Some initial notes to inform discussion on 1st June 2020

BACKGROUND: At the Scoping Working Group on 18th May, Jeremy suggested that a few of us based in LMICs unpack some of the issues we face in producing syntheses and getting them onto decision-makers' desks. Ruth's notes below aim to highlight some of the practical issues with ACE examples included. It would be great if others have examples and / or other issues to add.

PRACTICAL ISSUES:

- We are in demand from both decision-makers and funders:
    - *ACE experience:* We have good relationships with government decision-makers across a number of sectors and are being asked for evidence on a range of issues related to COVID-19.
    - *eBASE Experience:* Demand for evidence is still weak with government structures partially due to lack of understanding and awareness of EIDM usefulness and lack of capacity to digest research evidence in current format and predominance of evidence resources in English – this was reported in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.
    - *eBASE Experience:* Our experience with NGOs, CSOs, and development agencies have increased their awareness on EIDM and there was moderate demand for evidence resources on COVID-19 – including from NGOs implementing programmes, UN Women, and media – especially on prevention, COVID and disability, and educational interventions to improve learning outcomes in a time when kids cannot assemble in class.
- There is a lack of evidence resources targeting people with disabilities
    - *eBASE experience:* we supported organisations and people with disability (PWD) groups with evidence to guide their practice and developing information for PWD. Identified; access to water, access to information, stigmatisation, social distancing challenges, and living in institutionalized settings as factors that disproportionately make PWD more vulnerable.
- We are short-staffed
    - *ACE experience:* We have fewer skilled / experienced staff (not to say we don't have expertise on our teams, but it has limits). We need more hands-on deck for a number of reasons: to fill gaps because not all staff are able to operate at full capacity as explained below; and to meet growing demand from government colleagues and from funders. But getting new staff members onboard is basically impossible at this time. We don't have a pool of post-grad students who we can easily tap into.
    - eBASE experience: we are having difficulties paying the number of staff needed to keep up with flow of resources through the evidence ecosystem. 2 donors in health and education now support all covid work which cuts across other basic services. This is preading the team thin as there are also other tasks to attend to outside covid-19.
- Staff members are working under difficult physical circumstances:
    - *ACE experience:* Under lockdown many of those experienced team members are struggling to work because they live in crowded houses without desks or quiet spaces. It is quite normal for some of our staff members to be working sitting on

their beds because they don't have anywhere else to work. Many are also in high risk environments making it particularly difficult to get work done.

- Staff members don't have the technical equipment they need:
  - *ACE experience:* We have limited numbers of computers, especially laptops, to go around and our institutions are not running smoothly enough for us to access new machines for people, even if we have funds to do so. Since 1st March we have ordered 8 laptops for staff. To date 2 have arrived and been delivered to staff members (via a lot of arm twisting). We only actually have budget for 2.
- Staff members are struggling with connectivity - Systematic searches and use of specialist review software require good internet connections.
  - *ACE experience:* Few of our staff had any internet access to home prior to lockdown. Data / wifi and phone company coverage at home is limiting people's abilities to get online. We estimate that our senior team has spent 1,200 USD of personal money to buy data for their teams since lockdown started in late March (we will find a way to reclaim this from project budgets eventually).