



# Assessment of the Evidence Ecosystem in Trinidad and Tobago: A Pilot Study of the World Health Organization Checklist to Institutionalize Evidence-Informed Policymaking

## Project Overview

June 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### Background and Scope

In Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), the findings of Evidence-Informed Policymaking (EIPM) Needs Assessments, in the health and other social sectors, have highlighted some important challenges that Ministries face when attempting to find, appraise, synthesize, and use evidence in policymaking. These include inadequate: (i) awareness/ understanding of EIPM, (ii) capacity, (iii) skills, (iv) human resources, and (v) institutional support to effectively generate and utilize evidence. Limited access to quality data and the involvement of stakeholders/citizens in the process have also been identified as key challenges (1,2).

To address some of these challenges, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has collaborated with the Caribbean Centre for Health Systems Research and Development ([CCHSRD](#)), The University of the West Indies and other key stakeholders to implement several activities/initiatives geared towards strengthening and institutionalizing the country's capacity to generate as well as systematically and transparently use evidence in decision-making. These include:

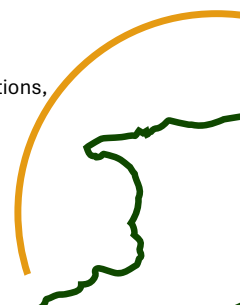
- ⇒ hosting the country's first [Reverse Research Day](#);
- ⇒ developing a [National Health Research Agenda](#); and
- ⇒ hosting annual [National Health Research Conferences](#) (2020-2023).

To support evidence uptake/utilization in policymaking, CCHSRD has conducted several EIPM capacity-building workshops as well as hosted an Evidence to Policy Fellowship Training Programme. Additionally, the Centre and the MOH have been co-producing [knowledge translation products](#) and co-hosting stakeholder dialogues.

While the initiatives stated above are steps in the right direction, there is still a critical need to strengthen the institutionalization of EIPM<sup>1</sup> in T&T, that is, “to make it integral to organization[s], society, or culture, so that it is seen as ‘normal’” (3). An assessment of the country's evidence ecosystem would allow key stakeholders to objectively understand what

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<sup>1</sup> The institutionalization of EIPM is defined as the “process and outcome of (re-)creating, maintaining and reinforcing norms, regulations, and standard practices that, based on collective meaning and values, actions as well as endowment of resources, allow evidence to become – over time – a legitimate and taken-for-granted part of policymaking”.



domains of EIPM institutionalization are already in place, the stage of institutionalization in which the country currently exists, and the actions needed to catalyse movement into the next stage of institutionalization (3,4).

## Goal

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To understand the situation and status quo of EIPM institutionalization in T&T by piloting WHO's checklist which was developed to support the routine use of evidence during the policymaking process.

## Objectives

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The objectives of the Evidence Ecosystem Assessment include:

1. assessing the situations and evidence ecosystem for EIPM in Trinidad and Tobago;
2. identifying the stage of institutionalization and exploring key actions of six institutionalization domains;
3. producing a list of key actions to strengthen current institutions or move forward to the next stage of institutionalization; and
4. obtaining stakeholders' feedback on the usefulness and efficiency of the tool and refining the tool.

## Audience

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The target audience will include **evidence producers** and **users** selected from the MOH and CCHSRD's EIPM stakeholder map and will comprise **policymakers** and **researchers**.

## Approach<sup>2</sup>

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The pilot study **methods** will include:



document review



key informant interviews



focus groups discussions



participatory workshops

Activities will be implemented **three stages**:

- (i) situation analysis
- (ii) identification of institutionalization stage and actions under the six domains in the checklist
- (iii) feedback and reflection

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<sup>2</sup> Research Ethics Committees approval granted by: Ministry of Health, T&T, World Health Organization, Evidence to Policy and Practice Centre and The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine.



## Outputs

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The outputs of the Evidence Ecosystem Assessment will include:

1. Situation Analysis Report derived from a desk review and primary research
2. Final Project Report
3. Peer-Reviewed Publication

## Outcomes

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The Evidence Ecosystem Assessment will:

1. increase stakeholders' awareness of the gaps in existing norms, regulations and practices related to the routine use of evidence during the health policymaking process in T&T;
2. produce a shared/common understanding of the importance and role of research evidence in the policymaking process in T&T as well as the stage of institutionalization in which the country currently exists, and the actions needed to catalyse movement into the next stage of institutionalization; and
3. promote collaborative effort towards the implementation of recommendations (*list of actions*) for strengthening/improving the evidence ecosystem for EIPM in T&T.

## References:

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1. Caribbean Centre for Health Systems Research and Development, UWI. Detailed Evidence Informed Policymaking Needs Assessment Report - Ministry of Health, Trinidad and Tobago. Caribbean Centre for Health Systems Research and Development, UWI; 2019.
2. Caribbean Centre for Health Systems Research and Development, UWI. Needs Assessment: Evidence Informed Policymaking at Four Social Sector Ministries in Trinidad & Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago: Caribbean Centre for Health Systems Research and Development; 2022 Nov p. 62.
3. World Health Organization. WHO Checklist - EIDM Institutionalization. World Health Organization; 2023.
4. World Health Organization. Evidence, policy, impact.: WHO Guide for evidence-informed decision-making [Internet]. World Health Organization; 2021. Available from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240039872>

