Writing an Abstract

Presenter:

Peter Tebon Tendoh, Capacity Advisor, ASAP II

Date: February 20, 2024

ASAP II

ACCELERATING SUPPORT TO ADVANCED LOCAL PARTNERS II

WELCOME ALL

1. Please let us know where you are from **in the chat.**

2. Please use the **Q&A box to ask questions** and the chat box for answering questions asked by the presenters.

3. The presentation for today's webinar will be saved on ASAP's website at **www.intrahealth.org/asap-resources**

ASAP I	ASAP II
April 1, 2019 to May 30, 2022	May 31, 2022 – July 30, 2024

PURPOSE

Rapidly prepare Local Partners to have the capabilities and resources to serve as Prime Partners for USAID/PEPFAR programming, in compliance with USAID and PEPFAR procedures, for PEPFAR program implementation.

70% of USAID PEPFAR funding to local prime partners.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Strengthen Local Partners as they transition to receive PEPFAR funding as a USAID Prime Partner to comply with regulations.

2. Prepare Local Partners to directly manage, implement, and monitor PEPFAR programs, and maintain consistent PEPFAR program achievement and quality.

ASAP II-SUPPORTED COUNTRIES

Angola

Cameroon

Côte d'Ivoire

DRC

eSwatini

Ethiopia

Lesotho

Malawi

Namibia

Nigeria

South Sudan

Uganda

Zimbabwe

TOTAL: 18 COUNTRIES

ASAP I additional countries:

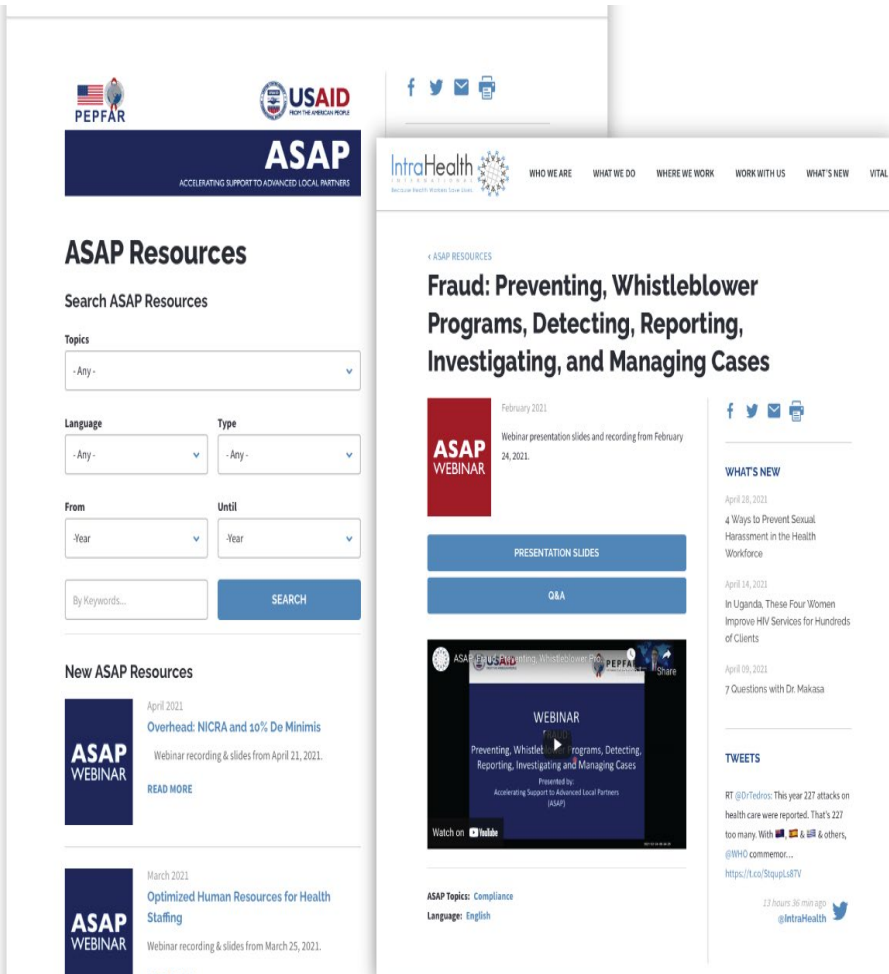Kenya

Mozambique

South Africa

Tanzania

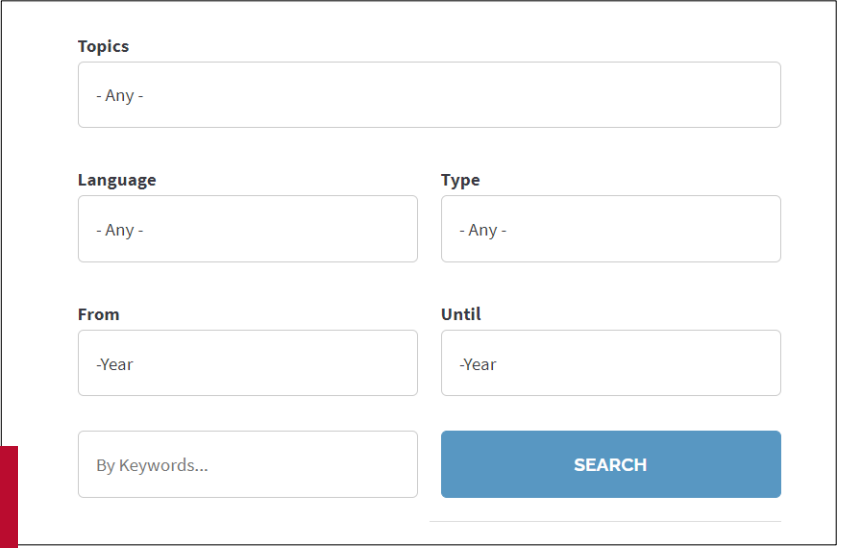Zambia

•VISIT

- **www.intrahealth.org/asap-resources**

USAID/ASAP has broadcasted **110 webinars** for more than **22,000 attendees** in **76 countries**.

AVAILABLE IN 3 LANGUAGES

UPCOMING WEBINARS

English:

February 22:   Business Development: Pre-RFA to Post-Submission Best Practices

February 28:   Procurement and Property Management Compliance Issues

March 5:   USAID Financial Policies, Internal Controls and Compliance

Peter Tebon Tendoh, ASAP II Capacity Advisor

WHY WRITE AN ABSTRACT?

7 GREAT REASONS

- **Raise visibility** of your organization's technical work and capabilities

- **Highlight expertise** at national and international forums

- Position for **new project opportunities**

- Make **better decisions** about projects and investments

- Advance global knowledge base

- Be **known as leaders** in your field

- **Enhance promotion** prospects (add to CV)

ARE YOU READY TO COMMUNICATE YOUR RESULTS?
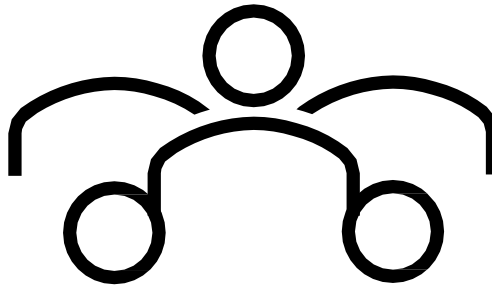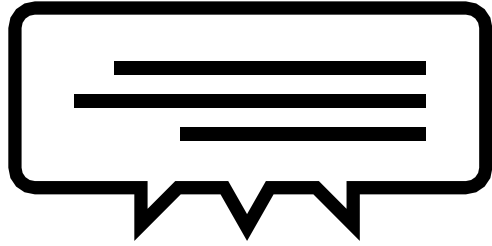
Is your project or activity **ready to be written up?**

Are you able to answer the **"so what"** question?

If your abstract is evidence-based, **is the data solid?**

Has the abstract been reviewed by others in the organization?

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

- **Look at examples** of successful abstracts.

- **Understand the target themes or topics** and type(s) of abstracts being solicited.

- **Pay careful attention** to submission instructions/guidelines.

- **Use the template provided**, if applicable.
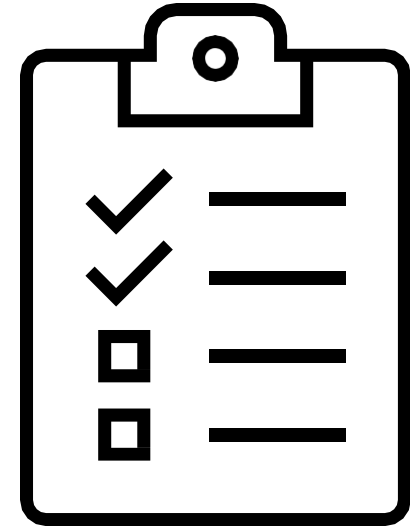
WHAT TO CONVEY IN YOUR ABSTRACT

WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM YOU WERE TRYING TO SOLVE?

WHAT DID YOU DO?

WHAT DID YOU FIND?

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? *So what?*

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR ABSTRACT

WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM? → **INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

WHAT DID YOU DO? → **METHODS**

WHAT DID YOU FIND? → **RESULTS/FINDINGS**

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? → **DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION**

# WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM? ➜ INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

This is the **shortest part of the abstract** (2-3 sentences).

Answers the following questions:

- **What is already known about the subject,**

  related to the topic in question?

- **What is not known about the subject**

  and hence what the study intended to examine (or what the paper seeks to present)?

The reader is **interested in your paper/poster because of its findings** –not because of the introduction.
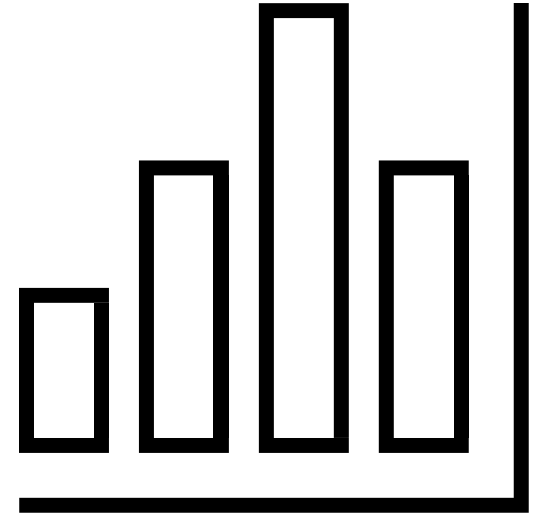
Second-longest section of the abstract.

Informs the reader of **what you have done and how.**

- What is the **study design and sample size?**

- What is the **setting and population?**

- What **method of inquiry** was used (surveys, observations, focus groups, key informant interviews)?

- What was the **outcome measure** and how was it defined?

The **longest and most important** part of an abstract.

- **Give the main results**, not just in subjective terms.

  "We found approach X to be superior to approach Y."

- Data from which the conclusions will be drawn should be **reported in as much detail** as space allows.

Contains the most important take-home message

of the study (2-3 sentences).

Authors may be able to express an opinion about the theoretical or practical implications of the findings.

Caution: Do not claim more than the data demonstrates.

GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

- Title should be obvious, short and related to the other sections in the abstract.

- Make it interesting enough to lure them to read the abstract.

- It is necessary in some studies that the study design be evident in the title.

FOR EXAMPLE

"HIV testing and counseling among students."

"Data on prevalence of HIV testing and counseling among students."

"Prevalence of HIV testing and counseling and associated factors among secondary school students in Botswana."

USING KEY WORDS

CHOOSE WISELY

- Choose between **3** and **10** words

- Key words are usually **used by conference organizers and indexing databases**

TIP: Review key words from abstracts with a similar topic.

LET'S GET STARTED

|	
REVIEW	Review the specific guidelines and instructions for an abstract
READ	Read through published abstracts.
THINK	Think about your target audience
WRITE	Write the title and select key words. (First or last?)
DRAFT	Draft your Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion/Conclusion (I-M-R-a-D)

NEXT STEPS

REVIEW, PROOFREAD, EDIT

- Proofread carefully.

- Revise, as necessary.
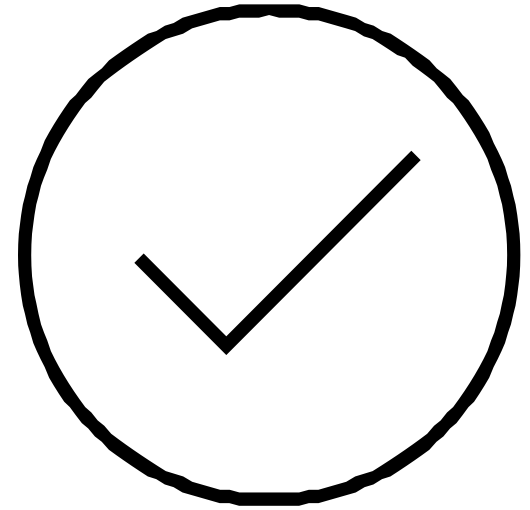
TIP: Have other people read your abstract for content, style, grammar, and spelling before you submit.

HELPFUL HINTS

- **Use active voice** and simple sentences.

  "We studied 20 HIV positive patients." is much better than *"Twenty HIV-positive patients were studied."*

- Check **word count.**

- **Spell out abbreviations** on first use.

- Avoid citations, footnotes, and external quotes.

- **Use active voice** and simple sentences.

  "We studied 20 HIV positive patients." is much better than *"Twenty HIV-positive patients were studied."*

- Check **word count.**

- **Spell out abbreviations** on first use.

- Avoid citations, footnotes, and external quotes.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

- The scientific committee of a conference oversees the peer review process.

- **Reviewers use score sheets** to assess abstracts within pre-determined criteria.

- Reviewers are looking for general **quality, sound methodology, relevance or originality, importance or general interest,** and whether an abstract should be an oral or a poster.

WHY ABSTRACTS GET REJECTED

- **Methods are unclear** or not sound

- Topic is **not relevant to the conference**

- **Lack of originality**

- **Findings are not presented** or too preliminary

- **Conclusions are not linked to the data**

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR ABSTRACT

COMPLETE → COVER THE MAJOR PARTS OF YOUR STUDY.

CONCISE → NO UNNECESSARY WORDS.

CLEAR → READABLE AND WELL ORGANIZED, WITH LITTLE JARGON.

COHESIVE → THE SECTIONS FLOW SMOOTHLY AND ARE LOGICAL.

TECHNICAL WRITING

COMMON ISSUES

- Long sentences

- Incorrect punctuation

- Inconsistent capitalization or over-use of capital letters

- Acronyms not spelled out on first use

- Spelling errors

- Incorrect sentence structure

PUNCTUATION TIPS

- Complete sentences end in period, question mark, or exclamation mark.

- Whether you use single or double spaces after all punctuation marks, make sure it is consistent.

- Commas are used to separate ideas.

- Use commas in numbers of 1,000 and greater.

- Footnotes should be at the end of a sentence, outside of the period with no space.

USING LISTS

- Use a bulleted list when the list includes three or more items

- Introduce list with a complete sentence followed with a colon

- Capitalize the first item in each bullet

CAPITALIZATION

BE CAREFUL NOT TO OVER-CAPITALIZE.

The following require capitalization:

- First word in a title

- First word after a colon

- Figure and table references

- Formal names of governments, agencies and organizations

CAPITALIZATION

BE CAREFUL NOT TO OVER-CAPITALIZE.

- Capitalize district or region only when it directly follows the proper name. Use lowercase when it appears alone.

 Examples: Mbale District is in Uganda. Luangwa is a small district in Zambia.

- Capitalize only the official name/title of a group, organization, or location. Example: In Rwanda we visited Shyira Hospital. In Uganda we went to the referral hospital in Lira.

- Capitalize the name of a department.

Example: The Finance Department implemented a new procedure.

- Don't capitalize names of cadres or types of health facilities. Examples: nurses, auxiliary nurse midwife, pharmacists, medical officer, community health center, district hospital.

USING THE APPROPRIATE TERMS: HIV

TERMINOLOGY	PREFERRED LANGUAGE
High(er)-risk group; vulnerable group	Key population(s)
Hotspots	Location of local epidemic
Positives; HIV victim; HIV positive (fe)male	People/children living with HIV
Prostitute	Sex worker
Target population	Key population
Driver [of acquiring HIV]	Use the actual term (i.e., poverty)
Drug users	People who inject drugs
Target [MSM]	Engage [MSM]

Use UNAIDS Terminology Guidelines:
http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2015/2015_terminology_guidelines

*Sourced guidance from UNAIDS

- Avoid using passive voice: *"We concluded..." instead of "It can be concluded that..."*

- Cut out unnecessary adjectives (e.g., ~~advanced~~ notice)

- Avoid double negatives: "Malaria is not uncommon"

- Short sentences (average 20 words, never longer than 50 words).

KEEP A CONSISTENT ORDER

- Ideas must be **well organized**

- **Each paragraph** captures just **one topic**

- **Each sentence** has just **one idea**

- Explicit **relationship must exist between sentences**

- Explicit **relationship** must also exist **between paragraphs and between sections**

Zieger, M. (2000) Essentials of Writing Biomedical Research Papers, 2nd Ed

STYLE AND LANGUAGE

- Complex language not needed

- Write numbers from 0 to 10 in words

    o One, two, three…. after

    o 10, 11, 12,….

- Do not use contractions in professional writing

(don't, couldn't, shouldn't)

- Maintain similar language throughout

- **Either/or, neither/nor:** Best together, not one without the other (and never either/nor or neither/or).

- **'Respectively' is an adverb.** It means "in the order given" and should only be used if your sentence would be unclear without it.

- For men, the proportion of hospital admissions rose from 1.8% in 1998 to 8.1% a decade later; for women, those figures were 7.5% and 16.3%, respectively.

- **Punctuation goes inside quotes**, e.g., "I love working here," he said, or "Working here is the best."

- The Latin abbreviation "i.e." means "that is"; the abbreviation "e.g." means "for example."

- Both **"i.e." and "e.g." should be followed by a comma**

  (i.e., like this) and should be combined with "etc."

Wordy and Redundant	Word Diet
At the present time	now
Absolutely essential	essential
honest truth	truth
despite the fact of	because
make a correction	correct
as long as	if
any particular type of	any
large in size	large
past history	history
will be able to	can
while it is true that	although
utilize	use

Wordy and Redundant	Word Diet
a very limited number of	few
Absolutely essential	essential
Free gift	gift
altogether	together
make a correction	correct
as long as	if
any particular type of	any
large in size	large
one of the same	the same
Summarize briefly	summarize

There are many <u>resources</u> that provide technical and editorial help to new authors, especially from low-middle income countries.
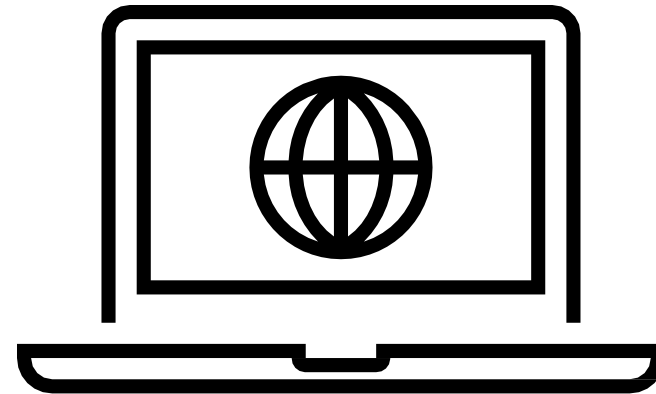
The EQUATOR Network is a new initiative that seeks to improve the quality

of scientific publications

by promoting transparent and accurate reporting of health research.
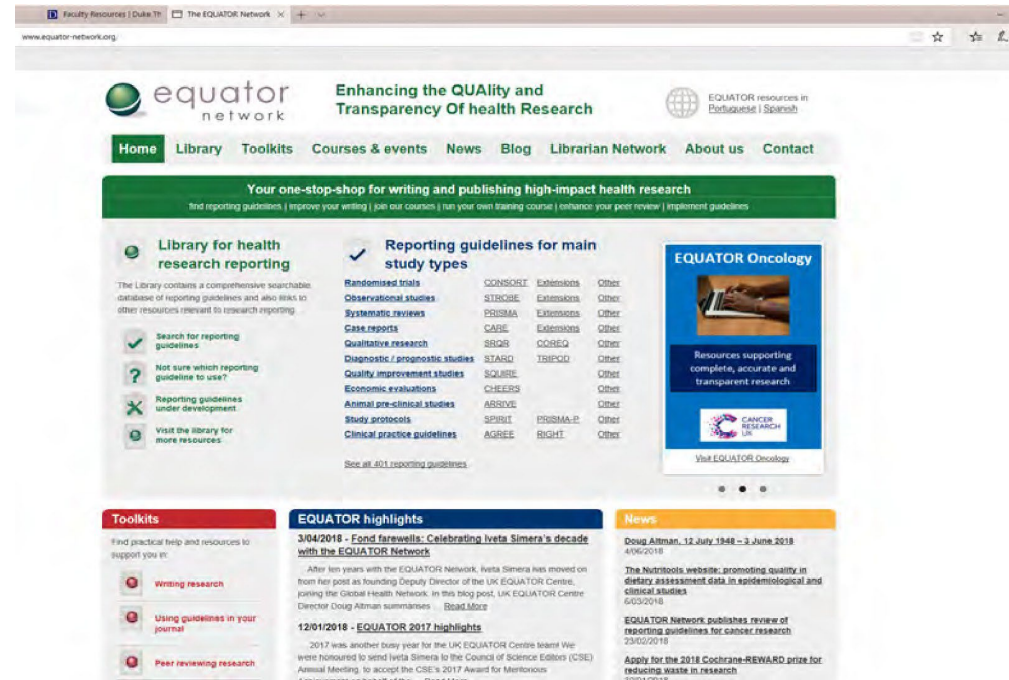
www.equator-network.org

Junior scientists get a mentor (often a retired academic) who guides them through the writing process.

www.authoraid.info/about/

IN SUMMARY

- State the issue to be discussed, give a brief background to the issue, describe briefly what you are doing/have done about it, and why is it important.

- Practice, practice, practice –writing an abstract is not easy, but is a key part of our work and career.
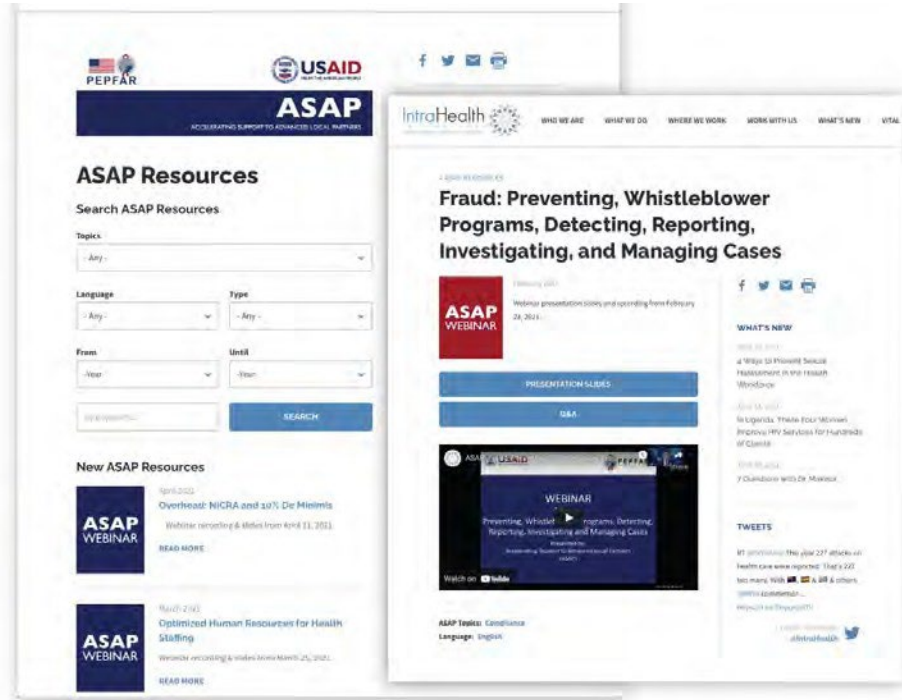
The ASAP website hosts many recorded webinars and resources. Visit us at: **www.intrahealth.org/asap-resources**

QUESTIONS?

Thank you!

ASAP II

ACCELERATING SUPPORT TO ADVANCED LOCAL PARTNERS II