"From Scientific Evidence to Programs, Strategies, and Policies in the Arab Region:

Research, Rights, and Regional Action for Young Children in Crises", the *Symposium Outcomes Report*

23 October 2025

Introduction

In August 2025, *the Arab Network for Early Childhood Development (ANECD)* and *[Moving Minds Alliance (MMA)](#)*, in collaboration with the *[National Council for Family Affairs](#)* in Jordan, hosted a regional research symposium titled *"Scientific Evidence for ECD Programs and Policies in the Arab Region: Research, Rights, and Regional Action for Young Children in Crisis"*.

The aims of this symposium were to enhance and strengthen ECD in crisis knowledge and practice in Arab countries by sharing research findings, with a specific focus on the *Strategic Research Model (SRM)*. It also sought to promote collaboration and dialogue among researchers, policymakers, and regional representatives, advocate for evidence-based programs, policies, and strategies, and communicate results to other regions affected by poly-crisis.

This symposium Outcome Report emphasizes the *Strategic Research Model* as an innovative framework for conducting regionally focused research, presents findings from discussions on translating research into policy, and explores potential pathways for doing so in the Arab Region.

Section One:
Background and significance

The Arab Network for Early Childhood (ANECD) is an Arab multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral nonprofit organization focused on early childhood care, development, and education—especially in poly-crisis situations. The Moving Minds Alliance (MMA) is a multi-stakeholder alliance advocating for better outcomes and equity for young children affected by crises worldwide, leveraging the strengths of diverse local and global actors to prioritize early childhood development in every crisis response. Together, we are working to innovate how early childhood development in crisis response, knowledge, advocacy, and change can be advanced to foster progress.

In situations of prolonged crisis and their impact on young children and their caregivers, finding the balance between understanding key issues, responding to urgent humanitarian needs, and protecting the future of affected communities through meaningful change is challenging. This is because establishing pathways for research, its use in advocacy efforts, and effective policy change is difficult, especially in rapidly changing or unstable environments. Specifically, ECD in crisis research often struggles to reach a national, regional, or global audience due to competing priorities, limited funding, and lack of visibility. In the Arab region, significant efforts have been made in this area. However, the work continues to progress and has been advanced by bringing together key stakeholders in research and policy to share ideas and collaboratively develop solutions to critical issues in the research-to-policy process.

The two-day symposium welcomed delegates and representatives from government, academia, regional networks, international experts, and local and international NGOs, representing a broad geographic area including Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Morocco, Tunisia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, the USA, the UK, the Netherlands, and South Africa. This encouraged lively collaborative learning and discussion, culminating in a policy workshop focused on generating insights into the most effective ways to integrate and embed regionally-driven research into policy frameworks.

Section Two:

The Strategic Research Model (SRM) in early childhood:
An innovative framework for developing knowledge and policies

The regional symposium focused on sharing research results, especially the *Strategic Research Model (SRM).*

SRM is a participatory research model developed by ANECD and used by researchers in Arab countries to set goals, policies, models, and methods for improving knowledge in early childhood. It is a scientific tool that connects research with programming, strategies, and policies. By incorporating other research types, such as the Action Research Model and Community Participatory Research, it aims to produce comprehensive joint results, detailed strategies, and effective policies.

In developing the model, *ANECD* began with the common standard, a familiar premise of growing interest in early childhood development, care, protection, and education, aiming to achieve the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).* This is based on the "holistic integrated approach," especially during complex multidimensional crises. The lack of a unified research framework for different national initiatives and programs led *ANECD* to consider creating a framework that ensures coordination and integration in these areas. There was also a need for a research model that enhances knowledge production and guarantees usability across programs, strategies, and policies.

The idea for *SRM* also emerged from a series of events organized by *ANECD.* During these convenings, key questions were raised about supporting and implementing research related to early childhood development (ECD), including cognitive, social, emotional, and physical aspects. Discussions also focused on the best ways to gather data on ECD indicators, such as education quality, health, and family support services. Participants explored methods to evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs and interventions, measuring their impact on children and families. Additionally, strategies to build capacity among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in early childhood research and evaluation were highlighted to promote collaboration and mutual benefit. The need for creating platforms to share research findings, best practices, and lessons learned with stakeholders and decision-makers in Arab countries and beyond was also emphasized, along with the importance of establishing dedicated platforms for collecting and analyzing ECD-related data.

A quick guide to *SRM*

What is it?	*SRM* pillars
- It is a participatory research model developed by *ANECD*. - A group of researchers in Arab countries is working to establish goals, policies, models, and methods for advancing knowledge in early childhood development. - It is a scientific tool connecting research to programming, strategies, and policies.	- Strengthening the policy-oriented research component and the evaluation studies at *ANECD* - The need for a research model that enhances knowledge production and ensures usability across programs, strategies, and policies - Data collection mechanisms linked to development indicators - Developing platforms for sharing research findings, best practices, and lessons learned with decision-makers.

First: Between knowledge production and influencing policies

Since its inception, the *Strategic Research Model* has demonstrated various benefits, most notably fostering a participatory regional research framework that emphasizes early childhood priorities in Arab contexts and supports policy development. It also connects research to organizational and program goals and strategic priorities, enabling accurate and cost-effective data collection across different national groups. Additionally, it provides valuable, authentic policymaking information free from bureaucracy across public administrations.

Regarding topic selection, methodology, and data collection, the core principles of *SRM* are teamwork and collaboration, emphasizing the importance of participatory research. The model also offers a comprehensive approach that enhances work in the field of ECD by producing replicable and comparable national and regional reports, developing policy briefs that support effective implementation, and facilitating advocacy and communication campaigns.

One of the additional benefits of *SRM* is that the research provides essential tools for decision-makers, such as recent comparable data, key performance indicators (KPIs), collaborative platforms for knowledge sharing, and continuous feedback mechanisms from the field to policies. It also aligns strategically with institutional goals and uses a participatory design that includes stakeholders, considering gender, vulnerable groups, and people with disabilities. Furthermore, it is methodologically flexible and adaptable to crises and emerging trends. It promotes sustainability and functions as a tool for creating more equitable and responsive early childhood systems in Arab countries.

Unlike traditional studies, which focus on only one aspect of child development, SRM combines cognitive, social, emotional, and physical elements in a single study, highlighting sustainability and policy influence.

The impact of *SRM* went beyond just theoretical ideas. It also contributed to shaping actual policies by suggesting changes to Child Rights laws in six Arab countries, improving working conditions for professional child caregivers, implementing policies to support children during crises, and integrating the environmental aspect into EC strategies.

Second: Scope of research in the *SRM*

Strategic research models focus on the five intervention areas prioritized by *ANECD*. These include Child Rights, the early childhood workforce, early childhood in complex crises and emergencies, early childhood and climate change, and protection and digital empowerment for children.

Accordingly, the topics include Child Rights laws and legislation in various Arab countries with different contexts, the conditions of parents and caregivers during crises, parents' awareness of

the impacts of the climate crisis on children, and the working conditions and professional development needs of the ECD workforce.

The research models showcased at the symposium were as follows:

1. "[The status of parents and caregivers during crises in 6 Arab Countries](#)", namely Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco

2. "[The working conditions of educators in nurseries and kindergartens in 7 Arab Countries](#)", namely Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Oman

3. "[Review of Child's Rights laws and legislations in 6 Arab countries](#)", namely Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco

4. "Knowledge and practices of parents and caregivers regarding the impact of the climate change crisis on children in six Arab Countries", namely Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Oman, Tunisia, and Morocco

5. "Professional development of early childhood educators in nurseries and kindergartens in seven Arab Countries", namely Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Oman, Morocco, and Tunisia

6. "Reviewing national early childhood strategies and their alignment with the SDGs in six Arab countries", namely Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Morocco, and Tunisia. This model is currently being implemented.

SRM extends beyond the topics already mentioned. Through its participatory approach, engaging national ECD networks, community involvement, and empowerment, it has demonstrated the ability to highlight and address the crises facing Arab countries in the ECD sector. For example, it provided a structured space for analysing how political instability, displacement, and economic hardship affect early childhood systems and policies. Through collaborative regional research and cross-country exchanges, **SRM has generated actionable insights that help guide national responses and policy reforms in times of crisis.** *The model can be expanded to include broader topics, such as digital challenges in childhood research, unchilding children, the status of children with disabilities and their challenges, and other issues related to Child Rights, all while considering each region and country's cultural factors and specificities.*

Section three:
From Research to Policies

First: The Importance of Research in Policy Formulation

Research is crucial for policy development because it provides evidence that guides decision-making and helps ensure effective interventions. It enables policymakers to systematically and scientifically understand what each country and context needs and to create evidence-based policy briefs to inform their choices. This is especially important in Arab countries, where research is conducted but often not aligned with national needs, priorities, and strategic frameworks, particularly in the ECD sector. Without research, policies depend on assumptions rather than facts and realities, leading to inefficient resource allocation or interventions that fail to meet the actual needs of children, families, and communities.

Furthermore, research helps identify gaps, trends, and emerging issues, ensuring policies address the most urgent challenges. It also plays a vital role in promoting accountability. Incorporating community voices, including children's perspectives, is a crucial and necessary part of policy-relevant research. When community experiences are reflected in research, policies become more relevant, culturally appropriate, and practically effective. In short, research transforms knowledge into actionable strategies, turning valuable information often unused into practical applications.

Research also plays a crucial role in strategic policy planning. By providing data on priorities, needs, and the effectiveness of previous interventions, research helps policymakers anticipate challenges and make informed choices. This is especially vital in complex situations, such as emergencies, where accurate evidence can guide actions that directly impact the well-being of young children. Therefore, evidence-based research bridges understanding community needs and implementing effective policies, ensuring that decision-making is well-informed and often proactive.

Second: Strategies for integrating research into policy

When connecting research to policy, a key dilemma emerges.

"What are the key strategies for integrating research into policy?" To ensure research effectively supports policy, it is essential to create frameworks that identify stakeholders, national priorities, and sectoral strategies. Guiding research to match policy needs requires direct coordination, as

research can remain outside the decision-making process without proper networking. Promoting collaboration between policymakers and researchers from the beginning is a vital strategy. Interactive platforms, ongoing dialogue, and joint professional development opportunities help build shared understanding and trust, increasing the likelihood that research will influence policy development.

It's also crucial to turn research into practical tools like policy briefs, toolkits, and guidelines for program development. These tools should communicate research findings in clear, accessible language so decision-makers can easily understand and use them. Contextualization is essential because research findings are relevant to local circumstances, cultural specificities, and economic realities. Narratives, stories, case studies, and quantitative data can help influence decision-makers by adding a human element that shows real-world impact.

Furthermore, interconnected, multi-sector strategies are crucial. Policies often overlap in areas like education, health, and social protection, making it vital for research to identify these connections. By adopting systems thinking, policymakers can ensure that research focuses on comprehensive solutions rather than isolated, sector-specific actions.

In Early Childhood Development (ECD), systems thinking involves looking at the big picture instead of focusing on just one part of the puzzle. It helps us understand how various factors, like government policies, school funding, teacher training, a child's home environment, and community values, are all connected and influence one another. This approach demonstrates that to genuinely improve the quality of early education, you can't fix just one thing in isolation; you need to understand and address how the entire system functions together.

For more about Systems thinking:
https://ecdan.org/systems-masterclass/

Section four:
Between research and policies in the Arabic region: Processes and potentials

We now recognise that the importance of research-based policy cannot be overstated. It is also well understood that achieving this is notoriously difficult. To this end, participants and delegates from the Arab region identified several effective methods to translate research into policy, most notably:

- Conducting national assessments to understand each country's current situation, priorities, and gaps is a crucial first step. These assessments provide evidence-based interventions.
- Creating regional networks and professional development platforms helps strengthen the voices of local researchers and encourages knowledge sharing and collaboration both regionally and globally.
- Engaging communities, parents, local governments, and civil society ensures that research meets real needs.
- Pilot programs and small-scale interventions are crucial. Research that shows specific results, such as improved service quality or cost-benefit analysis, can offer persuasive evidence for policymakers to adopt similar methods on a larger scale.
- Leveraging local, regional, and global networks allows learning from experts and sharing knowledge broadly while promoting innovative solutions and respecting cultural and contextual differences.
- Maintaining ongoing communication among researchers, policymakers, and communities is crucial to ensuring that research goes beyond simply gathering information and reporting. Instead, it should focus on evaluating and improving practices in a sustainable, evidence-based way.
- By applying the strategies mentioned above, Arab countries can improve the influence of research on policymaking and ensure that interventions are appropriate, relevant, and tailored to the needs of children, families, and communities. This way, evidence-based research shifts from merely a tool for understanding reality to a catalyst for practical, realistic, and context-specific policies.

Conclusion

The first regional symposium on early childhood research during crises emphasized the importance of evidence-based research, like the Strategic Research Model, in shaping effective early childhood policies across the Arab region. It reinforced that sustainable progress depends on a systems-thinking approach that connects education, health, protection, and social policies.

Moving forward, ongoing regional collaboration and effective research-to-policy translation are vital. This symposium clearly calls for action: to create resilient and equitable early childhood systems, future policies must be based on thorough research that actively centers the voices, experiences, and contexts of children and their communities.

You may access the symposium's mini website here.

You may also access the Symposium's special coverage here.