

Institutionalization of EIDM curriculum into government and research institutions in Kenya and Malawi

Key Messages

1. Delivering Evidence-Informed Decision-Making (EIDM) training to institution staff as part of continuing professional education is key for entrenching an evidence use culture.
2. Through the HIGH-Res project, high-level engagement with leaders at selected training institutions led to understanding of the need to incorporate EIDM modules/course in existing programmes.
3. Incorporating EIDM training in training programmes can ensure long-term sustainability since a critical mass of current and future policymakers will benefit by acquiring EIDM skills from these programmes.
4. Follow up and mentorship are key in supporting target institutions to adapt and incorporate the existing EIDM curricula in their training programmes.

Evidence has an important role to play in improving policy, programme and practice decisions that ultimately improve development effectiveness^{1,2}. However, decision-making processes are complex and evidence often competes with many other factors including interests of policymakers, politics, value systems, technical and institutional capacities, and financial constraints^{3,4}.

Led by the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), the Heightening Institutional Capacity for Government Use of Health Research (HIGH-Res) project aims at strengthening institutional capacity to facilitate increased use of health research in decision-making. The collaborative programme is implemented by a consortium of institutions, working in partnerships with the Ministries of Health (MoH) of Kenya, Malawi and Uganda.

As part of the project's objective of strengthening existing structures to institutionalize mechanisms for evidence synthesis and use, AFIDEP plans to introduce a training module on evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM). The training will target civil servants, post-graduate students and institution staff as part of continuing professional education which is key for entrenching an evidence use culture. Incorporating EIDM training in pre-service and in-service training programmes is a strategy of acquiring EIDM skills and ensuring long-term sustainability among policymakers.

Between 2020 and 2021, the HIGH-Res team has made strategic efforts towards introducing EIDM courses into existing programmes. Some of the activities include:

- High-level engagement with leaders at the selected institutions on the importance of incorporating EIDM modules/courses into their existing programmes.
- Training of Trainers (ToT) for the delivery of the EIDM curricula in the institutions.
- Supporting follow-up and mentorship in the institutions where need arises, in the adaptation of the EIDM curriculum in their training programmes.

¹Stewart, R; L Langer; Y Erasmus (2018). An integrated model for increasing the use of evidence by decision-makers for improved development. *Development Southern Africa*. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0376835X.2018.1543579>

²Newman, K, Fisher, C & Shaxson, L, (2012). Stimulating demand for research evidence: what role for capacity building. *IDS Bulletin* 43(5), 17–24. doi: 10.1111/j.1759-5436.2012.00358.

³Jones, H, Jones, N, Shaxson, L & Walker, D, (2012). *Knowledge, policy and power in international development: a practical guide*. Policy Press, London.

⁴Buse, K. and S. Hawkes (2014). Health post-2015: Evidence and power, *Lancet*, 22;383(9918):678-9. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(13)61945-5.

Below are the four institutes in Malawi and Kenya where the project introduced the EIDM curriculum and their planned deliverable in the coming year following the ToT.

Table 1: Institutes trained on EIDM and planned deliverables

Institute	Description	EIDM curriculum review date	EIDM ToT date	Planned deliverable following training
Kenya School of Government (KSG)	Founded under an Act of Parliament with a mandate to transform the public service through human resource capacity development. KSG offers training aimed at developing professional competencies, public service values and capabilities for research-based policymaking.	Feb 2020	Oct 2021	To introduce the curriculum to the school targeting officers of different levels including technical and director level.
Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI)	A state corporation established through the Science and Technology (Amendment) Act of 1979, responsible for carrying out health research in Kenya. Within KEMRI, the KEMRI Graduate School was established by KEMRI Board of Management in 1992 to train postgraduate students in health research.	Aug 2021	Sept 2021	To introduce the curriculum to the institute targeting technical staff as an induction course. In addition, the curriculum will be incorporated into the post graduate curriculum within the KEMRI Graduate School.
The Kamuzu College of Health Sciences (KUHeS)	Emerges from the amalgamation of two (former) constituent colleges of the University of Malawi (UNIMA), i.e., the Kamuzu College of Nursing (KCN) and the College of Medicine (CoM). The Institutes were established in 1965 and 1991 respectively with the three main roles of training, research and service.	Oct 2021	Oct 2021	Work with the academicians for opportunities when the institution reviews its curriculum to open window for introduction of the new curriculum as a long-term course. In addition, strategize on how to pitch the EIDM curriculum to Health Economics and Policy Unit (HEPU) as a short course.
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT)	Started in 1981 as a Middle Level College (Jomo Kenyatta College of Agriculture and Technology (JKCAT)) by the Government of Kenya. In 1988, the college was established as a University through the JKUAT Act of 1994 and inaugurated on 7 December 1994. The University offers diverse academic programmes from Certificate, Diploma, Degree, Masters, Doctoral and Post-Doctoral courses.	Oct 2021	Oct 2021	To introduce the curriculum as a short course at post graduate level of the institute. The team will also strategize to incorporate the curriculum as a long course.

EIDM curriculum and its development

EIDM training curriculum was developed by AFIDEP (and partners) in 2014 and used to train technical level in MoHs and parliament, to strengthen their technical capacity in accessing, appraising, interpreting, synthesizing, and utilizing research evidence in decision-making.

The introduction of EIDM curriculum involves two processes;

1. **The curriculum review:** Involves a collaborative review of the curriculum to tailor the content to the target audience.
2. **The Training of Trainers (ToT):** Introduces the EIDM curriculum to the trainers who will be delivering the course. This is to equip the institution selected trainers with the skills needed to conduct the EIDM training course.

EIDM curriculum structure

● Face-to-face or online programme

The programme can be delivered face-to-face or virtually. The virtual modality is to accommodate the current pandemic situation which has made face-to-face meeting a challenge.

● Face-to-face programme

A two-week programme (10-days), during which module 1 is offered in week-1 and module 2 is offered in week-2.

● Online programme

A four-week (20 days) programme, during which module 1 is offered in two weeks (10 days), and module 2 is offered in the next two weeks (10 days).

● Mentorship Phase

The EIDM training is followed by a one-month remote mentorship to support learners to apply the knowledge and skills by producing a policy brief.

EIDM curriculum content

The EIDM training course comprises of five sub-modules summarised in the table below (Table 2).

Table 2: Curriculum module and description

Module	Description
Introduction	Provides an overview of the training course, its rationale, and helps participants and trainers to get to know each other.
Module 1: Foundation of Policymaking	Provides an understanding of the policy-making process, including the factors and actors influencing decisions; the role of evidence in the policy-making process; the barriers and facilitators of evidence use; and guidance in defining a clear policy question or issue.
Module 2: Accessing Evidence	Develops knowledge and skills for conducting systematic searches for evidence and assessing evidence sources, as well as establishing and maintaining meaningful links with researchers.
Module 3: Appraising Evidence	Builds on knowledge of how to assess the quality and rigor of research and other evidence before deciding to use it. It provides a basic review of various research designs and methodologies and the kinds of evidence they produce; critical appraisal of the strength of research articles and bodies of evidence; measures of strength.
Module 4: Synthesizing Evidence	Develops knowledge and skills in determining the usability of evidence; synthesizing a wide range of evidence for decision-making; and developing effective policy or evidence briefs from the synthesized evidence.
Module 5: Applying Evidence	Builds understanding of the indicators of evidence use, and developing and implementing effective communication strategies to share evidence for decision-making.
Wrap-Up	Brings the training to a close and presents the training follow-up plan for each learner.

NB: Upon request, the curriculum was customised to include additional modules like public policy module and monitoring and evaluation module (Table 3).

Table 3: Additional curriculum modules and description

Module	Description
Foundation of Public policy	Provides an understanding of the public policy concept, policymaking process, including the factors and actors influencing decisions; the actors in the policymaking process and defining a policy question or issue.
Monitoring and Evaluation	Describes the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes and tools in policy engagement and evidence uptake efforts. It elucidates what to measure and how to measure it when it comes to policy engagement and evidence uptake efforts.

Training Workshop Delivery

The training workshop commenced with a pre-training test using the Survey Monkey tool that was to assess the level of knowledge and skills on EIDM. The results were compared with the results of the post-test to assess the effect of the training workshop.

The actual training workshop was offered over five days. To ensure effective learning, the curriculum used a mix of training methods including interactive lectures, role play, case study reviews, small group and plenary discussions, and individual practical exercises. The curriculum also featured question and answer in each session

as well as session evaluation to ensure the participants provide feedback on the delivery of training sessions for improvement as the workshop progresses. The training was delivered by trained lecturers and AFIDEP who were adequately equipped and prepared to effectively deliver the course.

To support learners to apply skills, the trainers had each learner identify one evidence product to produce following the workshop (e.g., policy brief, position paper, cabinet paper, etc.) learners were encouraged to focus their products on evidence that is needed by their agencies so that the products produced will be presented to senior policymakers at their agencies for decision-making.

Feedback from the trainers engaged in the ToT

The EIDM curriculum was introduced to primarily support the institute to introduce a training on EIDM in their curriculum and to effectively implement the teaching of the same.

“The engagement introduced us to the systematic processes of developing a curriculum for researchers and best methods to deliver effective training and/or communication for targeted audience. The ToT will heighten the capacity and help institutionalise EIDM and a learning culture within the institute.”

KSG lecturer

“The session was interesting with practical sessions to allow the participants to grasp the technical component. The most interesting part was learning the concepts of developing policy briefs for policymakers that would enhance uptake of research evidence to inform policy and practice.”

KUHES lecturer

“The EIDM skills will help us improve networks and communicate effectively with stakeholders (students, scientist, policymakers etc) in the institute and promote evidence-informed health decision-making by producing high quality, systematic reviews and other synthesized evidence.”

JKUAT lecturer

“As an example with KEMRI, we anticipate the training will benefit a number of stakeholders within the institute.

First, KEMRI graduate students will benefit since the course has great potential that will transform their public health problems into research questions, literature search, synthesis and production of evidence briefs. The course will strengthen their dissemination of research findings to communicate to any target stakeholders.

Secondly, KEMRI research scientists will also benefit from extra skills from research-to-policy engagement. Coupled with this, is the ability to communicate effectively and address the issues that decision-makers would want to hear, they can act upon the actionable recommendations of research output and transform how they have been conducting priority-setting and other allocative decisions.

Finally, for KEMRI management and by extension, Resource Development and Knowledge Management (RD&KM) Unit, this course will help to build capacity in knowledge translation and ability to generate research evidence/policy briefs with information collated from the various KEMRI research centers and field stations located all over Kenya.”

KEMRI lecturer



Standing from left: David Mutunga (KEMRI), Lilian Mayieka (KEMRI), Jennifer Orwa (KEMRI), Rose Oronje (AFIDEP), James Wodera (KEMRI), Steven Onteri (KEMRI), Aggrey Mokaya (KEMRI) and Leylah Abdullahi (AFIDEP).
Infront: James Kariuki, (KEMRI) and Rose Bosire (KEMRI)



From left: Evans Ayao (KSG), Bob Gichana (KSG), Isaiah Omondi (KSG), Brian Mbugua (KSG), Fredrick Mukabi (KSG), Patrick Gachagua (KSG), Hilda Mugendi (KSG), Rose Oronje (AFIDEP), Andrew Rori (KSG), Leyla Abdullahi (AFIDEP), and Antony Kamakia (KSG)

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