

## **Progress report on developing national institutional capacity for evidence-informed policy-making for health**

### **Introduction**

1. Evidence-informed policy-making (EIPM) is essential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and universal health coverage, and its importance is emphasized in WHO's global strategies, including the Thirteenth and Fourteenth General Programmes of Work. Using high-quality evidence for timely decision-making is also crucial to enable effective and evidence-informed support for the strategic operational plan for the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2025–2028, and the three flagship initiatives.<sup>1</sup>

2. At its 66th session in October 2019, the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean adopted resolution [EM/RC66/R.5](#), endorsing the framework for action to improve national institutional capacity for the use of evidence in health policy-making in the Region.<sup>2</sup> The resolution requested the Regional Director to report on progress in implementing the framework to the Regional Committee at its 68th and 70th sessions, with a final report to the 72nd session.

### **Summary of progress made between 2020 and 2022**

3. Between 2020 and 2022, WHO achieved significant milestones in advancing EIPM across the Eastern Mediterranean Region. A regional action plan<sup>3</sup> for implementation of the framework was published in 2021, which outlined six key strategies – three focusing on Member States' responsibilities (enhancing demand, decision-making structures and resources) and three on WHO's support (Regional Office capacity-building, national capacity-building and establishing a regional network). Key achievements included a range of technical capacity-building activities, including three capacity-building workshops on the development and use of policy briefs to inform the policy-making process and the launch of a web-based training package for EIPM in April 2022 to enhance the use of evidence for decision-making for health in the Region. A regional Network of Institutions for Evidence and Data to Policy (NEDtP) was established in 2021 to promote intercountry collaboration and enhance regional and national capacity in the generation and use of evidence and data for policy-making. COVID-19-related initiatives included assessing national treatment guidelines for 10 countries, launching a regional vaccine-effectiveness study and jointly developing 15 case studies with 13 countries to share experiences and lessons learned. WHO also provided technical support to Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco and Somalia to establish knowledge management centres and evidence-to-policy units at the health ministries.

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic operational plan for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2025–2028. Regional Committee version October 2024. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2024 (EM/RC71/D-Rev.2; <https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/Strategic-operational-plan-eng.pdf?ua=1&ua=1>, accessed 8 August 2025).

<sup>2</sup> Framework for action to improve national institutional capacity for the use of evidence in health policy-making in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2019 (<https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/EMSID001E.pdf>, accessed 8 August 2025).

<sup>3</sup> Regional action plan for the implementation of the framework for action to improve national institutional capacity for the use of evidence in health policy-making in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (2020–2024). Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2021 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/352260>, accessed 8 August 2025). Licence: CC BYNC-SA 3.0 IGO

4. Progress in implementing the regional action plan was reviewed at an expert consultation meeting in February 2023, with participants from Member States, the three levels of WHO and global experts from the Region and beyond. Participants noted that the Eastern Mediterranean Region is particularly advanced in this area due to its systematic approach to enhancing and institutionalizing EIPM. Concerns were noted, however, about the fragmentation of knowledge and efforts, the need to ensure political commitment, lack of local data and evidence, the need for increased action at country level, and the need for timely evidence for decision-making in the short term. The consultation also noted the importance of considering national values and ethics, as well as addressing the wider ecosystem of external partners, to ensure the relevance and usefulness of tools developed.

5. This progress report highlights key activities and achievements since 2023. Further information about progress made between 2020 to 2022 can be found in the report to the 70th session of the Regional Committee in 2023.<sup>4</sup>

## **Progress update on implementation of the regional action plan**

### *Technical capacity-building for EIPM*

6. To enhance technical capacity on EIPM, a web-based training package was launched in April 2022 (available on the WHO regional website).<sup>5</sup> The package includes a flow chart specific to the needs of researchers and policy-makers, guiding the user through 15 subject areas. A third update to the training package was completed in 2025, which included two new training packages on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for evidence synthesis and delivery for impact.

7. A virtual workshop series on the use of the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) methodology to support evidence-based decision-making was held in October–December 2023. The workshops aimed to increase knowledge on the GRADE approach and facilitate knowledge exchange and the sharing of experiences among countries of the Region.

8. During 2025, the WHO Regional Office organized a webinar series on institutionalizing EIPM for delivery for impact, featuring global experts from leading institutions in EIPM. The series covered innovations in evidence synthesis, guideline programmes, the science ecosystem and global collaboration initiatives. The primary audience was NEDtP member institutions; however, the sessions were open to all interested academic institutions, policy-makers and members of the public in and beyond the Region. The first three of the eight webinars were held in February, March and April 2025.

### *Supporting countries in technical capacity-building for EIPM*

9. To enhance decision-making structures and processes for the use of evidence at national level, WHO began the process of supporting Egypt to establish a national programme for the development and adaptation of clinical and public health guidelines in 2022. In October and November 2023, a series of high-level meetings, as well as in-person and online training sessions, were conducted. The National Guidelines Development and Adaptation Programme in Egypt was officially launched in July 2024, and the national

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<sup>4</sup> Seventieth session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, Cairo, Egypt, 9–12 October 2023. Progress report on implementing the framework for improving national institutional capacity for evidence-informed policy-making for health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2020–2024. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2023 (EM/RC70/INF.DOC.7; <https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/Progress-report-EDP-eng.pdf>, accessed 8 August 2025).

<sup>5</sup> Evidence-informed policy-making training package [website]. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2025 (<https://www.emro.who.int/evidence-data-to-policy/training-package/index.html>, accessed 8 August 2025).

road map for the guidelines programme (jointly developed with WHO) was signed and endorsed in September 2024.

10. In addition, a capacity-building event for senior policy-makers on EIPM processes was organized for Palestine in June 2023. During 2023, WHO also supported the Knowledge Management Centre in Morocco by reviewing and providing feedback on knowledge products developed by the Centre.

11. In April 2024, WHO conducted a high-level mission to the Syrian Arab Republic to enhance EIPM capacity for more than 30 senior policy-makers and directors at the Ministry of Health and key academic institutions. The Ministry adopted the rapid advice tool for country action on EIPM in January 2025 and will implement the recommended priority actions provided by the tool to enhance EIPM in the country. In addition, the country's Planning and International Cooperation Commission will become a member of the NEDtP.

12. In July 2024, WHO carried out a mission in Tunisia to strengthen national institutional capacity for EIPM. More than 40 senior policy-makers and directors attended the programme. The mission led to decisions to apply the rapid advice tool for country action on EIPM, establish a national coordination mechanism, add the National Authority for Assessment and Accreditation in Healthcare (INEAS) to the NEDtP and conduct further capacity-building on EIPM for policy-makers.

13. In October 2024, WHO conducted a mission to Kuwait to support the institutionalization of EIPM in the Ministry of Health. A capacity-building workshop was held for 40 senior policy-makers and directors from the Ministry and key institutions. Key outcomes of the mission included plans to jointly develop policy briefs with WHO and establish a national programme for the development and adaptation of guidelines.

### *Technical tools and products*

14. The regional action plan has proved to be a living tool for regional and national technical guidance. It includes a variety of high-level options for countries to choose from, depending on their national capacities and priorities. A rapid advice tool for country action on EIPM was developed in January 2023 to support countries in improving national institutional capacity for EIPM. The tool provides focused support to countries through a set of priority actions to facilitate the adaptation and implementation of the regional action plan, while taking account of the country context for institutionalization of EIPM. The tool was implemented in Kuwait in December 2023, which led to the integration of EIPM into Kuwait's national health strategy for 2024–2030. The rapid advice tool was implemented in the Syrian Arab Republic in January 2025, and implementation is underway in Bahrain and Tunisia.

15. WHO published *Policy brief template: how to write an effective policy brief* in January 2024.<sup>6</sup> The template is a critical tool to support the development of quality policy briefs to inform policy-making at country level. The template has also been used in the development of regional WHO policy briefs on healthy ageing, implementing anti-stigma programmes, medical oxygen policies and strengthening road safety systems.

16. Efforts have been made to improve the standardization and use of clinical practice and public health guidelines in the Region. A regional survey was conducted in 2023 to better understand the status of guideline development and adaptation programmes in countries. The survey results were used to inform a pre-Regional-Committee technical presentation on guideline programmes at the 70th session of the

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<sup>6</sup> Policy brief template: how to write an effective policy brief. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2024 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/375770>, accessed 8 August 2025). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean. Following this, a regional road map on establishing a national programme for guideline adaptation, including a nine-step guideline adaptation flow chart, was published in January 2024.<sup>7</sup>

17. In response to requests by countries and regional experts for standardization, a glossary has been developed to promote shared definitions of key EIPM terms and concepts. The final draft was reviewed at an expert consultation in 2023 and *Evidence-informed policy-making: a glossary of key terms* was published in March 2025.<sup>8</sup>

18. A regional health technology assessment (HTA) transferability tool is being developed to support countries in using the results of HTAs conducted by other countries in their own national settings. The tool takes into account feasibility and implementation issues in adapting HTA results to different contexts. It was reviewed at an expert consultation in 2023 and is currently under development.

19. Knowledge translation involves the use of knowledge products (such as policy briefs, guidelines, HTA reports) and processes (such as policy dialogues) to inform decision-making. Recognizing the constraints in technical and financial resources worldwide, effective prioritization of health problems is essential for developing impactful knowledge products to inform decision-making. To address this need, WHO is developing a tool to assist health ministries and academic institutions in systematically identifying and prioritizing health problems. The tool will help to ensure the development of relevant, timely and impactful knowledge products.

#### *Regional network of institutions for evidence and data to policy (NEDtP)*

20. The NEDtP<sup>9</sup> is a regional network established by WHO to facilitate the generation and use of research evidence, data and knowledge translation processes in the Region. Network members include research and academic institutions, health ministries and civil society organizations from the 22 countries and territories of the Region. Three new member institutions have joined the network since 2023, making a total of 34 member institutions from the Eastern Mediterranean Region and one observer institution from the African Region. Two new supporting institutions were also added, giving a total of 15 supporting institutions that provide technical and material support to NEDtP's mission and objectives.

21. A survey was conducted by WHO in June–August 2023 to assess the capacities of and work done by NEDtP members on generation and use of evidence for policy-making, and to determine the specific areas where they may require WHO support. Challenges revealed by the survey include the limited availability of technical capacities, financial resources and local data, as well as limited capacity in the field of HTA. The survey results were presented at an NEDtP meeting in April 2024, in which member institutions also shared updates on their EIPM activities.

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<sup>7</sup> Establishing a national programme for guideline adaptation: key steps and functions. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2024 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/376106>, accessed 8 August 2025). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

<sup>8</sup> Evidence-informed policy-making: a glossary of key terms. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2025 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/380916>, accessed 8 August 2025). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

<sup>9</sup> Network of Institutions for Evidence and Data to Policy (NEDtP) [website]. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2025 (<https://www.emro.who.int/evidence-data-to-policy/network-of-institutions/index.html>, accessed 8 August 2025).

### *Rapid evidence synthesis for EIPM*

22. With a view to enhancing technical capacities in the Region, 15 case studies on the use of evidence and data to inform policy-making processes in response to COVID-19 were jointly developed with 13 countries during 2021–2022. The consolidated lessons learned from the case studies were published in 2023.<sup>10</sup>

23. In addition, WHO is developing a rapid evidence synthesis platform to support EIPM in the Region. The platform will enable countries to rapidly receive evidence summaries and reviews to support their decision-making for health policy development. It will provide high-quality, contextualized and targeted research evidence to decision-makers to facilitate the uptake of research in policy and practice. The platform is being developed in alignment with the strategies, approaches and resources outlined in the regional action plan for EIPM.

### *Communication tools and advocacy*

24. WHO has continued to develop communication tools and advocacy strategies to enhance EIPM in the Region, including regular updates to the evidence and data to policy webpage,<sup>11</sup> production of short videos, contributing to organizing the WHO global evidence-to-policy (E2P) summits and releasing a special issue on evidence to policy for health care in the *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal* in August 2023.<sup>12</sup>

25. A poster on the web-based training package was presented at the Global Evidence Summit 2024. In addition, two journal articles were published in 2024 on COVID-19 vaccine-effectiveness studies in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Work is ongoing on a manuscript on the establishment of the national guideline programme in Egypt to enhance evidence-based practices.

## **Way forward**

26. While this is the final report provided under resolution EM/RC66/R.5, going forward progress in this area will be reported as part of annual reporting on implementation of the regional strategic operational plan 2025–2028. Work will continue to focus on the key strategies identified in the regional action plan.

27. Over the next four years, WHO plans to advance the use of AI for EIPM across the Eastern Mediterranean Region. This initiative aims to enhance the synthesis of evidence for decision-making by leveraging AI technologies to analyse and interpret complex datasets efficiently. By embedding AI-driven mechanisms within health systems, WHO seeks to streamline decision-making processes and improve the accuracy and relevance of health policies.

28. In addition, efforts will focus on identifying measurable impacts of policies and interventions through enhanced monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Moreover, knowledge translation processes will be further embedded within health systems to ensure that synthesized evidence translates effectively into actionable messages and policies, thereby enhancing the overall impact and sustainability of evidence-informed health policies in the Region.

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<sup>10</sup> Case studies on the use of data and evidence to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic [website]. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2023 (<https://www.emro.who.int/evidence-data-to-policy/covid-19-rapid-evidence-reponse/case-studies-on-the-use-of-data-and-evidence-to-respond-to-the-covid-19-pandemic.html>, accessed 8 August 2025).

<sup>11</sup> Evidence and data to policy [website]. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2025 (<https://www.emro.who.int/evidence-data-to-policy/about.html>, accessed 8 August 2025).

<sup>12</sup> Special edition on evidence to policy for healthcare. East Mediterr Health J. 2023;29(7):495–599. (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/373614>). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.