

Sub-regional efforts to support Evidence-Informed Policymaking

The case of the West African Health Organization (WAHO)

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Consortium for Mothers, Children, Adolescents,
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IDRC

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Overview of Presentation

- **Part 1: Background** – Evidence-informed policymaking research
 - Models of evidence use
 - Factors affecting evidence use
- **Part 2: WAHO** – Sub-regional efforts to link evidence and policy
 - What is WAHO?
 - MEP Project
 - Regional intervention framework
- **Part 3: Reflections and Next steps**
 - Strengths of MEP and Comparative Advantages of WAHO
 - Challenges of strengthening evidence use
 - Next step: *Theorizing WAHO's work*

Part 1: Background

Existing research on
Evidence-Informed Policymaking

Evidence-to-Policy Research

- Importance of **research use** in health policymaking widely recognized
- Large literature, but **limitations**:
 - Mostly HICs
 - Majority focus: tabulating **barriers and facilitators** to evidence
“UPTAKE”
 - Few rich **explanatory case studies** and **evaluations**
- Generally **under-theorized** field

Models of research use (Weiss, 1979)

Knowledge-Driven Model



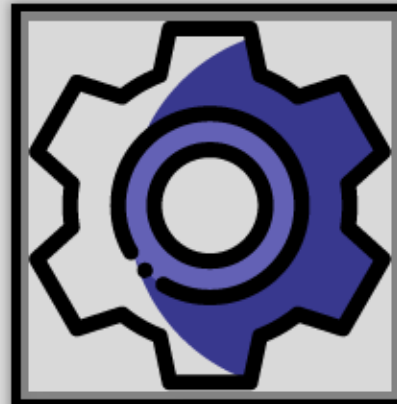
Political Model



Problem-Solving Model



Tactical Model



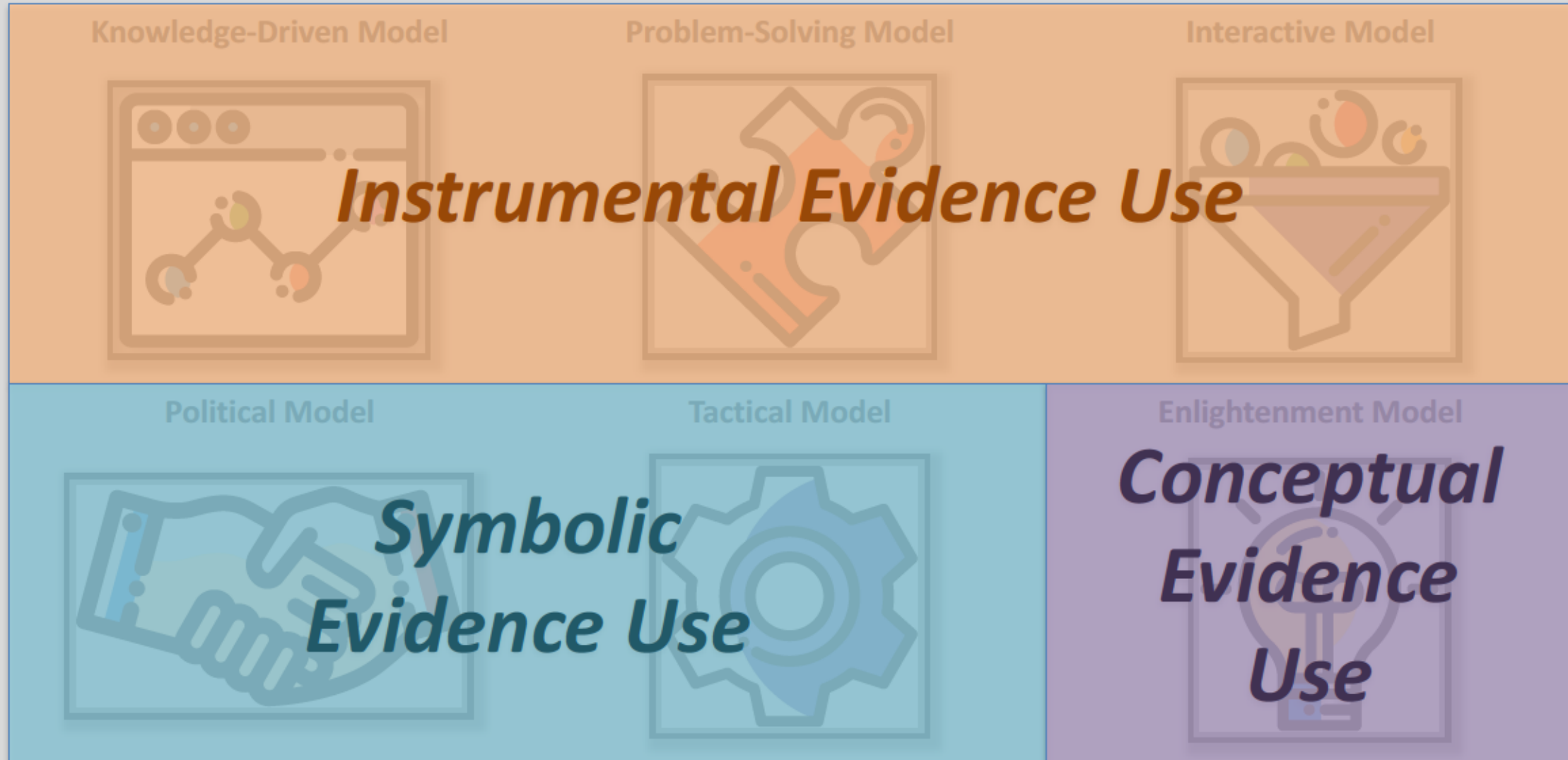
Interactive Model



Enlightenment Model



Models of research use (Weiss, 1979)



Factors that **promote** or **inhibit** research use

Category	Facilitators	Barriers
Contact & collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researcher contact with policymakers Researcher-policymaker collaboration Relationships of trust and respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time constraints & lack of opportunity for evidence use
Organisation & resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to or improved dissemination of research Managerial support for evidence use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of research availability Financial costs Lack of staff/personnel
Characteristics of research & researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High perceived clarity, relevance & reliability of findings Research presented in useable format 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of perceived clarity, relevance & reliability Research presented in non-useful format
Policymaker characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policymaker research skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of research skills Lack of research awareness Lack of political will
Policy characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived importance of the policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pressures on policy other than evidence (competing priorities)

Part 2: WAHO

Sub-regional cooperation to promote
Evidence-informed policymaking
in West Africa

West African Health Organization (WAHO)

- **The Specialized Health Agency of ECOWAS**
- **Mission:** “...*the attainment of the **highest possible standard** and protection of health of the peoples in the sub-region through the **harmonisation of the policies** of the Member States, **pooling of resources**, and **cooperation with one another and others...***”
- **Fifteen member states;** >350m pop.
- **Diverse sub-region:** Linguistically, politically, historically, epidemiologically



West African Health Organization (WAHO)

Structure and Governance

- Three levels of *political* decision-making:
 - Authority of Heads of State & Government
 - Council of ECOWAS Ministers
 - ***Assembly of Health Ministers (AHM)***
- Activities overseen by DG; Implemented by ~100 professional staff across 6 depts
- In-country anchor point: ***National MoHs***
 - **WAHO focal persons**



WAHO: Supporting research generation and use

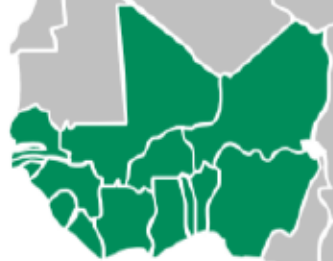
- 2016-20 Strategic Plan prioritizes *“Improv[ing] the production, dissemination and **utilization of health information and research** within the ECOWAS region” including developing **“mechanisms for regular dissemination and utilization of knowledge, evidence and information”***
- Flagship project: **Moving** Maternal, Newborn and Child **Evidence** into **Policy** in West Africa (**MEP**)

The MEP Project

Overarching objective:

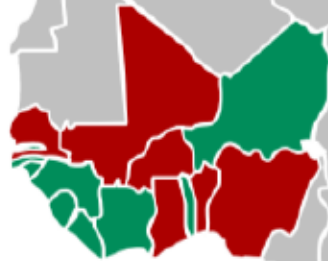
To “Improve demand for the production of, and use of research results for decision-making in MNCH programs and policies within the ECOWAS region.”

ECOWAS: Fifteen Member States



- **Bénin**
- **Burkina Faso**
- **Cape Verde**
- **Côte d'Ivoire**
- **The Gambia**
- **Ghana**
- **Guinée**
- **Guinea-Bissau**
- **Liberia**
- **Mali**
- **Niger**
- **Nigeria**
- **Sénégal**
- **Sierra Leone**
- **Togo**

MEP Project Focus Countries



- **Bénin**
- **Burkina Faso**
- **Cape Verde**
- **Côte d'Ivoire**
- **The Gambia**
- **Ghana**
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The MEP Project: Knowledge Transfer Platform

- Set of complex ***Multi-level, Multi-stakeholder*** interventions
- Developed iteratively through:
 - National- and regional-level **Situation Analyses**
 - National-level **Stakeholder Engagement Workshops**
 - **Regional Validation Meeting** (Feb, 2016)
- **Multi-level:**
[1] *Individual*, [2] *Organizational*, [3] *Institutional*
- **Multi-stakeholder:**
[1] *IRTs*, [2] *MoHs*, [3] *WAHO* itself

MEP: KT Platform Intervention Framework

Target Actor(s)	Level of intervention		
	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Organizational</i>	<i>Institutional</i>
<i>WAHO</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity strengthening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines on using evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AMH Resolution on use of evidence in decision-making processes
<i>MoHs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity strengthening Study tour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guideline on using evidence Promotion of policy briefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National-level text or law on the use of research in decision-making
<i>Researchers (IRTs)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity strengthening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration between researchers & decision-makers Research-to-policy fora 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy for improved collaboration between researchers & decision-makers

MEP : *Individual-Level Interventions*

Aim to:

- *Impart and strengthen **skills** of policymakers to access, appraise and apply research*
- ***Sensitize** policymakers to importance of **research use***
- *Generate “**buy-in**” for MEP*

Key interventions:

- Stakeholder engagement workshops
- Capacity-building trainings

MEP : *Individual-Level Interventions*



Three-part Knowledge Transfer Training in Burkina Faso

Building capacity in:

- Knowledge transfer
- Knowledge brokering
- ***Supporting change*** in research use

MEP: Organizational-Level Interventions

Aim to:

- ***Build organizational capacity at the level of MoH Units***
- ***Strengthen links and promote dialogue between MoH Staff and researchers***

Key interventions:

- ***“Knowledge exchange” Forums***
 - e.g. **Nigeria Research Days in MNCH**
- ***Guideline on using research evidence***

MEP: Organizational-Level Interventions

Nigeria Research Days in MNCH:

Fostering
dialogue
between
policymakers
and researchers



MEP: *Institutional-Level Interventions*

Aim: to strengthen norms of evidence use at national and regional levels and foster ‘cultures of evidence’

Key interventions:

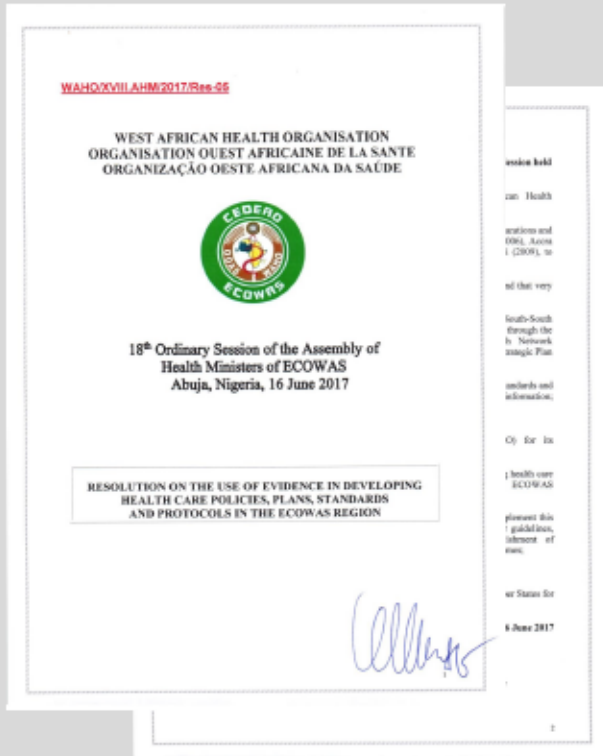
- ***Resolution on use of evidence:*** Assembly of Health Ministers
- Support to Member States to develop similar legal texts at national level

MEP: Institutional-Level Interventions

Resolution on use of evidence: Ratified by Assembly of Health Ministers in June 2017

MEP: *Institutional-Level Interventions*

Resolution on use of evidence in developing health care policies, plans, standards and protocols Ministers in June 2017



protocols, requires the use of evidence to have valid information;

The Assembly of Health Ministers of ECOWAS:

COMMENDS

the West African Health Organisation (WAHO) for its commitment to promoting the use of evidence;

ADOPTS

the “Resolution on the use of evidence in developing health care policies, plans, standards and protocols in the ECOWAS Region”;

URGES

the Ministers of Health of the Member States to implement this resolution in their countries through legislations or guidelines, capacity building in research and the establishment of mechanisms for validation and use of research outcomes;

RECOMMENDS

to WAHO to monitor its effective implementation;

CALLS ON

Development Partners to support WAHO and Member States for the implementation of this resolution.



Abuja, 16 June 2017

Part 3: Reflections and Next Steps

Reflecting on and Theorizing WAHO's work

Reflections: *Strengths of MEP*

- **Contextualized and tailored**
 - Attuned to strengths *and* weaknesses of individual Member States
 - Driven by Member State **priorities** and **needs**
- **Stakeholder-driven** from the beginning
 - Key to “*Buy-In*” and commitment
- **WAHO’s Comparative Advantage**
 - Unique **mandate**
 - Direct line of **communication** with country-level **political leaders**
 - **Reputation** and perceived legitimacy

Reflections: *Challenges*

- **Time required to achieve change**
- **Sustainability** of effects
- **Diversity** of the sub-region
 - Consideration of context critical
- Possible **unintended** (and unforeseen) **consequences**
- **Unspoken assumptions** and **hidden mechanisms**
 - Need for more explicit, consensual, long-term “**theory of change**”

Thank you

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Merci

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