Research Square

Preprints are preliminary reports that have not undergone peer review.
They should not be considered conclusive, used to inform clinical practice,
or referenced by the media as validated information.

The Comings of the Two Rivers: A Unified Framework for Transforming Scientific Evidence into Evidence Use through Storytelling

Patrick Mbah Okwen

okwen@ebaseafrica.org

Effective Basic Services (eBASE) Africa

Lisette Nange

Effective Basic Services (eBASE) Africa

Damaris Ntam Maih

Effective Basic Services (eBASE) Africa

Gloria Akah Ndum Okwen

Effective Basic Services (eBASE) Africa

Ernest Alang Wung

Effective Basic Services (eBASE) Africa

Miguel Jumwoh

Effective Basic Services (eBASE) Africa

Leonel Ayafor Ngwa

Effective Basic Services (eBASE) Africa

Okwen Chanice Fri

Effective Basic Services (eBASE) Africa

Mekano Fonjang Chia

Effective Basic Services (eBASE) Africa

Boudan Á Gouife Yolande

Effective Basic Services (eBASE) Africa

Euphrasia Ebai-Atuh Ndi

University of Bamenda

Bagele Chilisa

University of Botswana

Article

Keywords: Tori Dey, Evidence Uptake, Storytelling, Knowledge Translation, community and stakeholders

Posted Date: August 30th, 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-10205265/v1

License: This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
Read Full License

Additional Declarations: No competing interests reported.

`

The Comings of the Two Rivers: A Unified Framework for Transforming Scientific Evidence into Evidence Use through Storytelling

ABSTRACT

Despite major advances in evidence synthesis, a persistent global challenge remains where evidence is often produced but not meaningfully used. Across sectors, dissemination approaches remain largely linear, text-based, and detached from how individuals and communities interpret, internalize, and act on information. This creates a critical last mile gap between evidence generation and real-world decision-making. Addressing this gap requires rethinking dissemination not as information transfer, but as a process of engagement, interpretation, and activation. This paper introduces *The Comings of the Two Rivers*, the storytelling framework underpinning Tori Dey (Evidence Tori Dey, ETD), as a structured seven-step approach to evidence dissemination. The model brings together the "River of Science" (research, practice, and lived data) and the "River of Stories" (narrative forms such as oral storytelling, performance, and cultural expression). Through seven steps Identify a Topic; Community Diagnosis; Evidence Synthesis; Evidence Statements; Co-Creation of Stories; Telling Stories; and Evaluation of Change_the framework transforms evidence into socially embedded narratives that resonate with audiences and support uptake. The framework advances dissemination theory by integrating insights from behaviour change science, knowledge translation, and evidence-use scholarship. It aligns with social learning theory and behaviour change models, demonstrating how narrative and co-interpretation can bridge the gap between evidence and action. Rather than treating audiences as passive recipients, it positions them as active interpreters and co-creators of meaning. To date, *The Comings of Two Rivers* approach has been applied across 4 African countries and 1 European country (Cameroon, Germany, Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa), reaching over 500 participants through 8 conferences, workshops, and stakeholder engagement events. The approach has translated evidence from more than 10 systematic reviews from Cochrane, Campbell, JBI and EEF to support knowledge translation.

Keywords: Tori Dey, Evidence Uptake, Storytelling, Knowledge Translation, community and stakeholders.

`

1. The Global Evidence-Use Challenge

Over the past three decades, the global evidence ecosystem has undergone remarkable transformation (White, 2019) Investments in evidence synthesis, implementation science, and evidence-informed decision-making have resulted in an unprecedented expansion of systematic reviews, rapid reviews, evidence maps, policy briefs, clinical and public health guidelines, and implementation research. These advances have strengthened the scientific foundations for decision-making across health, education, social development, environmental management, and public policy. This growth has been supported by an increasingly interconnected network of organizations dedicated to producing, synthesizing, and promoting the use of research evidence. Institutions such as Cochrane, the Campbell Collaboration, the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), the Africa Evidence Network (AEN), Research4Life, the Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative (ESIC), and emerging regional initiatives including Responsive Evidence System for African Policy Needs (REAP) and Daara Development Academy have collectively expanded access to high-quality evidence while strengthening global capacity for evidence-informed policy and practice. Together, these organizations have helped establish a mature global evidence ecosystem that extends well beyond evidence generation to include synthesis, implementation, knowledge translation, and capacity strengthening.

Despite, these considerable achievements, evidence use remains inconsistent. The availability of robust evidence does not automatically translate into changes in policy, professional practice, or community decision-making (Lavis et al., 2003). Research on evidence-informed policymaking, knowledge translation, and implementation science consistently demonstrates that the uptake of research evidence is influenced not only by methodological quality, but also by its accessibility, relevance, timing, trustworthiness, relationships between evidence producers and users, institutional capacity, political context, and the extent to which evidence is communicated in forms that people can understand and apply (Best et al., 2010; Grimshaw et al., 2012).

These observations reveal a persistent paradox within contemporary evidence ecosystems. Scientific knowledge has become increasingly rigorous, accessible, and abundant, yet its influence on everyday decisions frequently remains limited. In many settings, research evidence must compete with misinformation, personal experience, cultural beliefs, political narratives, and

`

rapidly circulating digital content that often travel faster and resonate more deeply than scientific publications. Even where initiatives such as Research4Life have reduced barriers to accessing scientific literature, access alone does not ensure understanding, trust, or meaningful use. Evidence must still cross linguistic, cultural, literacy, institutional, and relational boundaries before it can influence behavior, professional practice, or public policy.

This evidence-use challenge suggests that the next frontier in evidence-informed decision-making is no longer simply producing better evidence or improving access to it. Rather, it is developing more effective ways of enabling people and institutions to interpret, trust, internalize, and apply evidence within their own social and cultural contexts. It is within this context that this paper proposes *The Comings of the Two Rivers* as a methodological framework for transforming scientific evidence into culturally meaningful stories that strengthen evidence engagement, uptake, and ultimately evidence use.

1.1. Why Dissemination Alone Is Not Enough

Considerable progress has been made in developing strategies to communicate scientific evidence to intended users. Knowledge translation and implementation science have generated a wide range of dissemination products, including peer-reviewed publications, systematic review summaries, evidence briefs, policy briefs, clinical guidelines, infographics, webinars, podcasts, digital repositories, and online learning platforms. These products play an essential role in improving access to scientific knowledge and have substantially strengthened the visibility and availability of research evidence across diverse sectors (Grimshaw et al., 2012; Oliver et al., 2014; Ward et al., 2009) However, making evidence available should not be equated with ensuring that it is understood, trusted, or used.

Conventional dissemination approaches often follow a predominantly linear model in which evidence is generated, synthesized, simplified, packaged, and transmitted to intended audiences. While this process improves accessibility, it frequently assumes that exposure to evidence will naturally result in understanding, acceptance, and behavioural or policy change. Research across knowledge translation and implementation science increasingly demonstrates that this assumption rarely holds in practice. Evidence use is an active social process in which individuals interpret information through their existing beliefs, experiences, identities, institutional contexts,

`

relationships, and cultural values rather than simply receiving it as objective information (Best et al., 2010; Oliver et al., 2014; Ward et al., 2009)

This challenge has become even more pronounced within contemporary digital information environments. Scientific evidence no longer competes solely with limited access to information; it increasingly competes with misinformation and disinformation that are rapidly disseminated through social media, interpersonal networks, and digital platforms. Such information often spreads more quickly than scientific evidence because it is emotionally engaging, personally relevant, culturally familiar, and easily shared within trusted social networks. Consequently, the effectiveness of evidence dissemination depends not only on the quality of the evidence itself but also on its ability to compete for attention, trust, and meaning within complex communication ecosystems (Dahlstrom, 2014).

Furthermore, evidence is rarely evaluated by audiences on scientific merit alone. Decisions are shaped by lived experience, identity, social norms, community narratives, language, trust in institutions, and perceptions of relevance. Indigenous and participatory knowledge traditions similarly recognise that knowledge is interpreted through relationships, dialogue, and collective meaning-making rather than through the passive transmission of information (Chilisa et al., 2016). From this perspective, dissemination cannot be understood simply as the movement of information from researchers to users. It is fundamentally a process of interpretation, negotiation, and social learning.

These limitations suggest that the next generation of evidence-use methodologies should move beyond simply improving the communication of evidence toward systematically supporting how evidence is interpreted, contextualised, and integrated into everyday decision-making. Rather than replacing existing dissemination approaches, *The Comings of the Two Rivers* builds upon them by providing a structured methodology for translating scientific evidence into culturally meaningful stories that preserve scientific integrity while strengthening engagement, trust, and evidence use.

1.2. The Missing Methodology

The growing recognition that evidence use is influenced by social, cultural, behavioural, and institutional factors has stimulated the development of numerous frameworks across knowledge translation, implementation science, science communication, behaviour change, and participatory

`

research. These approaches have advanced understanding of how evidence is communicated, interpreted, implemented, and evaluated, while highlighting the importance of context, stakeholder engagement, and co-production in strengthening evidence-informed decision-making (Best et al., 2010b; Ward et al., 2009).

Similarly, the growing literature on narrative communication and storytelling has demonstrated that stories can improve comprehension, emotional engagement, trust, recall, and motivation by presenting scientific information in forms that are personally meaningful and culturally resonant (Dahlstrom, 2014) Indigenous and participatory knowledge systems further communication demonstrate that storytelling is not merely a tool but a legitimate way of generating, sharing, and validating knowledge through dialogue, collective interpretation, and lived experience (Chilisa et al., 2016a)

Despite these advances, important methodological gaps remain. Existing dissemination and knowledge translation frameworks generally describe what should be communicated and to whom, while narrative communication frameworks explain why stories can influence audiences. Behaviour change theories, in turn, explain how attitudes and behaviours may change following exposure to information. However, these bodies of work have largely evolved in parallel, providing limited guidance on how scientific evidence can be systematically transformed into culturally grounded stories while maintaining scientific fidelity and supporting measurable evidence use.

Existing frameworks make important contributions, but no single approach integrates evidence synthesis, evidence translation, participatory story co-creation, dissemination, behaviour change, and evaluation into a coherent methodology for evidence use. Consequently, researchers, evidence synthesis organisations, and implementation practitioners lack a systematic framework that connects these components into a unified process. This gap is particularly significant as scientific evidence increasingly competes with misinformation, declining trust in institutions, and rapidly evolving communication environments. To address this challenge, this paper introduces *The Comings of the Two Rivers*, the conceptual foundation of the Tori Dey methodology for evidence uses. Building on the convergence of the River of Science and the River of Stories, the framework integrates four complementary components; the Tori Dey Kompas, the Seven Steps of Tori Dey, the Evidence into Stories (EtS) Framework, and the Knowledge–Intention–Self-efficacy–

`

Behaviour (KISB) pathway, to provide a structured methodology for translating scientific evidence into culturally meaningful stories that strengthen evidence understanding, engagement, and use. Thus, this paper introduces *The Comings of the Two Rivers* as a methodological framework for promoting evidence use through storytelling.

2. Rethinking Evidence Dissemination: Towards an Integrated Framework for Evidence Use

2.1. Evidence dissemination has evolved but evidence use remains limited

Over the past three decades, the field of evidence-informed decision-making has expanded considerably through advances in evidence synthesis, implementation science, and knowledge translation. Organizations such as Cochrane, the Campbell Collaboration, the JBI, The Wellcome Trust, ESIC, Digital Evidence Synthesis Tool INnovation for Yielding Improvements in Climate & Health. DESTINY, METIUS, SOLACE AI), The Jacobs Foundation, and the WHO have invested heavily in producing systematic reviews, evidence syntheses, clinical guidelines, evidence briefs, and implementation resources that improve the accessibility and quality of scientific evidence. Parallel developments in implementation science have produced sophisticated frameworks that seek to understand why evidence succeeds or fails to influence policy and practice. These advances have substantially strengthened the global evidence ecosystem and transformed the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge.

Despite this progress, the translation of evidence into routine practice remains inconsistent. Producing and disseminating evidence does not necessarily lead to evidence-informed decisions. Evidence use is influenced by institutional capacity, timing, political priorities, trust, organisational culture, relationships between researchers and decision-makers, and the ways in which evidence is communicated and interpreted (Grimshaw et al., 2012; Lavis et al., 2003).

Current evidence ecosystems excel at producing and disseminating evidence but lack a methodology for transforming evidence into culturally meaningful, behaviourally effective, and community-owned knowledge. We propose *The Comings of the Two Rivers* as an integrated methodological framework that bridges evidence synthesis, participatory storytelling, behaviour change science, implementation, and reciprocal learning.

2.2. Existing dissemination frameworks are necessary but not sufficient

`

Knowledge Translation (KT) and implementation science have developed frameworks such as the Knowledge-to-Action Framework, Promoting Action on Research Implementation in Health Services (PARIHS), Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) and Reach, Effectiveness Adoption, Implementation and Maintenance (RE-AIM) to explain how evidence moves into practice (Damschroder et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2006; Harvey & Kitson, 2016). The Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF) synthesises constructs from multiple behavioural theories to identify determinants of behaviour and guide intervention design (Atkins et al., 2017).Likewise, Abraham and Michie's Behaviour Change Technique Taxonomy standardises the active ingredients of behaviour change interventions, improving intervention specification and replication (Abraham & Michie, 2008). These frameworks have transformed implementation science but provide comparatively limited guidance on how scientific evidence should be transformed into culturally meaningful stories.

2.3. Storytelling has emerged as a promising knowledge translation strategy

Storytelling is increasingly recognised as an effective knowledge translation strategy because it translates complex evidence into engaging narratives that improve understanding, emotional engagement and recall (Brooks et al., 2022). Brooks proposed storytelling as a theory-informed knowledge translation intervention, while (Archibald et al., 2018) demonstrate how arts-based storytelling can preserve scientific accuracy while making evidence accessible to parents through *My Asthma Diary*. Together these studies demonstrate that storytelling is more than communication as it can facilitate evidence engagement. However, storytelling is still largely treated as an intervention rather than a comprehensive methodology linking evidence synthesis, dissemination, behaviour change and evaluation.

2.4. Behaviour change requires more than information transfer

Behavioural science explains why dissemination alone rarely changes practice. According to Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, intentions are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, which together predict behavior. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory similarly identifies self-efficacy and observational learning as central mechanisms of behaviour change (Bandura, 2004). The TDF further highlights that knowledge, beliefs, emotions, social influences and environmental context interact to determine behaviour (Atkins et al., 2017). Stories

`

can influence many of these determinants simultaneously, yet existing behavioural frameworks do not explain how evidence synthesis systematically generates behaviourally informed stories.

2.5. Indigenous knowledge systems challenge linear dissemination

Indigenous and African studies argues that knowledge is relational and co-created rather than transmitted unidirectionally where some studies advocates recognising multiple epistemologies and reconnecting researchers with communities. Aboderin et al. (2023) similarly argue for transformative research collaborations that rebalance global knowledge production rather than merely improving procedural equity. While Wung et al (2026) advocate for the spirit of ubuntu within the educational system and learners social emotional learning (SEL). These perspectives suggest that evidence becomes influential through dialogue, participation and cultural interpretation rather than one-way dissemination.

2.6. Towards an integrated methodology for evidence use

Taken together, knowledge translation, implementation science, storytelling research, behaviour change theory and Indigenous methodologies each explain different parts of the pathway from evidence generation to evidence use. However, these traditions have largely evolved independently. Consequently, there remains no integrated methodology that systematically connects evidence synthesis, participatory story development, dissemination, behaviour change and evaluation within a single evidence-use framework. As summarised in Table 1, existing approaches provide valuable but partial explanations of evidence use, with each framework addressing specific dimensions of the evidence-to-action pathway while leaving important gaps in integration. The Comings of the Two Rivers addresses this gap by integrating the River of Science and the River of Stories into a coherent methodology that translates scientific evidence into culturally meaningful narratives while preserving scientific integrity and promoting sustained evidence use.

Tori Dey is a participatory methodology that transforms synthesized evidence into culturally grounded narratives through community co-creation, grounded in the ubuntu philosophy, activates evidence-informed behaviour through established behavioural mechanisms, and generates community experience that feeds back into future evidence synthesis (Okwen et al., 2024)

`

Table 1: Conceptual approaches to evidence generation and use: A comparison of existing frameworks and the proposed Tori Dey Framework

Pillar	Question	Representative literature	Limitation
Evidence synthesis & Knowledge Translation	How is evidence moved into practice?	Lavis, Graham (KTA), PARIHS, RE-AIM	Treats evidence largely as a finished product to be communicated.
Storytelling & arts-based Knowledge Translation	How can evidence be communicated through stories?	Brooks, Houston, Archibald, Hartling	Develops narrative interventions but not a complete pathway from synthesis to implementation.
Behaviour change	Why do stories change behaviour?	Bandura, COM-B, Behaviour Change Wheel, TDF, BCT taxonomy, Ajzen	Explains mechanisms but not how evidence becomes culturally meaningful stories.
Indigenous knowledge	How should knowledge be created?	Chilisa, Nyamnjoh	Centres relational, community-based knowledge but not evidence synthesis.
African research transformation	Who owns knowledge?	Aboderin et al.	Highlights inequities in global knowledge production and calls for transformative collaboration.
Tori Dey	How do we connect all of these?	our contribution	Integrates the entire pathway. Applies use of AI.

3. The Comings of The Two Rivers

3.1. The River of Science

With new initiatives from the Wellcome Trust, Jacobs Foundation and the Gates Foundation all seek to create an interoperable repository of meta-analysis, access to evidence is more promising (DESTINY,2024; ESIC, 2023) Scientific knowledge has never been more abundant. Over recent decades, substantial global investments have strengthened the production, synthesis, and dissemination of research evidence through systematic reviews, evidence maps, clinical practice guidelines, health technology assessments, implementation research, and living evidence syntheses. Organisations such as Cochrane, the Campbell Collaboration, (JBI), and the (WHO) have collectively transformed how evidence is generated, critically appraised, and synthesized, creating a robust scientific foundation for evidence-informed decision-making across health, education, social policy, and international development.

Within *The Comings of the Two Rivers*, this accumulated body of scientific knowledge is conceptualised as the River of Science. It represents more than published research alone. Rather, it encompasses the full spectrum of systematically generated evidence, including systematic reviews, primary studies, implementation evidence, programme evaluations, administrative data,

`

policy analyses, and other forms of rigorously produced knowledge. The River of Science is characterised by methodological transparency, reproducibility, critical appraisal, and continuous refinement through new evidence.

However, scientific evidence does not acquire influence simply because it exists. Evidence is often communicated through technical language, academic publications, and institutional channels (Lavis et al., 2003) Scientific evidence therefore provides the necessary foundation for decision-making but rarely, by itself, produces widespread evidence use.

Within the Tori Dey framework, the River of Science represents the source of scientific credibility. It ensures that stories are anchored in the best available evidence while preserving the rigour, transparency, and fidelity that underpin evidence-informed practice.

3.2. The River of Stories

If the River of Science represents the production of knowledge, the River of Stories represents how human societies make meaning from knowledge. Across cultures and throughout history, stories have served as fundamental mechanisms for transmitting experience, preserving collective memory, communicating values, and guiding behaviour. Long before the emergence of formal scientific institutions, communities used oral traditions, songs, theatre, poetry, proverbs, visual arts, and performance to explain the world, resolve conflicts, educate younger generations, and negotiate social change.

Within Indigenous and African knowledge systems, storytelling is not merely a communication technique but an epistemological practice through which knowledge is generated, validated, interpreted, and shared. Chilisa argues that Indigenous methodologies challenge the separation between researchers and communities by recognising knowledge as relational, contextual, and collectively constructed rather than passively transmitted (Chilisa et al., 2016b) Similarly, Aboderin and colleagues argue that transforming global knowledge systems requires approaches that reposition communities as active participants in knowledge production rather than passive recipients of externally generated evidence (Aboderin et al., 2023)

Contemporary research similarly demonstrates the value of storytelling within knowledge translation (Brooks et al., 2022). propose storytelling as a theory-informed knowledge translation intervention capable of increasing engagement, emotional resonance, and behaviour change, while

`

(Archibald et al., 2018) demonstrate that arts-based storytelling can faithfully communicate complex scientific evidence without sacrificing accuracy. Behavioural science further explains that stories facilitate learning by increasing identification, modelling desired behaviours, strengthening self-efficacy, and influencing intentions (Bandura, 2004).

Within Tori Dey, the River of Stories therefore represents the social life of evidence. It transforms abstract scientific findings into narratives that communities can understand, discuss, remember, question, and ultimately use.

3.3. The Convergence of the Two Rivers

The central proposition of *The Comings of the Two Rivers* is that scientific evidence and storytelling should not be viewed as competing approaches to knowledge but as complementary knowledge systems that become most powerful when they converge. Scientific evidence provides credibility, methodological rigour, and trustworthy knowledge. Stories provide meaning, cultural relevance, emotional engagement, and opportunities for dialogue. Individually, each river has limitations. Scientific evidence without meaningful translation often remains inaccessible to intended users, while stories without scientific grounding risk reinforcing misinformation, anecdote, or unsupported beliefs. Together, however, they create a new pathway for evidence use.

The convergence of these two rivers represents the point at which evidence is translated into culturally grounded narratives without compromising scientific fidelity. This convergence is not a process of simplifying evidence or replacing science with storytelling. Rather, it is a structured process of interpretation in which evidence synthesis, community knowledge, participatory co-creation, and behavioural science interact to produce stories that remain faithful to the evidence while becoming socially meaningful and actionable.

Unlike conventional dissemination models that position storytelling as the final stage of communication, *The Comings of the Two Rivers* conceptualises storytelling as the central mechanism through which evidence becomes understandable, trusted, and usable. The process is therefore cyclical rather than linear. Scientific evidence informs stories; stories stimulate dialogue, reflection, and evidence-informed behaviour; implementation generates new experiences; and those experiences contribute to future evidence generation and refinement. Evidence and stories continuously enrich one another.

`

This convergence also reflects a broader commitment to epistemological pluralism. Rather than privileging scientific knowledge over community knowledge or vice versa the framework recognises that effective evidence use depends upon respectful interaction between multiple ways of knowing. In this sense, *The Comings of the Two Rivers* is more than a dissemination framework; it is a methodology for integrating scientific evidence and human experience to promote evidence use. It provides the conceptual foundation upon which the Unified Tori Dey Framework, the Tori Dey Kompas, the Seven Steps, the Evidence into Stories Framework, and the KISB pathway are subsequently operationalised.

4. The Unified Tori Dey Methodology for Evidence Dissemination

The Comings of the Two Rivers is not a single storytelling framework but a reproducible methodology for evidence dissemination. Rather than viewing dissemination as the final stage of research, it conceptualizes dissemination as an interpretive process through which scientific evidence is transformed into culturally meaningful knowledge that communities can understand, discuss, trust, and apply. The Unified Tori Dey Framework integrates four complementary methodological layers into a single evidence dissemination pathway. Together these layers move from strategic planning, through evidence translation and participatory storytelling, to behaviour change and continuous evaluation. Rather than functioning independently, each layer informs the next, creating a cyclical system through which evidence continuously interacts with community experience to strengthen evidence use. This integration operationalizes the conceptual model presented in *The Comings of the Two Rivers* and provides a structured methodology that can be adapted across diverse evidence ecosystems.

4.1. Strategic Layer

Before evidence can be translated into stories, dissemination requires deliberate strategic planning. The Strategic Layer is operationalized through the Tori Dey Kompas, as represented in Figure 1. This is a navigational tool that guides researchers, storytellers, practitioners, and funders in selecting the most appropriate story according to the dissemination objective, intended audience, context, and available evidence. Much as a compass orients a traveller through unfamiliar terrain, the Kompas helps orient evidence dissemination by matching story form to communication need.

Rather than assuming that one story fits every audience, the Kompas recognises that different stakeholders require different narrative approaches. Process stories communicate implementation

`

experiences and methodological learning; narrative stories explain findings through human experience; impact stories demonstrate measurable change resulting from evidence-informed action; and creative stories employ artistic forms such as theatre, music, poetry, and visual expression to stimulate reflection and community dialogue. Story selection therefore becomes an intentional methodological decision rather than a creative afterthought, ensuring that dissemination remains aligned with both evidence and audience needs.



Figure 1: Tori Dey Kompas

4.2. Operational Layer: The Seven-Step Evidence Dissemination Cycle

The Operational Layer translates strategic decisions into participatory evidence dissemination through seven iterative steps. Together, these steps provide a structured workflow for transforming scientific evidence into culturally meaningful stories while ensuring community participation, scientific fidelity, and continuous learning. As presented in Figure 2, the steps are cyclical rather

`

than linear, allowing lessons generated during dissemination and evaluation to inform future evidence translation and story development.

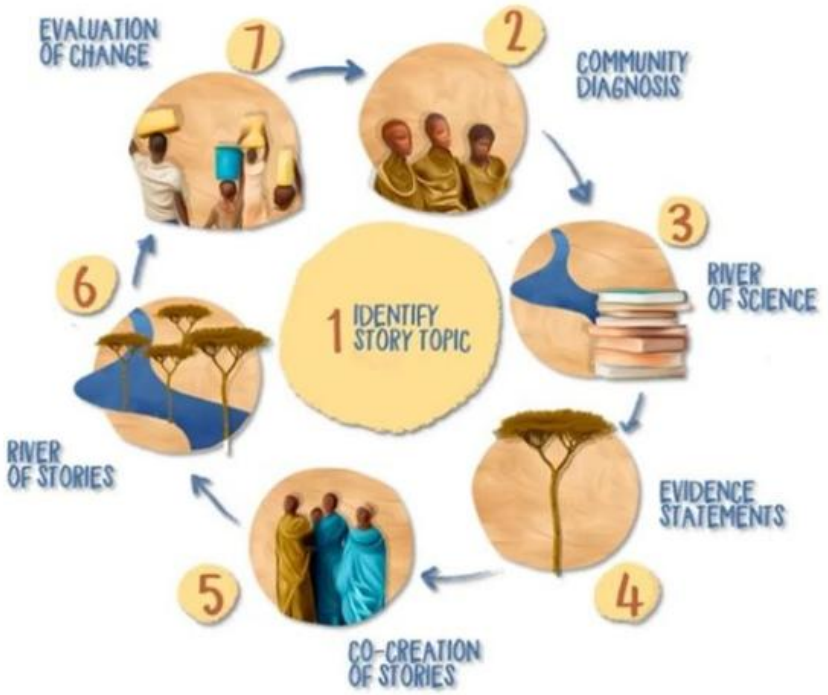


Figure 2: The Seven-Step Evidence Dissemination Cycle

Step 1 – Topic Identification: The process begins by identifying a priority topic based on policy needs, programme objectives, community priorities, or emerging evidence. This step defines the dissemination objective and establishes the scope of the storytelling intervention.

Step 2 – Community Diagnosis: A rapid assessment explores local knowledge, beliefs, cultural practices, information needs, and prevailing misconceptions surrounding the selected topic. This ensures that evidence dissemination responds to genuine community concerns and identifies opportunities where storytelling can address evidence gaps or misinformation.

Step 3 – Evidence Synthesis and Contextualisation: The best available evidence is identified, critically appraised, and synthesised using systematic reviews, guidelines, programme evaluations, or other credible sources. Key findings are then interpreted within the local cultural, linguistic, and implementation context to ensure relevance for intended audiences.

Step 4 – Story Co-creation: Researchers, storytellers, artists, community representatives, and other stakeholders collaboratively transform synthesised evidence into culturally appropriate

`

narratives. This participatory process combines scientific evidence with local knowledge and lived experience while preserving the integrity of the underlying evidence.

Step 5 – Story Dissemination: Stories are disseminated through contextually appropriate channels selected during the strategic planning stage. These may include community storytelling events, theatre, radio, podcasts, WhatsApp, social media, schools, community meetings, or other locally trusted communication platforms to maximise accessibility and engagement.

Step 6 – Monitoring and Evaluation: Dissemination is evaluated to determine its influence on knowledge, audience engagement, intentions, self-efficacy, behaviour, and evidence use. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are used to assess whether the stories achieved their intended dissemination objectives and to identify opportunities for improvement.

Step 7 – Learning and Adaptation: Findings from monitoring and evaluation are used to refine stories, strengthen dissemination strategies, and inform future evidence translation activities. This final step closes the learning cycle by feeding implementation experience back into subsequent rounds of evidence synthesis, story development, and dissemination, reinforcing the continuous interaction between the River of Science and the River of Stories.

4.3. Translation Layer: Evidence into Stories

The Translation Layer is operationalised through the EtS Framework as represented in Figure 3, the component that ensures stories remain scientifically faithful while becoming culturally meaningful. It provides the technical process through which evidence is transformed into narratives without becoming anecdote, oversimplification, or misinformation. Its logic follows a deliberate chain: Evidence → Evidence Statements → Behaviour Change Technique → Story Technical File → Story → Scientific Fidelity.

The process begins with the best available evidence, drawn from systematic reviews, guidelines, implementation evidence, programme data, or community diagnosis. This evidence is then translated into Evidence Statements: short, plain-language propositions that communicate what the evidence says in a way that non-specialist audiences can understand. These statements form the scientific spine of the story.

The next step is to identify the behaviour change technique the story will employ. A story may model an evidence-aligned behaviour, show consequences of action or inaction, challenge

`

misinformation, strengthen self-efficacy, or shift perceived social norms. Making this mechanism explicit ensures that the story is not only engaging but intentionally designed to support evidence use.

These decisions are documented in the Story Technical File, the methodological bridge between the River of Science and the River of Stories. The technical file records the evidence base, evidence statements, intended audience, behavioural objective, story type, characters, dissemination channel, and evaluation plan. It therefore creates an audit trail that allows the story to be reviewed, replicated, adapted, and evaluated.

The EtS Framework in Figure 3 protects scientific fidelity while enabling creativity. It ensures that stories are not merely culturally resonant, but also evidence-grounded, behaviourally purposeful, and methodologically transparent.

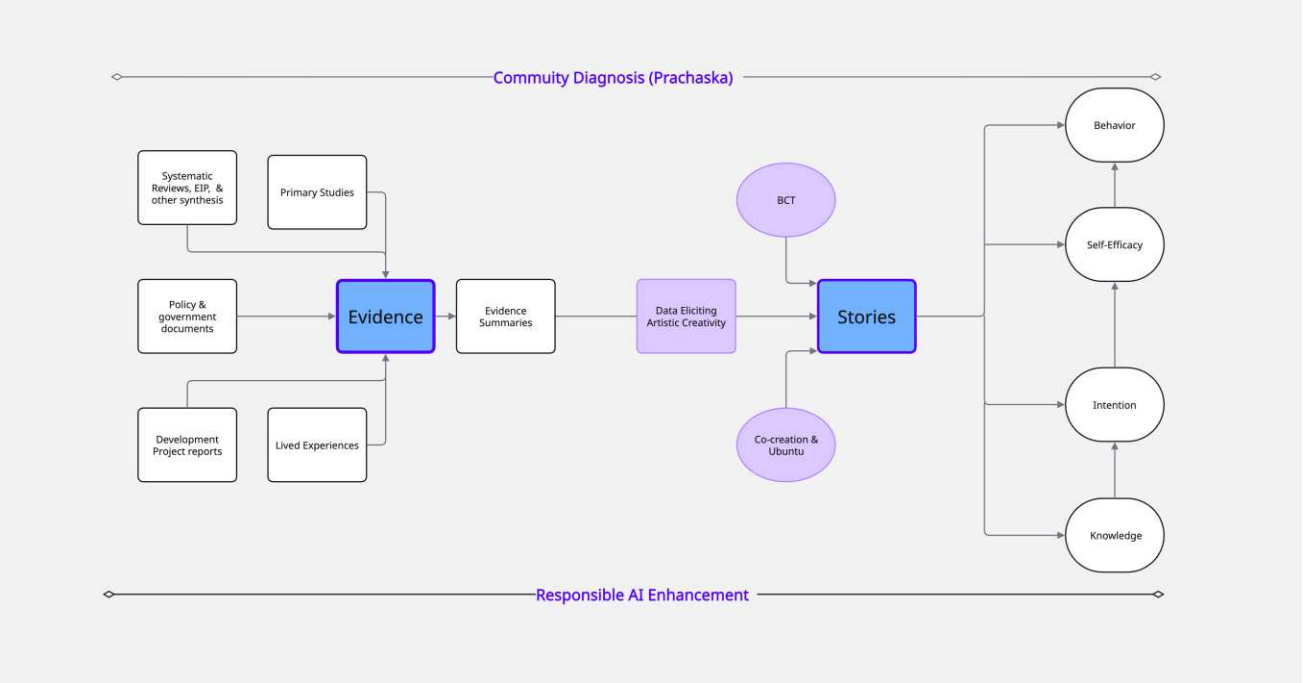


Figure 3: Evidence into Stories Framework

4.4. Behavioural Pathway: From Knowledge to Evidence Use

The Behavioural Pathway in Figure 4 explains how evidence-informed stories are expected to influence evidence use. Operationalised through the KISB pathway, it recognises that exposure to evidence rarely produces immediate behaviour change. Instead, stories influence a progressive

`

sequence of cognitive and behavioural processes that ultimately support the uptake and application of evidence.

The pathway begins with knowledge (see Figure 4), where audiences acquire and comprehend evidence presented through culturally meaningful stories. Knowledge alone, however, is insufficient to produce change. Individuals must first develop the intention to act, reflecting their willingness and readiness to adopt evidence-informed practices. This stage aligns closely with Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour, which identifies behavioural intention as the strongest predictor of subsequent action and emphasises the influence of attitudes, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioural control on decision-making (Ajzen, 1991).

The next stage is self-efficacy, defined as an individual's confidence in their ability to perform the desired behaviour. Drawing directly from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy is strengthened when stories present relatable characters, model achievable behaviours, demonstrate successful outcomes, and reinforce the belief that change is both possible and worthwhile (Bandura, 2004). By embedding these mechanisms within narrative, storytelling moves beyond information transfer to actively support behavioural capability and motivation.

The pathway culminates in behaviour, where individuals apply evidence in practice, leading ultimately to evidence use. Unlike conventional dissemination models that often assume knowledge automatically leads to action, the KISB pathway recognises evidence use as a progressive process requiring understanding, motivation, confidence, supportive social environments, and opportunities to act. Within the Unified Tori Dey Framework, KISB therefore provides the theoretical mechanism through which scientifically grounded stories are expected to influence sustained evidence-informed decision-making.

`

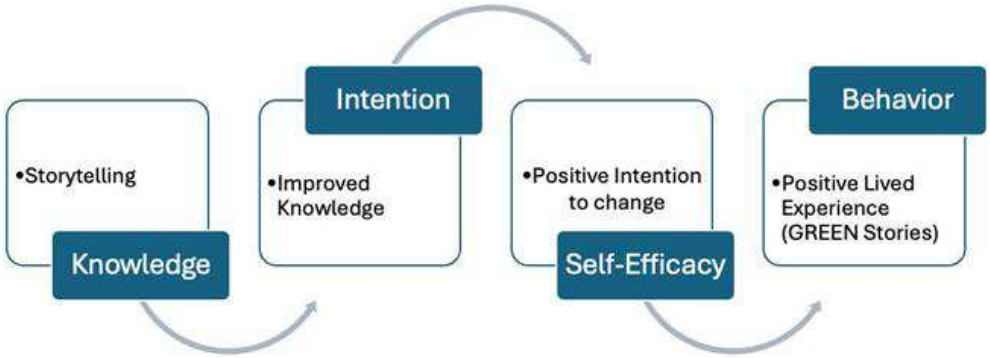


Figure 4: Knowledge, Intention, Self-Efficacy and Behaviour

4.5. Integration Layer: A Unified Methodology for Evidence Use

The strength of the Unified Tori Dey Framework lies not in its individual components but in the way they function as an interconnected methodological system for promoting evidence use. Rather than operating as separate frameworks, the Strategic, Operational, Translation, and Behavioural layers interact to create a continuous pathway through which scientific evidence is transformed into culturally meaningful stories that influence evidence-informed decision-making.

As seen in Figure 5, the process begins with the Strategic Layer, where the Tori Dey Kompas determines the dissemination objective, identifies the intended audience, and guides the selection of the most appropriate story type. These strategic decisions provide the direction for the dissemination process and ensure that storytelling is purposefully aligned with both the evidence and the communication context.

`

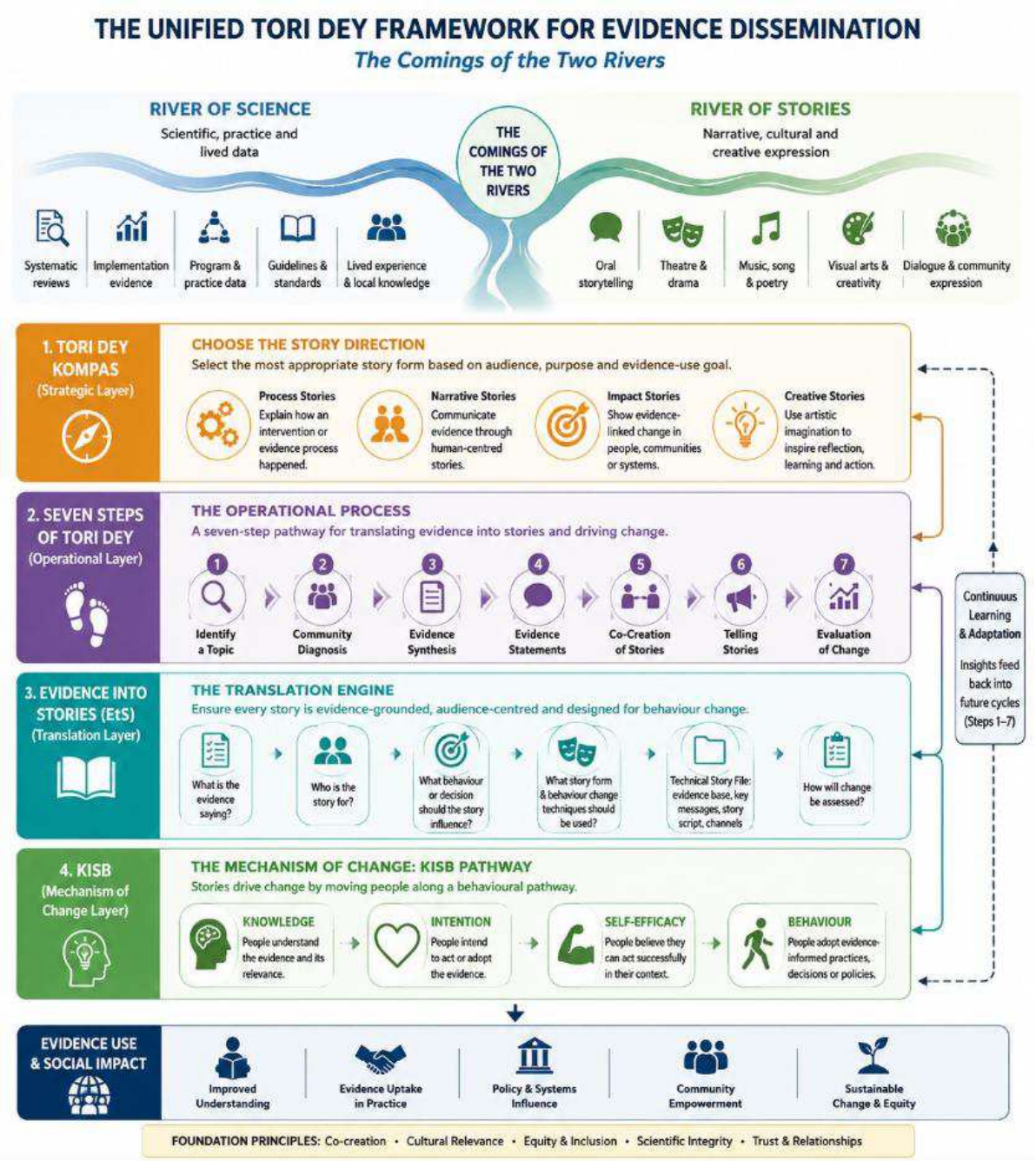


Figure 5: The unified Tori Dey Framework

The Operational Layer translates these strategic decisions into action through the Seven-Step Evidence Dissemination Cycle. Evidence is identified, contextualised, interpreted alongside community knowledge, co-created into stories with relevant stakeholders, disseminated through locally appropriate communication channels, and evaluated to determine its influence on audiences.

`

This layer provides the practical workflow that moves evidence from scientific knowledge into community engagement.

The Translation Layer safeguards the scientific integrity of this process. Through the Evidence into Stories Framework, research findings are distilled into evidence statements, linked to explicit behaviour change techniques, documented within the Story Technical File, and transformed into stories that remain faithful to the underlying evidence while becoming accessible, culturally relevant, and engaging. The Story Technical File serves as the methodological bridge between the River of Science and the River of Stories, providing transparency, reproducibility, and accountability throughout the translation process.

The Behavioural Pathway explains how these stories contribute to evidence use. Drawing on the Knowledge–Intention–Self-efficacy–Behaviour (KISB) pathway, stories strengthen understanding of evidence, foster intentions to adopt evidence-informed practices, increase confidence to act, and ultimately support sustained evidence-informed behaviours. Behaviour therefore emerges not simply from exposure to information but from a progressive process of comprehension, motivation, confidence, and action grounded in established behavioural theory.

Importantly, the framework does not end with dissemination. Monitoring and evaluation generate new implementation knowledge that informs future evidence synthesis, story development, and dissemination strategies. Community experiences, implementation successes, emerging challenges, and lessons learned re-enter the River of Science, where they contribute to future research, evidence synthesis, and refinement of dissemination approaches.

Rather than a linear dissemination model, the Unified Tori Dey Framework functions as a continuous learning cycle in which scientific evidence and community experience repeatedly enrich one another. In this sense, dissemination is not the final stage of research but an integral component of the broader evidence ecosystem, linking evidence generation, translation, implementation, and reciprocal learning within a single reproducible methodology for evidence use.

The Unified Tori Dey Framework transforms dissemination from an act of communication into a reproducible methodology for evidence translation, behaviour change, and reciprocal learning.

`

5. Illustrative Applications

The *Tori Dey* approach has gained international recognition as an innovative knowledge translation and evidence communication strategy. It has been presented and defined through engagement with diverse audiences at international conferences and workshops held in Entebbe - Uganda in 2023, Cape Town - South Africa in 2024, Nairobi – Kenya in 2025, and Limbe – Cameroon in 2024 – see performance extracts on Supplementary File (conferences). These engagements and dissemination platform provided opportunities to test the approach across different cultural and linguistic contexts, receive feedback from researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and community stakeholders, and strengthen its application for communicating complex research evidence in accessible and engaging ways. Below are illustrative cases that have been used to translate evidence.

5.1. Case Study 1 – Translating Evidence from a Campbell Systematic Review on Small-Group Reading Interventions into Community Narratives.

In the Biyem-assi locality, Tori Dey was applied to disseminate evidence from a Campbell systematic review on small-group reading intervention for primary school children experiencing reading difficulties. The evidence showed that structured small-group instruction improves reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension, particularly among learners at risk of being left behind. As a result, five stories were collaboratively developed and performed during 1 storytelling event. By applying five behaviour change techniques, the intervention stimulated dialogue among parents, teachers, and community members. Thereby, improving knowledge of early reading support children's literacy development. See Case study 1 in the supplementary file here.

5.2. Case Study 2 – From Evidence to Performance: Applying Tori Dey for Malaria Knowledge Translation in Lendi with evidence from Cochrane systematic review

In Lendi, Tori Dey was applied to disseminate evidence from Cochrane systematic review on malaria prevention and treatment. The evidence demonstrated the effectiveness of insecticide-treated bed nets, insect repellents, and prompt treatment in reducing malaria. Through participatory storytelling integrating music, dance, visual art, and performance, 10 stories were collaboratively developed and presented during 10 storytelling events by 3 storytellers who wrote and performed with participants. By applying 5 behaviour change techniques in each story, the intervention

`

improved community knowledge and promoted evidence-informed malaria prevention practices. See Case study 2 in the supplementary file here.

5.3. Case Study 3 – Translating Evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Teaching and Learning Toolkit on Menstrual Hygiene Management into Stories that Reduce Stigma.

In the Longkak neigbourhood, Tori Dey was applied to disseminate evidence on menstrual hygiene management and girls' educational participation. The evidence demonstrated that accurate menstrual health information, supportive school environments, and access to menstrual hygiene resources improve girls' attendance, confidence, and participation in education. Through participatory storytelling and painting, seven stories were written by five storytellers and presented during seven storytelling events in the presence of the EEF team. By applying ten behaviour change techniques, the intervention reduced stigma, stimulated community dialogue, and strengthened knowledge and support for menstrual hygiene management among girls, parents, and educators. See Case study 3 in the supplementary file here.

5.4. Case Study 4 – Using Tori Dey to Translate Evidence from a Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Systematic Review on Overweight and Obesity.

In Bonas (student's neighbourhood in Yaounde), centre region of Cameroon, Tori Dey was applied to disseminate evidence from a systematic review on intermittent fasting for overweight and obesity. The evidence showed that intermittent fasting achieved weight loss comparable to continuous calorie restriction while reducing body fat and improving insulin levels. To communicate these findings, twelve stories were collaboratively developed and performed during sixteen storytelling events. Using six behaviour change techniques, the intervention improved community knowledge and identified barriers influencing healthy dietary behaviours. See Case study 4 in the supplementary file here.

6. Discussion

As evidence ecosystems become increasingly sophisticated through AI-enabled synthesis, living evidence, and global infrastructure initiatives such as ESIC and DESTINY, the next frontier is no longer simply producing better evidence. It is ensuring that evidence becomes understandable, trusted, culturally meaningful, and actionable. We argue that The Comings of the Two Rivers

`

provides one possible methodology for bridging this final and perhaps most critical step in the evidence ecosystem. (DESTINY, 2024; ESIC, 2023)

6.1. Contribution to Evidence Use: From Dissemination to Evidence Activation

The principal contribution of *The Comings of the Two Rivers* is that it reframes evidence dissemination as a process of evidence activation and hence use. Conventional dissemination approaches have largely focused on improving access to research through publications, policy briefs, guidelines, evidence summaries, and digital communication. While these approaches remain essential, they frequently assume that once evidence is communicated, it will naturally be understood, trusted, and used (Oliver et al., 2014). This accessibility blind-spot usually excludes those who need evidence the most. The Unified Tori Dey Methodology challenges this assumption by recognising that evidence dissemination is not simply the transfer of scientific findings from experts to end users, but an interpretive and relational process through which evidence is contextualised, negotiated, and made meaningful within particular social and cultural settings.

Evidence dissemination is not simply the transfer of scientific findings from experts to end users, but an interpretive and relational process through which evidence is understood, contextualised and made meaningful within particular social and cultural settings.

The concept of evidence activation extends existing evidence-use scholarship by emphasising the transformation of evidence into forms that stimulate understanding, dialogue, confidence, and action. Rather than viewing dissemination as the endpoint of the evidence ecosystem, Tori Dey positions it as the mechanism through which evidence becomes socially meaningful and behaviourally actionable. In this sense, evidence is not merely delivered to intended users but activated through participatory storytelling, cultural interpretation, and community engagement. This perspective complements contemporary evidence ecosystems that increasingly prioritise evidence synthesis and implementation by addressing what may be considered the "last mile" of evidence use, the point at which scientifically robust evidence becomes trusted, relevant, and incorporated into everyday decision-making.

6.2. Contribution to Knowledge Translation: Extending Knowledge Translation Through Storytelling

`

The Unified Tori Dey Methodology complements and extends the field of KT by addressing a critical stage that has received comparatively limited methodological attention: the systematic transformation of scientific evidence into culturally meaningful stories. Knowledge Translation has made substantial contributions to evidence-informed decision-making by promoting the synthesis, dissemination, exchange, and ethical application of research evidence (Straus et al., 2013) Frameworks such as the Knowledge-to-Action cycle have demonstrated that successful implementation depends upon adapting evidence to local contexts, engaging stakeholders, and evaluating implementation outcomes. However, they provide comparatively limited guidance on how evidence should be translated into narratives that communities can readily understand, trust, and apply.

The Comings of the Two Rivers addresses this methodological gap by positioning storytelling not as an end product of dissemination, but as the central mechanism through which evidence is interpreted, contextualised, and activated for use. Building on emerging work in narrative knowledge translation (Archibald et al., 2018; Brooks et al., 2022 the framework integrates evidence synthesis, participatory story co-creation, behaviour change theory, and scientific fidelity into a single reproducible methodology. In doing so, it extends Knowledge Translation beyond the communication of evidence towards the co-production of evidence-informed meaning, thereby strengthening the capacity of KT to promote sustained evidence use across diverse cultural, linguistic, and implementation contexts.

6.3. Contribution to Behaviour Change: Why Stories Matter

Stories matter because they operationalize established behaviour change theories in ways that conventional dissemination products often cannot. As seen in recent studies on how digital misinformation spreads rapidly through social media and that pandemic preparedness requires culturally appropriate approaches including storytelling to counter infodemics. They specifically highlight storytelling and digital platforms as important strategies for addressing evidence hesitancy in Middle Africa (Penka et al., 2024).

The contribution of *The Comings of the Two Rivers* to behaviour change lies not in proposing a new behavioural theory, but in providing a practical methodology through which established behavioural theories can be operationalised within evidence dissemination. Conventional dissemination products such as reports, policy briefs, and evidence summaries primarily

`

communicate information, often assuming that increased knowledge will naturally lead to behaviour change. Behavioural science demonstrates that this assumption is rarely valid. Evidence-informed behaviour is shaped by multiple interacting factors, including intentions, self-efficacy, social norms, emotions, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 2004) Stories provide a mechanism for influencing these behavioural determinants simultaneously. By presenting relatable characters, modelling desired practices, illustrating consequences, and embedding culturally familiar experiences, stories strengthen understanding, increase confidence, reinforce positive social norms, and encourage reflection. The Evidence into Stories Framework further enhances this process by explicitly incorporating behaviour change techniques into story design, ensuring that narratives are intentionally developed to support evidence-informed action rather than simply communicate information (Abraham & Michie, 2008; Brooks et al., 2022).

6.4. Contribution to Indigenous Methodologies: African Epistemologies and Participatory Evaluation

The Comings of the Two Rivers contributes to Indigenous and participatory methodologies by recognising that evidence use is fundamentally a relational process rather than a one-way transfer of information. Consistent with African epistemologies, the framework views knowledge as something that is created, interpreted, and validated through dialogue, collective reflection, lived experience, and social relationships rather than transmitted solely through expert authority. This perspective aligns with Chilisa's Indigenous research methodologies, which advocate recognising multiple knowledge systems and repositioning communities as active knowledge holders and co-creators rather than passive recipients of research (Chilisa, 2012). It also resonates with Nyamnjoh's (2024) concept of convivial scholarship and with calls by Aboderin et al. for transformative research collaborations that rebalance global knowledge production through equitable participation and shared ownership (Aboderin et al., 2023)

These principles are operationalised through the participatory design of Tori Dey stories and the framework's emphasis on continuous learning. Community diagnosis, story co-creation, dissemination, and participatory evaluation ensure that local knowledge informs every stage of the evidence dissemination process. Evaluation is therefore not simply an assessment of communication effectiveness but a mechanism through which community experiences, interpretations, and implementation lessons are fed back into future evidence synthesis and story

`

development. By creating this reciprocal relationship between scientific evidence and community knowledge, *The Comings of the Two Rivers* extends participatory evaluation beyond stakeholder engagement towards a dynamic model of co-learning and evidence use that is grounded in African ways of knowing while remaining globally applicable.

6.5. Implications for Global Evidence Ecosystems

The emergence of global initiatives such as the ESIC, DESTINY, and the Global Collective Initiative to Strengthen Evidence Synthesis and Use signal an important shift in the evidence ecosystem. Increasing attention is being directed towards accelerating evidence synthesis, improving interoperability, developing AI-enabled evidence infrastructures, and strengthening evidence-informed decision-making across sectors. ESIC, for example, describes itself as a global "community of communities" committed to improving lives through evidence synthesis by connecting producers, intermediaries, users, funders, and international organisations within a shared evidence infrastructure. Likewise, DESTINY is developing a new generation of AI-powered digital evidence synthesis tools designed to produce more timely, rigorous, and policy-relevant living evidence for urgent global challenges (eBASE Africa, 2026 .

These initiatives represent major advances in strengthening the production and availability of evidence. However, the effectiveness of increasingly sophisticated evidence infrastructures will ultimately depend on whether evidence can also become understandable, trusted, culturally meaningful, and actionable. We argue that *The Comings of the Two Rivers* complements these investments by addressing this critical "last-mile" challenge through a reproducible methodology for evidence activation.

For researchers and systematic reviewers, the framework encourages dissemination planning from the earliest stages of evidence synthesis rather than treating communication as an activity that follows publication. Organisations such as Cochrane, the Campbell Collaboration, and the JBI could use the methodology to translate systematic review findings into culturally appropriate stories while preserving scientific fidelity. For the WHO and governments, the framework offers a practical approach for transforming guidelines and recommendations into locally relevant narratives that can strengthen public engagement, support policy implementation, and respond rapidly to misinformation.

`

The implications are equally significant for emerging evidence infrastructure initiatives. ESIC's collective-impact approach seeks to improve how evidence is produced, connected, and shared globally, while DESTINY is transforming how evidence is synthesised using AI-enabled technologies. Tori Dey contributes the complementary methodological capability required to translate these increasingly sophisticated evidence products into formats that communities can understand, discuss, and use. Similarly, organisations such as METIUS could employ the framework to evaluate evidence-use pathways and dissemination effectiveness, while the Jacobs Foundation's Synthesis-Ready Evidence Repository and the wider Global Collective Initiative to Strengthen Evidence Synthesis and Use provide important opportunities to integrate evidence storytelling alongside synthesis-ready datasets and meta-analytic resources, thereby strengthening the connection between evidence generation, synthesis, translation, and use.

The growing challenge of misinformation further strengthens the need for evidence activation approaches such as Tori Dey. Arguing that, countering health misinformation requires culturally relevant communication delivered through the same digital channels where misinformation spreads. Short evidence-informed audio stories, WhatsApp voice notes, podcasts, and social media narratives therefore offer practical mechanisms for enabling scientific evidence to compete effectively within contemporary information ecosystems (Penka et al., 2024).

Finally, the framework has important implications for research funders. Increasingly, funders recognise that generating evidence alone is insufficient to achieve societal impact. Integrating structured evidence activation methodologies such as Tori Dey within research programmes would encourage projects to budget for evidence translation, participatory story co-creation, dissemination, and evaluation from project inception. In doing so, investments in evidence synthesis could be matched by equally robust investments in evidence use, strengthening the return on research investments while promoting more equitable, participatory, and sustainable evidence ecosystems.

6.6. Future Research

The Unified Tori Dey Methodology provides a foundation for a new programme of research on evidence activation. Future studies should focus on validating the framework across diverse cultural, linguistic, and policy settings, including randomized controlled trials and implementation studies comparing Tori Dey with conventional dissemination approaches in terms of knowledge

`

acquisition, evidence use, behavioural outcomes, and implementation effectiveness. Further research is also needed to refine methods for assessing scientific fidelity, story quality, and participatory evaluation across different contexts.

Emerging digital evidence ecosystems offer additional opportunities for methodological innovation. AI-enabled evidence synthesis initiatives such as DESTINY have the potential to automate elements of evidence identification, evidence statement generation, and story adaptation while preserving human oversight and community co-creation. Likewise, digital storytelling formats including short audio narratives, podcasts, WhatsApp voice notes, and social media storytelling should be evaluated as scalable approaches for strengthening evidence engagement and countering misinformation within rapidly evolving information environments (Penka et al., 2024). Collectively, these research directions would strengthen the evidence base for Tori Dey while advancing the broader science of evidence use within increasingly interconnected global evidence ecosystems.

7. Conclusion

The challenge is no longer producing evidence. It is enabling evidence to become meaningful enough to be used.

The past three decades have witnessed unprecedented progress in the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of scientific evidence. Investments by organisations such as Cochrane, the Campbell Collaboration, the Joanna Briggs Institute, the World Health Organization, and emerging global evidence initiatives have substantially strengthened the quality, accessibility, and coordination of evidence available to decision-makers. Yet the persistent gap between evidence production and evidence use demonstrates that generating better evidence alone is insufficient to improve health, education, and social outcomes. Evidence does not change lives simply because it exists; it changes lives when it becomes understandable, trusted, culturally meaningful, and actionable.

This paper has argued that *The Comings of the Two Rivers* provides a conceptual and methodological response to this challenge. By recognising the River of Science and the River of Stories as complementary knowledge systems, the framework reframes evidence dissemination as an interpretive, relational, and participatory process rather than a one-way transfer of information. The Unified Tori Dey Methodology operationalises this philosophy by integrating strategic story

`

selection, participatory evidence dissemination, evidence translation, behaviour change theory, and continuous evaluation into a single reproducible pathway for promoting evidence use. In doing so, it extends existing work in knowledge translation, implementation science, storytelling, and Indigenous methodologies while preserving scientific fidelity and strengthening community ownership of evidence.

Importantly, the framework is not proposed as an alternative to contemporary evidence ecosystems but as a complementary methodology that strengthens their societal impact. As initiatives such as ESIC, DESTINY, and global investments in living evidence and AI-enabled evidence synthesis continue to accelerate the production and accessibility of high-quality evidence, equal attention must be given to how that evidence is translated into forms that people can understand, trust, and use. We argue that this represents the next frontier of evidence-informed decision-making.

Ultimately, *The Comings of the Two Rivers* invites a shift in perspective from viewing dissemination as the final stage of research to recognising it as the mechanism through which evidence is activated within communities. By bridging scientific rigour with human experience, the framework offers a reproducible methodology for transforming evidence into action and for strengthening the reciprocal relationship between research, communities, and policy within an evolving global evidence ecosystem.

7.1. Limitations of the Concept

While The Comings of the Two Rivers offers an integrated methodology for transforming scientific evidence into culturally meaningful stories for evidence use, several conceptual, methodological, and practical limitations warrant careful consideration. These limitations do not undermine the framework's contribution but rather clarify the boundary conditions under which it is most likely to succeed, and they identify priorities for the empirical validation. As a conceptual framework, the current manuscript does not provide experimental evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of the approach in changing behaviours, improving decision-making, or increasing evidence uptake. Rather, it proposes a theoretically grounded and practice-informed model that requires systematic evaluation across diverse contexts to establish its effectiveness, feasibility, and sustainability.

7.1.1. Resource, Skill, and Scalability Constraints

`

The Seven-Step Evidence Dissemination Cycle is participatory and labour-intensive by design: it requires researchers, professional storytellers, artists, and community representatives to engage in iterative co-creation, performance, and evaluation process for each topic addressed. This represents a strength in terms of contextual relevance, ownership, and depth of engagement but also creates potential constraints related to scale, cost, and implementation capacity. The framework assumes access to diverse expertise, including evidence synthesis skills, facilitation capacity, cultural interpretation, storytelling competencies, and community engagement approaches, which may not be equally available across settings, particularly in low-resource or crisis-affected contexts.

The framework does not yet specify the cost, time, or personnel required to move from a single co-created story, such as those described in the illustrative case examples, to evidence dissemination across multiple sectors, languages, and countries. Future implementation research will be needed to determine the resources required for different levels of adoption and whether adaptations can maintain the core principles of the framework while reducing operational demands. Nor does it address whether the quality of co-creation can be maintained as the methodology is adapted by teams without direct access to skilled storytellers, or whether digital and AI-assisted adaptation (proposed in Section 6.6) can substitute for in-person, relational story development without weakening the participatory and relational qualities that distinguish Tori Dey from conventional knowledge translation approaches. This raises important questions regarding implementation fidelity: specifically, which elements of the framework represent essential mechanisms of change, and which components can be modified without compromising its intended purpose.

Until piloted and evaluated at scale, the framework's practical feasibility for large, multi-country programmes remains uncertain. Future studies should therefore examine issues of cost-effectiveness, scalability, adaptation across cultural and linguistic contexts, and the sustainability of storytelling-based evidence dissemination approaches over time.

7.1.2. *Risk of Reinforcing Existing Power Asymmetries*

The framework explicitly seeks to reposition communities as co-creators rather than passive recipients of evidence, drawing on Indigenous, participatory, and community-centered methodologies. Realizing this aspiration in practice, however, depends on how power is distributed

`

during evidence selection, story co-creation, dissemination, and evaluation processes, none of which is guaranteed simply by adopting a participatory design.

Researchers, institutions, and funders may continue to retain influence over which evidence is prioritized for translation, which behavioral objectives stories are designed to support, and how the resulting narratives are interpreted and used. Without explicit safeguards, there is a risk that participatory storytelling becomes a more persuasive vehicle for externally determined messages rather than a genuine process of negotiating whose knowledge counts, whose experiences are represented, and whose priorities shape the evidence agenda. This limitation is particularly important in contexts involving Indigenous communities, marginalized populations, and crisis-affected groups, where historical inequalities and institutional power differences may influence participation and knowledge recognition.

The framework would therefore benefit from clearer mechanisms to ensure that communities influence not only how evidence is communicated but also which evidence is selected for translation, how stories are validated, and how outcomes are assessed. Future applications should incorporate explicit accountability mechanisms, including shared decision-making structures, community ownership of narratives, ethical guidance for storytelling practices, and approaches for recognizing diverse knowledge systems alongside scientific evidence.

Finally, because the framework is grounded in the integration of evidence synthesis, storytelling, and participatory engagement, evaluating its effectiveness presents methodological challenges. Conventional outcome measures may not fully capture changes in understanding, trust, social learning, collective action, or shifts in evidence use. Future research should therefore explore mixed-methods evaluation approaches capable of assessing both measurable outcomes and the relational, cultural, and contextual processes through which storytelling influences evidence uptake.

Ethical consideration

Ethical approval was sought from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of eBASE Africa, which granted a waiver of ethical approval due to the nature of the study. As the study did not involve direct interaction with human participants or collection of identifiable personal data, the requirement for informed consent was waived. All data used were obtained from secondary

`

sources (previous works conducted by eBASE Africa) and handled in accordance with relevant ethical standards.

Conflict of Interest: All authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgement: The authors are grateful to the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) for supporting previous work related to storytelling, and to eBASE Africa for providing a conducive workspace for the development of this manuscript. The authors further acknowledge the support from Cochrane, Campbell Collaboration and Education Endowment Foundation for giving us free access to their repository and also for mentorship and providing us with capacity building on evidence synthesis. We express our gratitude to the Joanna Briggs Institute, the Cameroon French Institute and Grants Challenge Canada for funding early Tori Dey projects.

Authors Contribution:

PMO: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Project administration, **NL, GANO, EAW, JM, ALN, NDM, OCF, FMC,** and **BAGY;** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Validation and Project administration, **EAN;** Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Validation Supervision, Project administration, **BC;** Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Project administration.

Funding Statement: The authors declare that no specific funding was received for this study.

Data Availability: The technical materials underpinning the development of the *Tori Dey* narratives are provided as supplementary resources. The supplementary files contain complete case studies on the Lendi*, Biyem-assi, Bonas and Longkak* implementation projects developed from the evidence synthesis. The file also includes the evidence extraction, adaptation processes, and narrative development frameworks. These materials are intended to support researchers and practitioners seeking to adapt or replicate the *Tori Dey* approach in other settings and topic areas. All supporting documents for the case studies can be found here.

Referencing.

`

Aboderin, I., Fuh, D., Gebremariam, E. B., Segalo, P., Aboderin, I., Fuh, D., Gebremariam, E. B., & Segalo, P. (2023). Beyond 'equitable partnerships': the imperative of transformative research collaborations with Africa. *Global Social Challenges Journal*, *2*(2), 212–228. https://doi.org/10.1332/27523349Y2023D000000002

Abraham, C., & Michie, S. (2008). A Taxonomy of Behavior Change Techniques Used in Interventions. *Health Psychology*, *27*(3), 379–387. https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-6133.27.3.379

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *50*(2), 179–211. https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T

Archibald, M. M., Hartling, L., Ali, S., Caine, V., & Scott, S. D. (2018). Developing "My Asthma Diary": a process exemplar of a patient-driven arts-based knowledge translation tool. *BMC Pediatrics 2018 18:1*, *18*(1), 186-. https://doi.org/10.1186/S12887-018-1155-2

Atkins, L., Francis, J., Islam, R., O'Connor, D., Patey, A., Ivers, N., Foy, R., Duncan, E. M., Colquhoun, H., Grimshaw, J. M., Lawton, R., & Michie, S. (2017). A guide to using the Theoretical Domains Framework of behaviour change to investigate implementation problems. *Implementation Science 2017 12:1*, *12*(1), 77-. https://doi.org/10.1186/S13012-017-0605-9

Bandura, A. (2004). Health Promotion by Social Cognitive Means. *Health Education & Behavior*, *31*(2), 143–164. https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198104263660

Best, A., Holmes, B., Best, A., & Holmes, B. (2010a). Systems thinking, knowledge and action: towards better models and methods. *Evidence & Policy*, *6*(2), 145–159. https://doi.org/10.1332/174426410X502284

Best, A., Holmes, B., Best, A., & Holmes, B. (2010b). Systems thinking, knowledge and action: towards better models and methods. *Evidence & Policy*, *6*(2), 145–159. https://doi.org/10.1332/174426410X502284

Brooks, S. P., Zimmermann, G. L., Lang, M., Scott, S. D., Thomson, D., Wilkes, G., & Hartling, L. (2022). A framework to guide storytelling as a knowledge translation intervention for health-promoting behaviour change. *Implementation Science Communications 2022 3:1*, *3*(1), 35-. https://doi.org/10.1186/S43058-022-00282-6

Chilisa, B., Major, T. E., Gaotlhobogwe, M., & Mokgolodi, H. (2016a). Decolonizing and indigenizing evaluation practice in Africa: Toward African relational evaluation approaches. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, *30*(3), 313–328. https://doi.org/10.3138/CJPE.30.3.05

Chilisa, B., Major, T. E., Gaotlhobogwe, M., & Mokgolodi, H. (2016b). Decolonizing and indigenizing evaluation practice in Africa: Toward African relational evaluation approaches.

`

Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, *30*(3), 313–328. https://doi.org/10.3138/CJPE.30.3.05

Dahlstrom, M. F. (2014). Using narratives and storytelling to communicate science with nonexpert audiences. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, *111*(supplement_4), 13614–13620. https://doi.org/10.1073/PNAS.1320645111;ISSUE:ISSUE:DOI

Damschroder, L. J., Aron, D. C., Keith, R. E., Kirsh, S. R., Alexander, J. A., & Lowery, J. C. (2009). Fostering implementation of health services research findings into practice: A consolidated framework for advancing implementation science. *Implementation Science*, *4*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-4-50

DESTINY: Digital Evidence Synthesis Tool Innovation Yielding Improvements in Climate & Health. (2024). Retrieved June 30, 2026, from https://destiny-evidence.github.io/website/

eBASE Africa Joins Global Collective Initiative to Strengthen Evidence Synthesis and Use in Education. (2026.). Retrieved June 30, 2026, from https://ebaseafrica.org/news/ebase-africa-joins-global-collective-initiative-to

Education funders and partners unite to strengthen global evidence use to accelerate learning - Jacobs Foundation. (2025.). Retrieved June 30, 2026, from https://jacobsfoundation.org/education-funders-and-partners-unite-to-strengthen-global-evidence-use-to-accelerate-learning/

Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative | News | Wellcome. (2023). Retrieved June 30, 2026, from https://wellcome.org/insights/articles/evidence-synthesis-infrastructure-collaborative

Graham, I. D., Logan, J., Harrison, M. B., Straus, S. E., Tetroe, J., Caswell, W., & Robinson, N. (2006). Lost in knowledge translation: time for a map? *The Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, *26*(1), 13–24. https://doi.org/10.1002/chp.47

Grimshaw, J. M., Eccles, M. P., Lavis, J. N., Hill, S. J., & Squires, J. E. (2012). Knowledge translation of research findings. *Implementation Science 2012 7:1*, *7*(1), 50-. https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-7-50

Harvey, G., & Kitson, A. (2016). PARIHS revisited: from heuristic to integrated framework for the successful implementation of knowledge into practice. *Implementation Science 2016 11:1*, *11*(1), 33-. https://doi.org/10.1186/S13012-016-0398-2

Lavis, J. N., Robertson, D., Woodside, J. M., McLeod, C. B., & Abelson, J. (2003). How can research organizations more effectively transfer research knowledge to decision makers? *Milbank Quarterly*, *81*(2), 221–248. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.T01-1-00052;Wgroup:String:Publication

`

Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2024). Incompleteness as a framework for convivial scholarship and practice in healing. *Acta Academica: Critical Views on Society, Culture and Politics, 56*(1), 121–147. https://doi.org/10.38140/aa.v56i1.8410

Okwen, P., Nange, L., and Ayafor, L. (2024). The Comings of the Two Rivers: Storytelling Science Data. In E. Participatival (Ed.). Argentina: Research Program on Employment, Environment and Society and Institute for Development Evaluation. Retrieved June 30, 2026, from https://evalparticipativa.net/en/2024/02/13/the-comings-of-the-two-rivers-storytelling-science-data/?utm_

Oliver, K., Innvar, S., Lorenc, T., Woodman, J., & Thomas, J. (2014). A systematic review of barriers to and facilitators of the use of evidence by policymakers. *BMC Health Services Research 2014 14:1*, *14*(1), 2-. https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6963-14-2

Penka, M. B., Tangang, A., Alang Wung, E., Tata Kelese, M., & Okwen, P. (2024). Addressing infodemic for pandemic preparedness in the digital age: a focus on Middle Africa. *Frontiers in Public Health*, *12*, 1275702. https://doi.org/10.3389/FPUBH.2024.1275702/TEXT

Straus, S. E., Tetroe, J., & Graham, I. D. (2013). Knowledge Translation in Health Care: Moving from Evidence to Practice: Second Edition. *Knowledge Translation in Health Care: Moving from Evidence to Practice: Second Edition*, 1–406. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118413555 ;Website:Website:Pericles;Ispurchasable:Boolean: True;Page:String:Book

Ward, V., House, A., & Hamer, S. (2009). Developing a framework for transferring knowledge into action: A thematic analysis of the literature. *Journal of Health Services Research and Policy*, *14*(3), 156–164. https://doi.org/10.1258/JHSRP.2009.008120;WEBSITE:WEBSITE:SAGE;WGROUP:STRING:PUBLICATION

White, H. (2019). The twenty-first century experimenting society: the four waves of the evidence revolution. *Palgrave Communications 2019 5:1*, *5*(1), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-019-0253-6

Wung, E. A., Okwen, C. F., Tangang, T. A., Hanny, P. M. R., & Okwen, P. (2026). Education in conflict-affected areas: leveraging the ubuntu pedagogy as a strategy to improve social and emotional learning of learners. *Strategic Business Research*, *2*(1), 100077. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbr.2026.100077

`