- **Quotes:** Trim down as much as possible (use ellipsis...)
 - **Cut:**
 - text that doesn't support your main point
 - Text which explains supporting evidence- try linking to source instead
 - **Images:** include 1 image supporting your main point, more to break up a longer blog
 - **Subheads** can help if your blog is long
 - Run a spell check /review readability score
 - Ask someone you trust to read it through
 -
-



Spend time on your post title!

- This is what gets your audience to click on your blog post
- Needs to evoke curiosity!
- Brief: 8–10 words is ideal (a subhead can be used too)
- Make sure it speaks to your audience
- Describe post content accurately– not mysterious or misleading
- Formats: use numbers, questions
- Keywords important

CGD NOTES

Five Takeaways on the Future of Humanitarian Reform

Jeremy Konyndyk

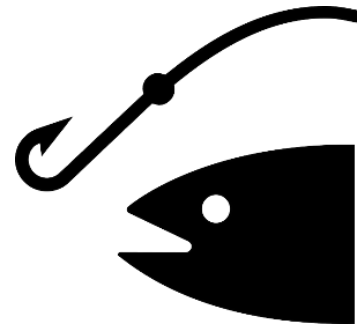
AUGUST 7, 2019

Should aid workers lead comfortable lives?

Are Generic Drugs Safe? Big Claims in a New Book

SOUTH KIVU: DEALING WITH CONFLICT AND CHOLERA

Opportunity or threat? What Plan S can contribute to Open Access in Latin America



Build credibility as a blogger

- Be balanced and civil in tone, and acknowledge others' ideas
- Be a real person– retain your voice
- Engage constructively with other online commentators/their work
- Back up assertions by linking to sources (Don't add footnotes)!
- Have a short professional bio and headshot to go with your blog and use it across social profiles





Research for health
in humanitarian crises

Where to publish?

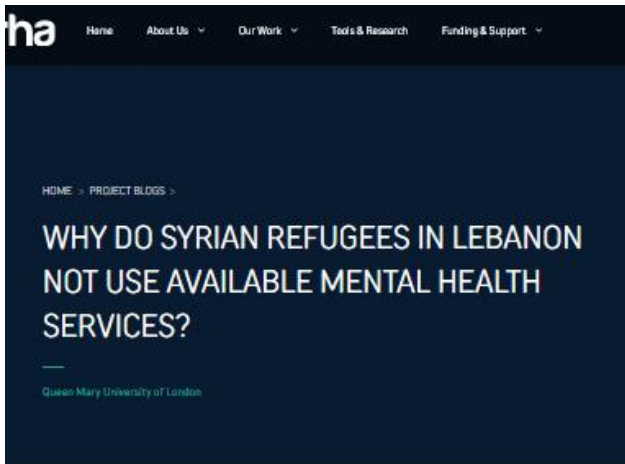


Different options

1. Your organisation
2. A multi-author blog site or other organization's blog that accepts external submissions
3. Social media EG: Linkedin articles linked to your profile
4. Your own blog: either self-hosted or on a platform like Medium, Tumblr, Wordpress.com etc

Things to ask yourself:

1. *Will this platform help me reach my target audience?*
2. *What level of freedom and editorial control do I want?*
3. *How much time /energy do I have for blog writing?*



Authors: Michael Pluess, Patricia Moghames, Nicolas Chehade, Fiona McEwen, Karen Pluess

According to a recent study by the World Health Organisation (1), about one-in-five people from war-affected populations suffer from mental health disorders. Several studies, including our own, suggest an even higher prevalence rate among Syrian refugee children (2,3).

We surveyed more than one thousand families in Lebanon and found that almost half of the children met the clinical cut-off for any psychological disorder. Many of the families agreed to a referral for mental health services. However, when they were contacted a few months later, nearly half no longer wanted any treatment and, from those that did, more than half did not attend the intake assessment or enrol into treatment. To understand why so many did not take up the mental health treatment offered, we visited two informal refugee settlements for group discussions on the topic.



Blogging for Elrha

- 2 'project blogs' during your grant
- Elrha's Medium blog: bigger topics relevant to humanitarian innovation/action/research
- Further guidance in grantee **communications pack**
- We can help!



Research for health
in humanitarian crises

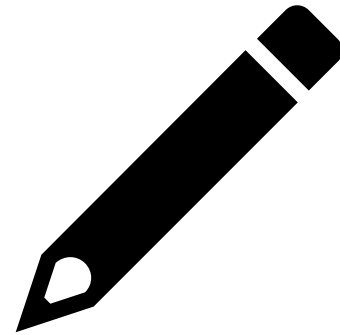
Ideas Generation exercise



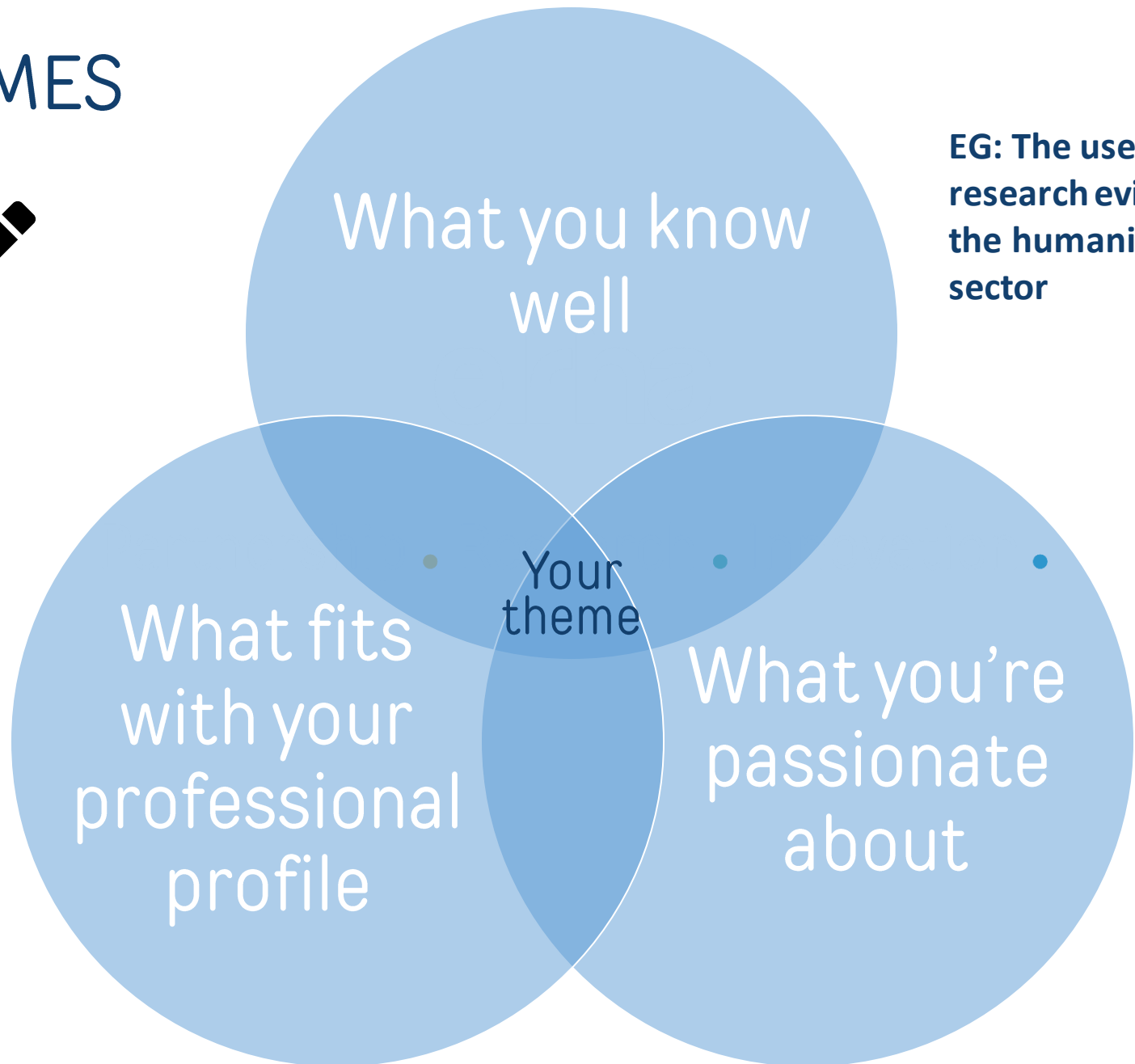
elrha

Brainstorm:

1. Themes (Broad)
2. Audiences
3. Blog post topic ideas
4. Types/structures



THEMES



**EG: The use of
research evidence in
the humanitarian
sector**

- Who do you want to read your research?
 - Who would care about what you have to say?



Target audiences (primary and secondary)

- Where are they based?
 - What jobs do they do/
organisations do they work for?



Topic ideas: blog post about research

1. What benefits are there from my findings? To whom?
2. What surprised me /would surprise others in my field?
3. How did I grow and learn as a researcher on this project?
4. What finding is the most important to tell others and why?
5. What did I learn from working in this country/with this community/with this research method etc?
6. What are the ideas, reflections or 'nagging thoughts' on this research topic that are still with me?



Now...



1. Look back at your ideas
 2. Pick just one idea for the next bit of the exercise
- (Pick one relevant to your target audience)

1. **Debunk** a common misunderstanding or **demystify** a little-understood term or idea

2. **Case study/How To:** Use a case example to demonstrate how a specific problem can be solved or explain how to do something

6. **Opinion:** Simply argue your main idea persuasively with a short piece of analysis, using examples and evidence

Types of blog post to explore your topic

3. **Stories:** tell a real-life story to illustrate a key message or point you want to make

5. **Lists :** 'Ten ways to do x', 5 things you didn't know about y'



4. **Commentary:** Share your personal view on a recent significant development in your field of expertise or news story



Share your ideas... or
ask questions

elrha

Closing thoughts:

- A blog these days won't change the world + you probably won't 'go viral'
- BUT a well-written blog targeted to a specific audience can raise profile of research (and your professional profile)
- Blogging can increase visibility to stakeholders/ connect you with influencing opportunities: routes to lasting impact
- Use blogging as one tool of several for stakeholder engagement and communications online
- Start by reading the blogs of others writing blogs for your target audience – learn what works well





Thank you!

- Handout
- Survey

Contact c.lonsdale@elrha.org

elrha

How to find your readability score in word

- File->Options -> Proofing
- Readability score up to 100 is displayed after all spelling/grammar errors are checked

Aim for readability score which matches your audience's needs

- Harvard Law Review = low 30s
- Guardian= around 58
- Average 12yo student writing = 60-70 .
- "The cat sat on the mat." = 116.

