

## Policy brief Maternal Newborn and Child Health



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## *Moving Maternal Newborn and Child Health Evidence into Policy (MEP)*

## **KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND USE OF EVIDENCE IN MATERNAL NEWBORN AND CHILD HEALTH: CURRENT SITUATION IN ECOWAS**

### **Key Messages**

- Policy documents scarcely cite scientific references
- Policy documents do not mention the process of integrating research data
- The stakeholders capacities to acquire evidence, to evaluate their validity, quality and applicability, to adapt and apply them were weak
- Inadequate sustainability structures for the utilization of evidence in policy making in MNCH
- Stakeholders are ready to improve their capacities to use evidence

### **Background**

Despite the significant reduction in maternal and child mortality recorded over the last decade in West Africa, several countries in the region were unable to achieve the Millennium Development Goals at the end of the year 2015. The use of evidence is an important element that will help in improving the situation. WAHO is concerned in promoting the use of evidence for the development of maternal, newborn and child health policies and programs hence, situational analysis was conducted in 6 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal) through the ***Moving Maternal Newborn and Child Health Evidence into Policy in West Africa*** (MEP) project.

This policy brief presents the results of the situational analysis and formulates recommendations for efficient and effective use of evidence in area of Mother, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH).

### **Methodology**

The situational analysis was carried out between July and December 2015 in the 6 MEP project countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal) through:

- Literature review of policies and scientific publications, reports of research findings in MNCH in the 6 countries;
- Organization of workshops in the six countries engaging all the stakeholders in the process;
- Administration of an evaluation questionnaire to understand the knowledge, competences and the needs of stakeholders in identifying, evaluating, adapting and utilization of evidence data in MNCH;



- Organisation of a regional workshop to validate the results and to identify the priority actions to be carried out with the participation of all stakeholders.

## **Principal lessons learnt**

- 1) Developing policy documents, plans, standards and protocols for MNCH programmes in the 6 countries always requires the involvement of stakeholders including researchers. However, the consideration of evidence while developing such components is not noticeable.
- 2) Stakeholders' capacities in information technology, research and policy development process were quite good but the capacity to use evidence in the formulation and implementation of policies, plans, standards and care protocols was low.
- 3) Therefore, there is a need to strengthen some implementation research teams funded by the Initiative "*Innovating for mother and child health in Africa*" while ensuring that equity and gender issues appropriately considered.
- 4) There are some opportunities with regards to the conduct of research, knowledge transfer and use of evidence. These are found in programmes of the United Nations system, ECOWAS Gender Development Centre, existing and functional platforms for knowledge transfer such as the Community of Practice Health Service Delivery, the Nigerian Branch of Cochrane and on websites of international organizations and Research Teams.
- 5) Many areas were identified for capacity building, dialogue among the various stakeholders and support for the use of evidence. These areas include planning times, development or review of care policy documents, care plans, standards and protocols, and during meetings of steering committees on research projects and national or regional meetings on the Initiative.
- 6) Laws and regulations of Departments or Institutions requiring the use of evidence in decision-making as well as developing guides for the use of evidence should be taken into account in the future.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the results of the situational analysis in the 6 countries we recommend:

- 1) To develop and implement a capacity building intervention on knowledge transfer and evidence use for decision making.
- 2) To strengthen researchers capacities to communicate and collaborate with decisions makers.
- 3) To create a collaborative platform between researchers and policy-makers to identify research priority based on policy maker needs and the report of research findings in policy making.
- 4) To create an enabling environment for knowledge sharing and the use of evidence taking into account the findings of the current situational analysis.

This interventions need to mobilize and engage all existing opportunities at the country and regional levels. This mobilization should be made through a gradual approach in order to improve the sustainability of activities beyond the Initiative "*Innovating for mother and child in Africa*".



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