

Global Research Agenda on Knowledge Translation and Evidence-informed Policy-making

Project Summary and Progress Report (July 2025)

Background

In today's era of competing narratives and misinformation, grounding policy decisions in the best available evidence is more important than ever to enhance its effectiveness, transparency, and equity yet only a small portion of relevant research findings are ultimately reflected in policy and practice.

Knowledge Translation (KT) research - also referred to by other terms such as research on research use - studies the methods, mechanisms, and measurements that support the translation of research evidence into action. The field continues to grow, though progress is often limited by fragmented efforts, a lack of cooperation and uneven distribution of resources. Project-based funding models and siloed donor priorities contribute to duplicate work and neglected research gaps, preventing the development of a cohesive and responsive evidence ecosystem.

Addressing these challenges calls for a shared, inclusive research agenda shaped by a wide range of actors within the evidence ecosystem.

Project Description

To strengthen global governance for KT research, the World Health Organization (WHO) led a comprehensive research priority-setting initiative from 2023 to 2025. Coordinated by the Evidence to Policy and Impact Unit in the Research for Health Department of WHO's Science Division, this initiative involved over 130 global experts from more than 40 countries. With strategic guidance from an international Advisory Group, the initiative extended beyond health to include related sectors, notably education and environment. A wide range of stakeholders - including representatives from civil society, academia, government, United Nations agencies, and other international organizations - actively contributed to the process through structured reviews, global consultations, and a multi-round Delphi survey. Together, these activities served to identify, refine, and validate key research priorities in KT and evidence-informed policy-making (EIP).

With its global mandate and longstanding experience in research priority-setting, WHO plays a pivotal role in promoting the use of research evidence into policy and practice. This initiative aligns with WHO's Thirteenth and Fourteenth General Programmes of Work ([GPW 13](#) and [GPW 14](#)), particularly in its focus on strengthening country data capacity systems and supporting locally-led, context-sensitive KT to address pressing public health challenges. It is the first truly global research agenda of its kind that is not only involving experts from all regions but also spans across sectors beyond just health.

Methodology

WHO, supported by an international advisory group, initiated an [open call](#) in December 2023 to engage KT researchers and practitioners in a consultative prioritization process. During the initial scoping phase, a preliminary list of 121 research areas was developed through a combination of literature reviews and responses to an open survey. Between March 2023 and February 2024, WHO convened two major expert consultations and conducted two rounds of online Delphi surveys. These activities aimed to consolidate, refine, and prioritize the research areas based on their relative importance and according to their potential impact, inclusivity, and feasibility. In total, 131 KT experts from 38 countries contributed to this comprehensive and iterative process.

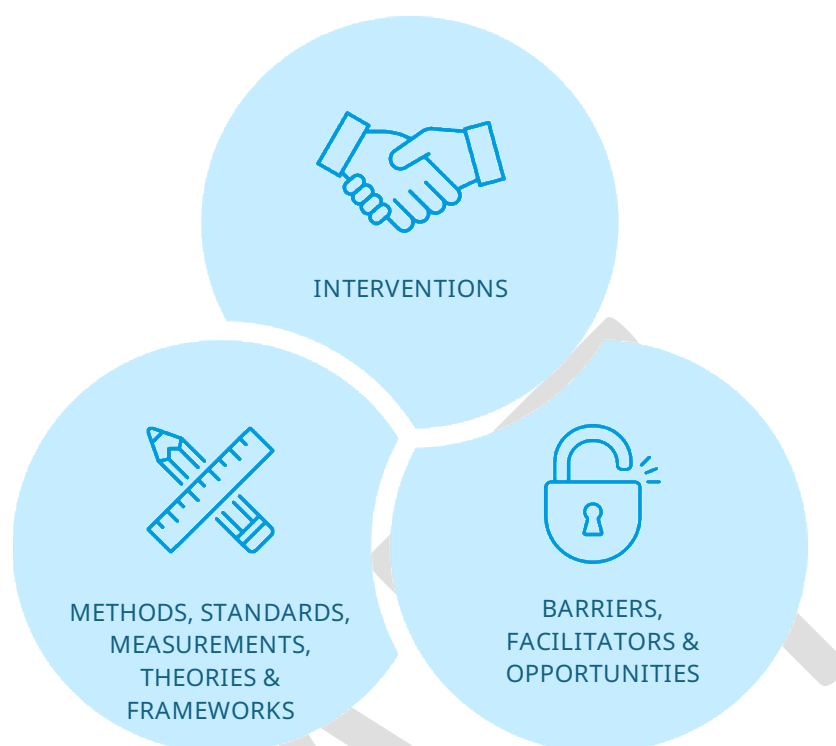
Project Goals and Impact

The priority-setting exercise aims to maximize the benefits of KT research by:

- Improving efficiencies and synergies for KT research;
- Directing and catalyzing KT research funding into priority areas;
- Enhancing understanding of successful evidence use and synthesis for policy-making;
- Fostering collaboration on KT research within health and across sectors;
- Raising awareness about KT research and evidence use for policy-making.

Results

The agenda-setting process identified three key research domains, encompassing 19 core areas established as global research priorities for KT and EIP:



- 1) Research on KT & EIP interventions:
This domain focuses on the design, implementation, sustainability, institutionalization, and evaluation of interventions that support decision-makers in using evidence effectively.
 - a. Eight priority areas were identified, including institutionalization; evaluation; engagement processes and mechanisms; responses during public health emergencies; capacity-strengthening; scale-up; and research communication.
- 2) Research on barriers, facilitators, and opportunities for KT & EIP:
This domain aims to understand the factors that either enable or hinder the effective translation and uptake of research evidence into policy.
 - a. Six key research priorities emerged, including research on contextual factors; the engagement of decision-makers; and the integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Emphasis was also placed on deepening the understanding of policy learning mechanisms; involving individuals with lived experiences; and investigating relational dynamics, including co-creation and co-production.

3) Research on KT & EIP methods, standards, measurements, theories, and frameworks:

This domain examines a range of methodological and conceptual instruments – such as methods, tools, standards, measurements, theories, models, frameworks, taxonomies, and typologies – that contribute to a deeper understanding of KT processes.

- a. Five priority areas were identified, focusing on the role of emerging technologies (e.g. artificial intelligence); decolonizing knowledge and methods; intersecting KT with basic science and other fields; harmonizing local and global knowledge; and advancing typologies, metrics, and standardizations for KT approaches.

These broad research domains are designed to be cross-cutting and applicable across various sectors and disciplines. The following three boxes present the complete set of 19 research priorities that constitute the Global Research Agenda. A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed to track the outcomes and impact of the research agenda over time. Implementation activities, including the creation of a collaborator network, will be carried forward by the [Global Coalition for Evidence](#).

INTERVENTIONS



1. Identify, develop, and assess strategies and approaches to institutionalize evidence production, translation, and use.
2. Evaluate the impacts of KT/EIP products and interventions.
3. Explore engagement processes between evidence generators, intermediaries, and users, including co-creation and co-production, for evidence uptake by decision-makers.
4. Understand, develop, and assess strategies for translating evidence during public health emergencies.
5. Assess capacity-strengthening interventions, including their adaptation and scale-up.
6. Identify, develop, and assess strategies for scaling-up KT/EIP interventions.
7. Identify, develop, and assess evidence-to-policy engagement mechanisms and best practices.
8. Improve the communication of research findings.

BARRIERS, FACILITATORS & OPPORTUNITIES



1. Examine contextual factors and their role in research uptake, implementation, and scaling-up of KT/EIP approaches at different levels.
2. Analyze factors determining the engagement of decision-makers in evidence uptake.
3. Integrate a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) lens into KT/EIP activities.
4. Understand and develop approaches for policy learning and transfer of successful KT/EIP experiences between countries and sectors.
5. Engage individuals with lived experiences in knowledge generation and translation.
6. Investigate factors that affect the relationship between evidence generators, intermediaries, users, and citizens, including co-creation and co-production.

METHODS, STANDARDS, MEASUREMENTS, THEORIES & FRAMEWORKS



1. Explore innovative and evolving technologies that support KT/EIP, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI).
2. Investigate methods, theories, and frameworks for decolonizing knowledge, research methods, and measures.
3. Explore methods for intersecting KT/EIP with basic science, clinical practice, public health, political science, and science diplomacy.
4. Explore methods for integrating and harmonizing local and global knowledge in the KT/EIP process, and for improving evidence contextualization.
5. Develop typologies, metrics, and standardizations for KT/EIP approaches.

Identified Sub-Research Areas

In addition to the 19 key research areas, the agenda-setting process identified a series of complementary sub-research areas and detailed explanations. These additions offer important context to help clarify the scope and intent of each broader research area. They also contribute to a more precise understanding of specific evidence needs, both for researchers and funding bodies. The table below presents the 19 research areas, ranked by overall priority, along with the complete list of associated sub-research areas.

Rank	Research area	Sub-research area
1	Identify, develop, and assess strategies and approaches to institutionalize evidence production, translation, and use	a) Assess organizational strategies, leadership, and approaches to institutionalize evidence use, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluating organizational readiness, • the institutional hosting and sustaining of evidence-support units, and • strategies to promote the routine use of evidence across evidence ecosystem actors at the local, national and global level b) Evaluate the extent to which KT/EIP interventions are or have been institutionalized c) Identify the most effective KT/EIP capacity-strengthening processes for institutionalizing these practices at the government level
2	Evaluate the impacts of KT/EIP products and interventions	a) Evaluate the impacts of KT/EIP interventions and strategies on policy and practice across various settings and end-users, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the sustainability of behavior change, and policy adoption, • implementation flexibility and adaptability, and • comparative impacts of integrated Knowledge Translation (IKT) versus end-of-grant KT interventions b) Evaluate the effectiveness and usefulness of KT/EIP products considering their design (e.g., evidence briefs, deliberative dialogues), target group (e.g., practitioners, policy-makers), intended outcomes (e.g., awareness, behavior change, health outcomes), impacts (e.g., policy translation, social influence, socio-economic conditions), and the context they are implemented in c) Assess the most appropriate evidence-use interventions or KT/EIP products for different circumstances and political realities, ensuring they align with available policy windows to maximize impact
3	Explore engagement processes between evidence generators, intermediaries, and users, including co-creation and co-production, for evidence uptake by decision-makers	a) Understand the formal and informal interactions, communication, and exchange mechanisms between evidence generators, intermediaries, and evidence users, and develop interventions to strengthen these linkages b) Explore the role, influence of, as well as engagement processes between different actors (e.g., researchers, intermediaries, evidence users, funders, citizens) for research co-creation to promote the democratization of evidence c) Investigate whether research co-production leads to more effective KT/EIP processes d) Explore strategies and pathways through which the engagement and leadership of decision-makers lead to greater research uptake

		e) Understand and develop context-specific KT/EIP intervention mechanisms to facilitate behavioral change in policy-makers towards using evidence
4	Examine contextual factors and their role in research uptake, implementation, and scaling-up of KT/EIP approaches at different levels	<p>a) Examine the role of contextual factors (e.g., political systems, governance structures, culture, power dynamics, political economy, institutional characteristics, interest groups) in implementing KT/EIP initiatives and strategies at different levels (individual, institutional, societal), and how these factors can be effectively addressed to improve research uptake and scale up KT/EIP approaches</p> <p>b) Assess how to maximize the impact of KT initiatives and research uptake in contexts with significant barriers to policy change, including understanding the dynamics of evidence needs and policy windows</p> <p>c) Facilitate the adaptation of KT/EIP resources to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse end-users, ensuring effective evidence uptake</p>
5	Understand, develop, and assess strategies for translating evidence during public health emergencies	a) Examine strategies to improve the translation of evidence into management, policies, and regulations during public health emergencies
6	Analyze factors determining the engagement of decision-makers in evidence uptake	<p>a) Examine personal characteristics, incentives, language use, emotions, identity, values, and preferences, along with other factors that drive decision-makers' political behavior and uptake of high-quality evidence</p> <p>b) Examine how to address these factors to strengthen engagement and foster commitment of decision-makers to use evidence</p>
7	Integrate a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) lens into KT/EIP activities	<p>a) Review co-production methods and processes to ensure DEI considerations, including gender and intersectionality, are integrated into KT/EIP activities and research</p> <p>b) Create and research guidelines for designing KT/EIP interventions with a particular focus on DEI and intersectionality, ensuring respectful interventions that actively involve local and marginalized communities</p> <p>c) Examine how to acknowledge the knowledge of structurally marginalized groups, how evidence is translated and used within their contexts, and how KT/EIP are shaped accordingly, along with the implications of engaging these groups in such efforts</p> <p>d) Investigate facilitators, barriers, outcomes, and impacts of integrating equity principles and practices into KT/EIP</p>
8	Explore innovative and evolving technologies that support KT/EIP, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI)	<p>a) Explore how innovative and evolving technologies, especially generative AI, can enhance KT/EIP methods, including applications like evidence synthesis, while also considering limitations, ethical issues, and risks such as bias, discrimination, lack of reproducibility, and data quality concerns</p> <p>b) Investigate the potential of AI to predict the success of implementing KT/EIP initiatives in various settings</p> <p>c) Develop lessons learned from case studies in generative AI to enhance KT/EIP methods, standards, and measurements</p>
9	Understand and develop approaches for policy learning and transfer of successful KT/EIP experiences	<p>a) Explore how to adapt and transfer KT/EIP experiences from one context (e.g., different countries, jurisdictions, populations, or cultures) to another, and where potential limitations of adaptation lie</p> <p>b) Conduct comparative research on evidence-to-policy ecosystems and interventions across different countries and settings that promote the use of</p>

	between countries and sectors	research findings by the three actors of the health system: government, providers, and patients
10	Engage individuals with lived experiences in knowledge generation and translation	a) Identify ways to ensure that individuals with lived experiences are equitably and meaningfully involved and properly acknowledged in both knowledge generation activities and translation interventions
11	Investigate factors that affect the relationship between evidence generators, intermediaries, users, and citizens, including co-creation and co-production	a) Investigate the barriers and facilitators to identify the most effective interventions, frameworks, and adequate practices for different audiences b) Investigate the barriers and facilitators for co-creation of knowledge with communities c) Investigate Global South versus Global North research co-production approaches, evidence generation, and evidence use for decision- and policy-making
12	Investigate methods, theories, and frameworks for decolonizing knowledge, research methods, and measures	a) Study the decoloniality of knowledge, methods, and measures to advance epistemic justice (i.e., more inclusive and equitable forms of knowledge production and exchange), including examining power imbalances in language use b) Understand how intersectionality, critical race theory, power dynamics, equity considerations, and traditional knowledge systems can be embedded in KT/EIP methods, approaches, frameworks, and research use studies c) Explore tools and methods that best integrate equity impact assessments into policies, interventions, and economic evaluations
13	Assess capacity-strengthening interventions, including their adaptation and scale-up	a) Identify and evaluate the most effective KT/EIP capacity-strengthening interventions, exploring strategies for adaptation and scaling across diverse audiences, while assessing their short- and long-term effects on knowledge, skills, behaviors, and research uptake, considering variations based on training duration, intensity, delivery methods, and contextual factors b) Assess KT/EIP knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for different evidence ecosystem actors at all career stages and levels (e.g., via competency profiles), and how to integrate KT/EIP into existing training curriculums c) Identify and test interventions and strategies to strengthen and sustain local capacity of researchers and knowledge users, e.g., for co-production or implementing evidence products
14	Identify, develop, and assess strategies for scaling-up KT/EIP interventions	a) Identify, develop, and assess strategies and practical interventions for scaling-up evidence uptake and understand their comparative effectiveness across different countries, sectors, and systems
15	Identify, develop, and assess evidence-to-policy engagement mechanisms and best practices	a) Evaluate the effectiveness, processes, and outcomes of evidence-to-policy engagement mechanisms and forums (deliberative dialogues, virtual policy dialogues, international meetings/conferences, etc.) for different audiences and in different contexts b) Identify best practices for meaningfully and effectively engaging different KT/EIP actors, including researchers, policy-makers, evidence users, underrepresented groups, Indigenous communities, funders, knowledge brokers, bureaucrats, and civil society c) Analyze policy- vs. practice-led knowledge exchange mechanisms
16	Improve the communication of research findings	a) Develop and evaluate interventions to improve the communication of research findings to interest-holders and the general public, including identifying suitable knowledge products for various target audiences and contexts b) Measure the effectiveness, sustainability, and transferability of communicating

		complex scientific results across different contexts, involving both evidence generators and users d) Examine the skills necessary for effective scientific communication to increase research uptake
17	Explore methods for intersecting KT/EIP with basic science, clinical practice, public health, political science, and science diplomacy	a) Examine differences and similarities in KT/EIP initiatives between clinical practice, public health, and overall health systems in terms of intervention effectiveness, evidence hierarchies, context, audience, and goals
18	Explore methods for integrating and harmonizing local and global knowledge in the KT/EIP process, and for improving evidence contextualization	a) Explore methods and frameworks for integrating and harmonizing local and global knowledge and research evidence in the KT/EIP process b) Explore how to use and adapt evaluation frameworks and criteria for KT/EIP at the local level, or develop new ones where necessary c) Assess methods how local meanings and interpretations can be leveraged to improve the translation of evidence in diverse contexts
19	Develop typologies, metrics, and standardizations for KT/EIP approaches	a) Conceptualize and standardize KT/EIP terminologies, concepts, products, methods, and typologies globally and across sectors b) Develop standardized indicators, metrics, measures, tools, and methods, and core outcome sets for monitoring and evaluating KT/EIP initiatives, decision-makers' behavioral change, and intervention effectiveness c) Identify mechanisms, including those proposed in the literature, to categorize evidence-use approaches

Note: Colors denote the respective research domain. Blue = "Research on KT & EIP Interventions"; Pink = "Research on barriers, facilitators, and opportunities for KT & EIP"; Green = "Research on KT & EIP methods, standards, measurements, theories, and frameworks".

Contact

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