



Requesting, assessing and using policy briefs as a policymaker

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We need to formalize and strengthen each national evidence-support system alongside the research system and the innovation system








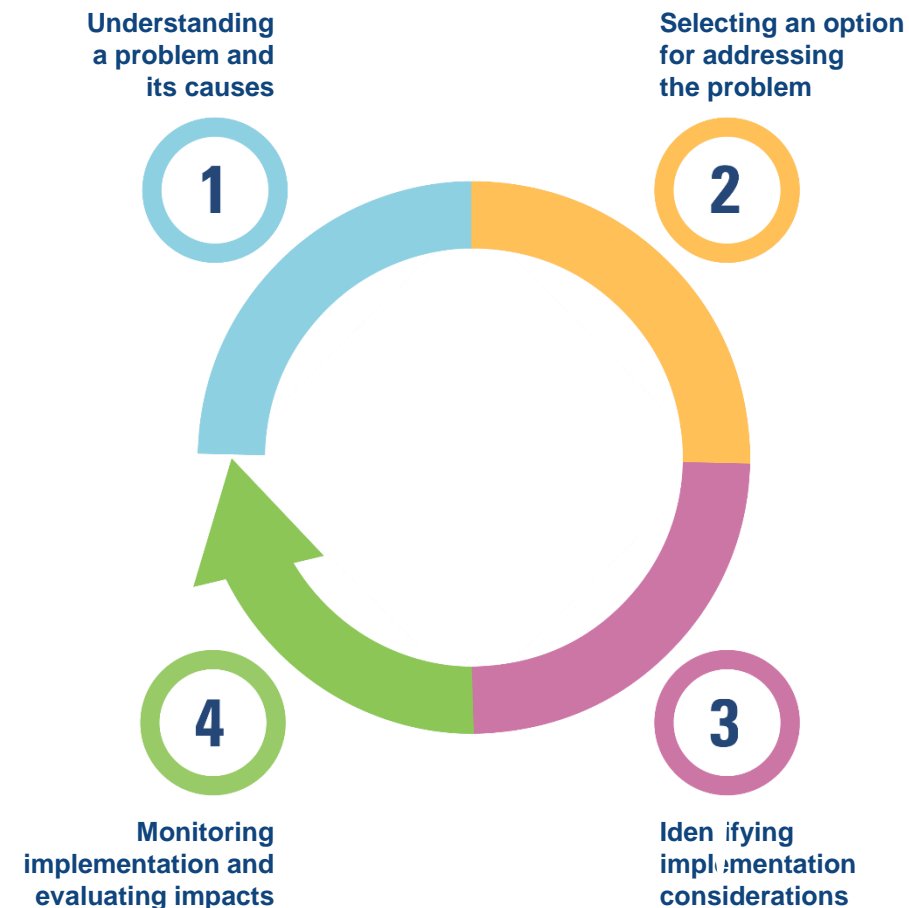
Evidence-support system – Grounded in an understanding of a national context (including time constraints), demand-driven, and focused on contextualizing the evidence for a given decision in an equity-sensitive way

Examples of infrastructure:

- evidence-support units that can combine the power of national evidence and the power of global evidence → **e.g., in the form of policy briefs**
- expert panels that include people with methods expertise and lived experience, pre-circulate evidence summaries, and clarify what evidence and experiences underpin the recommendations, as well as citizen- and stakeholder-engagement processes that provide ‘ways in’ for evidence → **e.g., policy dialogues**
- government science advisors who speak in a way that makes it possible to judge their accuracy
- **processes to:**
 - 1) **elicit and prioritize evidence needs**
 - 2) **find and package evidence that meets these needs within set time constraints**
(and build additional evidence as part of ongoing evaluations)
 - 3) strengthen capacity for evidence use (e.g., evidence-use workshops and handbook)
 - 4) incorporate evidence use into routine processes (e.g., memoranda to cabinet, budget proposals, spending plans)

The evidence-support system (and a policy brief) needs to match the form of evidence to the right step in the decision-making process

Forms of evidence	Steps where it adds the greatest value			
 Data analytics	1			4
 Modelling	1	2		
 Evaluation				4
 Behavioural / implementation research			3	
 Qualitative insights	1	2	3	4



The evidence-support system (and a policy brief) needs to rely on the combined power of local evidence (what has been learned in my country) and global evidence (what has been learned from around the world, including how it varies by groups and contexts)

Vantage point	Forms of evidence
Local (national or sub-national) evidence 	 Data analytics  Modeling  Evaluation  Behavioural/implementation research  Qualitative insights
Global evidence 	 Evidence synthesis (esp. living)
Local (national) recommendations or evidence support informed by local and global evidence 	 Technology assessments/cost-effectiveness analysis  Guidelines

- **Living** evidence syntheses add new evidence as it's made available, **based on its quality**, so that we have a continually evolving picture of what the entire evidence base, not just the newest study, tells us
- They don't accept a journal's peer review as synonymous with quality
- Good ones also describe how much certainty we have about particular findings
- **Living evidence syntheses can include both:**
 - **demand-driven, contextualized, equity-sensitive syntheses (e.g., policy briefs)**
 - global public goods

The evidence-support system also needs to use the right strategies to support the use of best evidence for the right issues and contexts



Strategies	Descriptions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., requiring government science advisors (and asking all experts, including those on expert panels) to speak in a way that makes it possible to judge their accuracy (e.g., by describing how they identified, assessed and interpreted the evidence they're drawing on), rather than accepting unquestionably their personal opinions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., supporting co-production – with decision-makers, diverse affected communities, and researchers – of new national evidence (data analytics, modeling, evaluations, behavioural / implementation research, qualitative insights), syntheses of the best evidence globally (evidence synthesis), and recommendations for the country that leverage both national and global evidence (technology assessments and guidelines)
Policy briefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., Integrating different forms of evidence into timely, demand-driven, contextualized, equity-focused evidence products (e.g., data analytics to clarify a problem and its causes, evidence synthesis to describe the likely benefits and harms of an option to address a problem, and behavioural science to develop an implementation plan)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., using one-stop evidence shops that are optimized for decision-makers' needs (e.g., COVID-END Inventory of Evidence Syntheses that identifies the 'best' evidence syntheses for any COVID-19 decision; Health Systems Evidence and Social Systems Evidence that quality rate evidence syntheses for health and all other sectors, respectively; evidence maps that profile the evidence available about climate change impacts and both mitigation and adaptation strategies)
Policy dialogues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., convening 'living' citizen panels and stakeholder dialogues – informed by citizen briefs and evidence briefs, respectively – to elicit citizen values and stakeholder insights that can drive action

Identifying priorities and requesting policy briefs to address them

- Is there a ‘meaty’ issue, particularly about strengthening the health system or getting the right programs, services or products to those who need them (not a narrowly defined clinical or health technology topic)?
- Is there an opportunity to get a new issue on the government agenda...
 - Can evidence help to make the case about a compelling problem?
 - Can evidence help to make the case of a viable policy?
 - Are there conducive politics?
- ... or is there an opportunity inform a policy decision?
 - Can evidence help to make inform the
 - Clarification of a problem and its causes
 - Framing of options to address the problem AND
 - Implementation considerations?
 - Are the institutional constraints, interest-group pressure, values and other political considerations such that evidence could play a role in informing decision-making?
- Is there (or could there be, with EMRO support) a team that understands your context and have the capacity to respond to your request? [capacity means capacity for evidence synthesis, policy analysis, and systems analysis +/- political analysis]
- Can you commit the time to a scoping call, periodic steering-group calls, and providing feedback?

Identifying priorities and requesting policy briefs to address them (2)

- Please insert in the chat box an example of a topic that would benefit from being addressed by a policy brief in your country
- Examples of some topics we're currently addressing using policy briefs
 - Creating resilient and responsive mental health systems for children, youth and families during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Using remote-monitoring and associated technologies to enable people to stay in their homes or existing level of care
 - Optimizing the use of virtual care to support health-system transformation and improve quadruple-aim metrics
 - Addressing the health human resources crisis [an example of what will becoming a 'living' policy brief' and used to inform a 'living' stakeholder dialogue over the coming year]

Assessing the policy briefs you receive:

Is it a policy brief in the sense we mean? **Was it done to a high standard?**

- Describes
 - Decision-making context (or justification)
 - A problem and its causes
 - Options to address the problem (or elements of a comprehensive approach to addressing the problem), including their advantages and disadvantages [safe and effective, cost-effective, feasible, sustainable]
 - Implementation considerations
- Incorporates
 - National evidence, or state/provincial evidence (data analytics, modeling, evaluation, behavioural / implementation research, and qualitative insights)
 - Syntheses of the best evidence globally
- *Doesn't make recommendations (and is typically an input to a policy dialogue)
- **Uses a systematic approach and reports the approach transparently [standards are under development]**
- Employs a graded-entry format (e.g., key messages, main text, and appendix with methods)
- Includes acknowledgements, conflicts of interest, and reference list
- Subjected to merit review (i.e., review by decision-makers as well as researchers)
- Considers
 - Equity
 - Quality of the evidence
 - Local applicability of the evidence (for syntheses of the best evidence globally)

Using policy briefs to....

- To strengthen your communication about a problem and its causes
- To help make decisions about potential policy options
- To engage stakeholders in discussions about problems and options (e.g., through a policy dialogue, which Fadi will be addressing in the next section)

All of these roles for policy briefs are further strengthened when accompanied by a policy dialogue

For more background: Evidence Commission report

- Two main **goals** of the report
 - Provide the context, concepts and vocabulary that underpin work in this area
 - Provide recommendations about how we can and must improve the use of evidence, both in routine times and in future global crises
- Available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish → **evidencecommission.org**
- Versions available now
 - Online executive summary
 - Online full report
 - Online chapters and sections (or infographics)
 - Print-on-demand full report (at cost through Amazon)



Why take steps to formalize and strengthen national evidence-support systems now?

- Cadre of political leaders who have personal experience with what worked well during COVID-19 and what could work better (and with how their counterparts in other countries appeared to be better supported with best evidence)
- Innovations in evidence products and processes, such as living evidence syntheses
- Lesson learned about needing to have evidence supports in place that can pivot to address future crises
- COVID-19 evidence investments coming to an end
- Recognition of the growing array of health (and broader societal) challenges where best evidence is needed