



EVALUATION FINALE DU PROJET “MOVING MATERNAL NEWBORN AND CHILD EVIDENCE INTO POLICY IN WEST AFRICA” (MEP)



WAHO commissioned a final evaluation report of the MEP project that it led and coordinated between 2014 and 2020.

The methodological approach followed to produce this report is presented in several stages:

- a documentary review of the various reports produced during the implementation of the project as well as other reports produced by consultants recruited for various technical support;
- interviews with the actors/beneficiaries involved in the implementation of the project (implementing partners, research teams, etc.);

- interviews with those in charge of the project at WAHO level;

A triangulation of the data was made to ensure the consistency of the information collected. This report details the main results for each of WAHO's contributions to the MEP project.

❖ **WAHO's promotional contribution to the use of research results to influence policy in countries**

At the institutional level, WAHO has used so-called "stakeholder engagement workshops" to promote the use of evidence-based data. These engagement workshops allowed

- promote the use of evidence and facilitate ownership of the MEP project among national decision-makers;
- share the findings of the studies "Situation analysis on knowledge transfer and the use of evidence in the field of maternal and child health" conducted in countries covered by the project;¹
- gain the informed engagement of countries' various key stakeholders in the production, transfer and use of evidence in maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH);
- Strengthen awareness and advocacy among policy makers and researchers for fruitful collaboration to promote the use of research data.

Additionally, using its regional position, advocacy and diplomacy capacity, WAHO has facilitated:

- Access by country research teams to strategic decision-makers in ministries of health, helping to create collaboration between researchers and policy makers. This official recognition allowed the research teams to work in an institutional framework marked by mutual collaboration;
- Access of the MISELI research team from Mali to the management and implementation committee of the Performance-Based Financing (PBF) strategy.

This connection with decision-makers allowed the MISELI team to access the data and conduct several studies relating to the medical insurance plan (RAMED):

- study on the effectiveness of targeting the indigent;
- study on the process of targeting the destitute;
- study on the quality of prescriptions;
- study on the use of the National Health Information System (SNIS);
- study on the profile of RAMED beneficiaries;
- Study on the financing of Community Health Associations.

These different studies have contributed to having evidence and reliable data on the quality of prescriptions according to the health pyramid, the challenges of the quality of prescriptions in the implementation of PBF, the use of the information generated, to have a clear profile of THE beneficiaries of RAMED. All of this evidence is an important food for health authorities to make evidence-based decisions and improve PBF implementation.

The various forums of good practices on maternal and child health organised by ECOWAS have served as a channel to promote the use of evidence through plenary communications, raising awareness for the national directors of maternal and child health programmes of the fifteen (15) ECOWAS Member States, technical and financial partners.

The "research days" organised by countries in collaboration with WAHO were an enriching boon for promoting the use of evidence.

They served as a framework for the following:

- build the capacity of stakeholders to use evidence in decision-making;

¹ "Analysis of the situation on knowledge transfer and the use of evidence in the field of maternal and child health"

- raise awareness and advocate for decision-makers and researchers to work collaboratively to facilitate the use of research by decision-makers;

One of WAHO's major contributions to promoting the use of research results was the adoption by the ECOWAS Assembly of Ministers of Health in June 2017, of a resolution on the use of evidence in the development of health policies, protocols, guides and standards applicable to all fifteen (15) ECOWAS countries. This commitment of the ministers of health is a major innovation recorded at the ECOWAS level and marks an irreversible will of decision-makers to take the path of the obvious.

Policy briefs for decision-makers were developed to inform deliberations on health policies and programmes. These were

- Evidence-Based Policy Note: Application of the Equitable Impact-Sensitive Tool (EQUIST) to evidence-based policy development to improve maternal and child health outcomes in Burkina Faso [2], Benin [3], Mali; Senegal;²³
- Evidence-based policy-making guidance for west Africa;⁴
- Health Systems & MNCH Outcomes in West Africa;⁵
- Knowledge transfer and use of evidence in the field of maternal newborn and child health: current situation in ECOWAS⁶

These different policy briefs produced shared and discussed at certain meetings or workshops helped to strengthen the interaction between researchers and decision-makers.

❖ **WAHO's contribution to facilitating knowledge transfer, documentation and dissemination of project results**

Workshops and meetings were organised or served as a framework for the dissemination of the results of the studies conducted during implementation. These were studies on the following:

- "analysis of the situation of knowledge transfer and use of evidence in the field of maternal, newborn and child health" conducted in Senegal, Benin,⁷⁸ Burkina Faso [11] and Mali [12]
- "Gender and Equity Inclusion in Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Services in West Africa: A Review of the Programming Literature [13]"
- "the analysis of factors favouring or limiting the consideration of maternal and child health issues [14]"

The exchanges on the results of these studies allowed not only all stakeholders to better understand the need for the use of research results in particular decision-makers, but also to understand the role of decision-makers, the role of researchers, and the absolute importance of a framework for collaboration between decision-makers and researchers and challenges in terms of capacity building for successful appropriation of this innovation.

² Prof.C. Jesse Uneke, Prof. Issiaka Sombie Dr. Henry Uro-Chukwu Dr. Ermel Johnson, March 28, 2018

³ Prof.C. Jesse Uneke, Prof. Issiaka Sombie Dr. Henry Uro-Chukwu Dr. Ermel Johnson, 28, March 2018

⁴ Prof. Jesse Uneke, Prof. Issiaka Sombie Dr. Ermel Johnson, 25 July 2019

⁵ Irene Akua Agyepong, Aku Kwamie, Selina Defor, Edith Frimpong, Genevieve C. Aryeetey, Abdallah Ibrahim

⁶ Ayelo Gilbert, Prof. Issiaka Sombié (OOAS)

⁷ An analysis of the situation of knowledge transfer and the use of evidence in the field of maternal health, the newborn and child at the level of Senegal, Mohamadou SALL,

⁸ Analysis of the situation of knowledge transfer and the use of evidence in the field of maternal, newborn and child health in Benin, Ayédéélé Love BALOGOU

The 4th Global Health Systems Research Symposium held in Vancouver, Canada in November 2016 was seized by WAHO to share its experience in research development in West Africa. To this end, it co-organized a one-day satellite symposium by presenting

- WAHO's new Strategic Plan 2016–2020 with an entire programme for health research and information;
- the experience of the steering committees in four (04) countries and the regional advisory committee as a means of collaboration between researchers and decision-makers for the strengthening of health systems through research;
- the state of play on knowledge transfer and the use of evidence in maternal and child health programmes in West Africa;
- WAHO's intervention platform to promote and support the use of evidence and research findings in West Africa;
- a regional capacity-building project in health policy and systems research involving several institutions from several countries;
- a Network of Young Researchers in Health Policy and Systems Research (West African Network of Emerging Leaders: WANEL) to help strengthen research and training collaboration between countries.

DURING THE SYMPOSIUM, WAHO also presented an oral paper and four posters on the following:

- planning an intervention to improve knowledge transfer in maternal and child health in West Africa;
- the transfer and application of evidence in maternal and child health policies and programmes in West Africa: State of play;
- Can the West African Health Organization become a centre for promoting knowledge transfer for maternal, newborn and child health?
- The West African experience of setting up steering committees for better collaboration between researchers and decision-makers to increase the use of health research results.

These presentations contributed to the dissemination of the results of the research conducted and to give more visibility in its mission.

The publication channel of scientific articles to disseminate the results of the research from the project was also used via blogs in Africa and internationally.

The following publications perfectly illustrate this contribution of WAHO at this level:

- sharing lessons learnt from the situation analysis on knowledge transfer and the use of research results in the ECOWAS area on the Global Health blog: <http://www.santemondiale.org/2016/03/10/edito-lecons-apprises-analyse-situation-transfert-connaissances-utilisation-evidences-sante-maternelle-neonatale-infantile-afrique-ouest/>;
- publication on the website of the Senegalese Press Agency (APS): <http://www.aps.sn/actualites/societe/sante/article/sante-maternelle-et-infantile-vers-la-validation-d-un-programme-de-transfert-de-connaissances>;
- Transcending the boundaries of maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) research and health systems: enabling and constraining factors of health systems to improve MNCH outcomes in West Africa.⁹
Improving maternal and child health policy-making processes in Nigeria: assessment of the needs of decision-makers, barriers and factors facilitating evidence-based policy-making.¹⁰

⁹ Irene Akua Agyapong, Aku Kwamie, Edith Frimpong, Selina Defor, Abdallah Ibrahim, Genevieve C. Aryeetey, Virgil Lokossou & Issiaka Sombie, 2017

¹⁰ Chigozie J. Uneke, Issiaka Sombie, Namoudou Keita, Virgil Lokossou, Ermel Johnson & Pierre Ongolo-Zogo, 2017

- Promoting Evidence-Based Policy Development in Nigeria: A Review of the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Policy Development Process. ¹¹
- Assessing the Individual and Organizational Capacity of Policy Makers to Acquire, Evaluate, Adapt and Apply Research Data for Maternal and Child Health Policy Development in Nigeria: A Cross-Sectional Quantitative Survey. ¹²
- An evaluation of policy engagement initiatives to promote evidence-based health policy development in Nigeria. ¹³
- Promoting research to improve maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health in West Africa: the role of the West African Health Organization. ¹⁴
- Promoting Evidence-Based Policy Development for Maternal and Child Health in Nigeria: Lessons from a Knowledge Translation Workshop [²¹]
- Using the Equitable Impact-Sensitive Tool (EQUIST) to promote evidence-based policy implementation to improve maternal and child health outcomes: A look at six West African countries. ¹⁵
- Review of the process of knowledge transfer and use of evidence in the field of reproductive and child health in Ghana [²³]

Other scientific articles have been published in local and/or pan-African journals (available in French and/or English). These were

- the qualitative evaluation of the first training session in Knowledge Transfer for the benefit of managers of the Ministry of Health of Burkina Faso;
- gender mainstreaming in a regional health institution: case of WAHO;
- the individual and organisational capacity of stakeholders to acquire, evaluate, adapt and apply maternal, newborn and child health evidence in policy-making in Burkina Faso;
- gender mainstreaming in a knowledge transfer platform in maternal and child health in West Africa;
- knowledge transfer and use of evidence in the development of maternal and child health policies and programmes in West Africa;
- Promoting evidence-based decision making in Burkina Faso: KT training assessment using three implementation outcomes and intention to apply knowledge acquire.

These various scientific publications have contributed to popularising the data from the research. They have contributed to achieving several targets, including decision-makers and operational actors.

The "newsletter" designed specifically for "MEP News" also served as a channel to disseminate and popularise the results of the project. Several "MEP" bulletins were produced for this purpose. This initiative through this newsletter has largely contributed to popularising the results of the project. Social networks were also used through the creation of a Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/OoasWaho> and a Facebook account to communicate about the project and disseminate the results of the MEP project. To consolidate the project's achievements, WAHO has also contributed to the development of the knowledge transfer unit recently established within the Ministry of Health in Burkina Faso through

¹¹ Chigozie Jesse Uneke 1, Issiaka Sombie , Namoudou Keita , Virgil Lokossou , Ermel Johnson, Pierre Ongolo-Zogo , Henry Chukwuemeka Uro-Chukwu , 2017

¹² Chigozie Jesse Uneke , Issiaka Sombie , Namoudou Keita , Virgil Lokossou , Ermel Johnson , Pierre Ongolo-Zogo, Henry Chukwuemeka Uro-Chukwu ,2017

¹³ Chigozie Jesse Uneke , Issiaka Sombie , Namoudou Keita , Virgil Lokossou , Ermel Johnson , Pierre Ongolo-Zogo

¹⁴ Issiaka Sombie , Aissa Bouwayé , Yves Mongbo , Namoudou Keita , Virgil Lokossou , Ermel Johnson , Laurent Assogba , Xavier Crespin

¹⁵ Chigozie Jesse Uneke, Issiaka Sombie, Henry Chukwuemeka Uro-Chukwu & Ermel Johnson

exchanges, advice, document sharing, review of creation texts, technical support in terms of capacity building.

WAHO's contribution to capacity building and mutual learning

Remarkable results have been achieved at both the individual and institutional levels.

At the institutional level, the following actions have been recorded, in particular:

- Capacity building of WAHO staff on knowledge transfer and the gender approach allowing staff to identify the principles, issues, tools to be used and the skills necessary to succeed in knowledge transfer.
- Build capacity of the WAHO team on the gender approach. This training contributed to the deepening of WAHO staff's knowledge on gender issues, to having a common understanding of the gender approach, the implications in the implementation of the IMCHA project,
- Support for the person in charge of monitoring/evaluation of a gender initiative. This training allowed the monitoring and evaluation officer to strengthen his capacities in the issue of the concept of gender, to better understand the gender dimension through the activities of the project, the information that exists or that is produced by the project and that could make it possible to conduct analyses on the gender issue.

At the individual level, WAHO provided capacity building for several actors.

To the country research teams:

- training on the methodological approach for consultants in the context of the conduct of studies on "the analysis of the situation of knowledge transfer and use of evidence in the field of maternal, newborn and child health", allowing consultants to better understand the objectives of the mission, the methodology to be used, data collection tools, a common approach and pooling their efforts for the conduct of missions;
- training on the gender approach in the framework of the "bajenu cox" project (Senegal's research team) contributing to a better understanding of the concept of gender;
- Training of the Women Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC) research team on knowledge transfer approaches and the use of the budgeting tool "EQUIST".
- Training of research teams to present the results of their research in formats accessible to decision-makers. These sessions covered themes such as "How to present research information to decision-makers (Policy Notes)", "How to use social media to communicate on research results?". These trainings have fostered a better understanding of policymakers' roles within research teams;
- training of research teams on the principles and mechanisms of knowledge transfer, on the principles of stakeholder engagement, on the gender approach, on the development of policy notes, in computer graphics and on the use of social media;
- training in gender analysis and integration in research projects for eleven (11) people, including eight (08) researchers

At the level of national actors in the countries covered by the project, WAHO organised several training sessions:

- Training for the Ministry of Health of Burkina Faso on the principles of Knowledge Transfer, the drafting of the policy note, the concept of knowledge brokering and the development of a knowledge transfer plan;

- Capacity building of maternal and newborn health policy makers in member countries on the mechanisms of demand, adoption and use of research results in their planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation activities.¹⁶

In terms of producing tools to strengthen the capacities of national actors, the following documents have been developed:

- The development of an evidence-based policy formulation guide inserted in the regional guide to the development guidelines for national adolescent and youth health strategies of ECOWAS member countries. This guide provides practical strategic guidance that gives users the opportunity to easily lead policy formulation by adapting it to the specific context of countries;
- development of a guide to conduct the "*Analyses of the situation of knowledge transfer and use of evidence in the field of maternal, newborn and child health*,"
- development of a knowledge transfer platform allowing countries to understand the culture of knowledge transfer;

In terms of capacity-building and mutual learning, we note

- the organisation of regional workshops at the level of the West African space allowing research teams to exchange on the implementation of their research projects, to share their experiences, to discuss opportunities for collaboration and mutual participation in certain activities, which to strengthen their collaboration;
- the establishment of a collaboration mechanism between WAHO and research teams of the ECOWAS area to strengthen the links between the different research teams through the mutual sharing of knowledge;
- Holding the IMCHA International Mid-Term Workshop in April 2017 with the participation of all West and East African research teams, Canadian partners from the research teams, the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), and the IDRC team, was another opportunity for capacity building and mutual learning;

❖ **WAHO's contribution to data production**

Indirectly, WAHO contributed to the production of data during the implementation of the project.

- Production of data for a better design of project interventions.

WAHO has commissioned several studies, including

- ✓ "Analysis of the situation of knowledge transfer and use of evidence in the field of maternal, newborn and child health" in the four countries for the French-speaking part (Benin, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Mali).

These analyses of the evidence on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, challenges and constraints as well as important reforms that need to be carried out to promote knowledge transfer and the use of evidence in the field of maternal, newborn and child health;

- ✓ Study "*Gender and Equity Inclusion in Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Services in West Africa: A Review of the Literature on Programming*". This study provided a description of the gender profile and equity in MNCH programmes and the level of gender mainstreaming in Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) programmes.

¹⁶ Technical Report n°9 of 1st July – 31 October 2019, WAHO

- ✓ *"Analysis of factors favouring or limiting the consideration of maternal and child health issues"*. She highlighted the factors that can promote or limit the consideration of maternal and child health issues in the health system;

The second dimension relates to the documentation and capitalisation of the results of the implementation of the project through major interventions including

- The mid-term evaluation of the project: the conclusions of the mid-term evaluation indicated that all stakeholders have a positive perception of the project in terms of relevance and implementation approach. The strengths of the project lie in waHO's support for capacity building of research teams and decision-makers, the creation/revitalization of researcher-decision-making collaboration frameworks, knowledge transfer activities, high-level advocacy for the use of evidence in the ECOWAS area.

Lessons learnt were recorded during the implementation of the project. Some are considered good practices:

- The implementation approach was based on evidence. The results of country-specific analyses on the status of the use of research results, on gender issues in the consideration of maternal and child health programmes and projects and the factors influencing the integration of maternal and child health and in the health system, served as a benchmark for developing the various interventions of the project;
- WAHO's commitment at the highest level in the implementation of the project has been precious. The mobilization of waHO's General Management and its participatory presence at key events in the life of the project (launch of the project, restitution workshop in Canada, country engagement workshops, strategic meetings etc.) have created a foundation of trust among all stakeholders and this has allowed for rapid adherence and ownership of the beneficiary countries and the results recorded by the project draw part of this commitment from the WAHO Directorate.
- The involvement and full and active participation of national actors has been a factor of success. All the interventions conducted (commitment workshop, workshops to share the results of analytical studies, knowledge transfer workshops) in the countries were partly organised by the countries themselves, which had the merit of obtaining from the outset, the commitment and involvement of national actors in this new initiative. It also allowed national actors to clearly express their needs and expectations in the implementation of the project. This facilitated the mobilisation of strategic actors (decision-makers at the highest level, actors in charge of maternal and child health issues and other partners) involved in promoting the use of research data;
- The implementation of the "MEP News" newsletter. This newsletter was a real innovation not only for communication and awareness-raising on the objectives and results of the project, but also for the promotion and accessibility of the project results. She contributed to establishing the credibility of the project as well as the consolidation of WAHO's mission as a Health Policy and Research Organization (HPRO);

Other lessons learned were also recorded that are areas for improvement or challenges.

- The role and responsibilities of WAHO as an OPRS in West Africa and WAHO as a regional institution have not been sufficiently clarified or better understood by stakeholders (WAHO and research teams) and WAHO in playing its role of regional coordination has appeared, to "distort" the autonomy of country research teams. As a result, the collaboration between WAHO and the teams was slow to develop, thus limiting frank collaboration between WAHO and the research

teams at the beginning of the implementation of the project. However, WAHO, as a regional institution, used diplomacy and advocacy to address misunderstandings by clarifying roles and responsibilities, which subsequently fostered the establishment of a collaborative and constructive framework between WAHO and research teams allowing some country teams to access decision-makers thus facilitating their research work.

Another lesson learned that could be described as a challenge is the promotion of the use of evidence. Despite an unequivocal will shown by all stakeholders and beyond the substantial contributions that the MEP project has made by encouraging decision-makers to use the evidence to develop health projects and programmes, it is also a process of profound reform of habits that is underway and, which foresees an irreversible process. This will require both regional and national pedagogical work on the part of WAHO. This requires the effective implementation of the resolution of the ECOWAS Ministers of Health and the capacity of the various actors (decision-makers, researchers, national programme managers and technical and financial partners) who globally animate the health system to align and comply with the requirements of the change required by the use of research data to develop and implement health projects and programmes. This ownership at the national level remains a challenge.¹⁷

❖ **Recommendations to the consortium**

The momentum generated by the consortium is a source of hope in promoting the use of evidence to develop effective and efficient health strategies, particularly in the area of maternal and child health.

- To strengthen the fruitful collaboration between WAHO and the research teams and consolidating the achievements already made, it might be ideal in the pursuit of the initiative to clarify WAHO's responsibilities as a regional health institution and those of the OPRS in the spirit and philosophy of the MEP project. This clarification would have the merit of better clarifying the role of WAHO in its capacity as OPRS with the research teams in the context of the implementation of the project and its role as a regional health organisation. This distinction will allow WAHO as an OPRS to properly play its role, according to implementing agreements like other OPRS. Then, WAHO, as a regional institution, will be able to use this strategic position as was done during the project to support the various actors in better coordination and collaboration in promoting the use of evidence.

 - Another alternative that could be considered in this collaborative scheme and allow WAHO to better highlight its roles and responsibilities as ANSO and enable it to carry out its regional coordination mission, would be to recruit WAHO (OPRS) first, then recruit research teams on the basis of priorities with the participation of WAHO and beneficiary countries. This approach would create greater buy-in from stakeholders (decision-makers, operational users, researchers, WAHO, etc.) and strengthen the decision-making-research team platform. This provision would also have the advantage of creating a fruitful collaboration between WAHO and the research teams that will work together on research protocols, jointly ensure the quality of protocols that meet the needs of countries, on innovative issues that integrate specific issues of primary importance such as gender. It would develop, with the research teams, a support plan to facilitate access to national data sources for decision-makers and a capacity-building plan for country teams. It should be remembered that the role of WAHO in its capacity as OPRS is to create favourable conditions for the production of data, the promotion of their use and this requires this expression of the affirmation of its dual role.
-

- **Recommendation to WAHO**

The role of WAHO as an OPRS in this initiative is crucial and requires a multidisciplinary team that ensures the interventions of all necessary segments, including communication, drafting of policy notes, relay on social networks, etc. The enthusiasm generated by countries must be able to find adequate responses to maintain momentum. The MEP project has triggered an irreversible process that must necessarily continue beyond consortium funding. It could even be understood as an obligation for WAHO to maintain the momentum by seizing the opportunities that exist to build the fundamentals of the rooting of this vision. Some beneficiaries have already translated this objective into practice through the creation of a knowledge transfer unit (Burkina Faso), which is a remarkable step forward and an example for other countries.

Considering the above, WAHO should:

- institutionalize this initiative as a regional policy and as a priority within the framework of its regional mission by mobilizing financial resources from other technical and financial partners for the continuation of the initiative at the end of the financing of the consortium and extend to ECOWAS member countries;¹⁸
- The resolution of the ministers of health offers a huge opportunity to materialise this commitment. WAHO should engage in advocacy with member countries to translate the resolution into a decree or a mandatory measure at the level of each member country so that its application can be recognised as a requirement and a daily practice when developing and implementing health policies;
- Support the functionalization or dynamic of the national frameworks for consultation between decision-makers and researchers that already exists in some countries.

These frameworks could help strengthen advocacy for effective implementation of the resolution taken by ECOWAS Ministers of Health.

^[2] Prof.C. Jesse Uneke, Prof. Issiaka Sombie Dr Henry Uro-Chukwu Dr Ermel Johnson, March 28, 2018

^[3] Prof.C. Jesse Uneke, Prof. Issiaka Sombie Dr Henry Uro-Chukwu Dr. Ermel Johnson, March 28, 2018

^[11] Maternal, newborn and child health "The use of scientific evidence in the health field": the case of maternal, newborn and child health, Zida André

^[12] Analysis of the status of knowledge transfer and use of evidence in the field of maternal, newborn and child health in Mali, Cheick-Oumar BAGAYOKO

^[13] Elizabeth A. Larson

^[14] Prof Irene Agyepong

^[21] Chigozie Jesse Uneke, Issiaka Sombie, Henry Chukwuemeka Uro-Chukwu, Yagana Gidado Mohammed and Ermel Johnson

^[23] Gordon Abekah-Nkrumah, Sombié Issiaka, Lokossou Virgil & Johnson Ermel