



# From Scientific Evidence to Policies and Programs

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As part of the [first regional symposium](#) on early childhood research in August 2025, a workshop was convened entitled *“From Scientific Evidence to Programs and Policies in the Arab Region: Research, Rights, and Regional Action for Young Children in Crisis”*. The workshop aimed to identify the challenges associated with data collection and research in crisis contexts, clarify research priorities in the field of early childhood, analyze the reasons for the weak translation of research into effective policies, and propose innovative solutions to enhance the link between scientific knowledge and decision-making.

During the workshop sessions, the participants presented a set of ideas that reflected the reality of research and applied work in the Arab region. They also contributed to elaborate practical proposals that activate the role of research in formulating policies and programs. These ideas are summarized below across four axes:

### **First: Challenges in Data Collection**

Participants agreed that data collection in the region faces multiple obstacles, most notably the difficult access to reliable and updated data, absence of unified tools and standards across countries, limited funding, high cost of data collection, and lack of specialized personnel and research capabilities. There were also challenges related to the disparity in national contexts and policies across countries and the difficulty of accessing and collecting data from areas that are remote or affected by crises. Participants also pointed to the absence of a culture of documentation and accountability, low respondent motivation, lack of awareness of the importance of data, absence of feedback mechanisms for respondents, in addition to the poor digital integration between national and regional platforms.

To address these challenges, participants recommended the following key solutions:

- Establishment of continuously updated national and regional databases
- Standardization and collective use of measurement tools and standards across countries,
- Allocation of national budgets alongside regional and international support.

They also emphasized the importance of building national research capacities, enhancing coordination and exchange of expertise between Arab countries, and involving the civil society in data collection, especially in vulnerable areas. Recommendations also highlighted spreading the culture of documentation, promoting transparency and accountability, raising awareness about the importance of data in improving policies, and providing participants in the research with tangible results encouraging responsiveness. The development of interconnected digital systems linking Arab platforms to the global ones was also recommended.

## **Second: Current Early Childhood Research Priorities**

Participants indicated that current research in early childhood still suffers from clear gaps, since research targeting the critical age group from birth to three years is absent and curricula for this age group lack clear standards. The region also suffers from a lack of appropriate assessment tools, particularly “learning readiness indicators” and lack of studies on the impact of digitalization on children's development and well-being. Most studies are limited to cross-sectional methodologies that do not accurately examine developmental progress. Additionally, tracking of program impacts after implementation is weak. Participants also noted the scarcity of research addressing the conditions of children in crisis settings, the limited involvement of decision-makers in policy formulation, and the difficulty of defining parental roles in the current crises.

Recommendations include:

- Conducting specialized research on educational issues and age-appropriate curricula (birth to 3 years)
- Developing studies to determine the basic competencies of caregivers and setting national criteria for their selection
- Enhancing research on children's readiness when transitioning to formal education.
- Expanding studies on digitization and measuring its impact on children's development
- Conducting longitudinal research on developmental standards
- Conducting evaluative research to measure the actual impact of implemented programs and projects.

Participants emphasized the importance of studying the impact of crises (wars, poverty, climate change) on children's brain and cognitive development, activating the participation of decision-makers in early childhood strategies, and formulating new models for parental roles that align with social and economic transformations.

## **Third: Challenges in translating research into policy**

One of the main themes of the workshop was analyzing the reasons for the weak transformation of research into effective policy. It was found that policy formulation often occurs in isolation from scientific evidence, due to weak coordination between sectors and the absence of formal knowledge transfer mechanisms. Some decision-makers rely on personal experience or political pressures rather than research evidence. Moreover, high implementation costs, the prevalence of short-term funding, and the limited ability to understand complex research are all factors that hinder the utilization of research findings. Additionally, the researchers discussed the challenges of linking scientific research findings to local realities and engaging civil society, while many

focus on academic publishing without practical impact, especially after the delayed publication of results when the need for them ceases. Lack of awareness of the importance of research, weak analytical skills, and lack of scientific terminology in Arabic for some scientific concepts are all additional constraints. Finally, participants expressed the weakness of knowledge transfer channels through effective communication with decision makers, as well as the conflict between donor priorities and national needs, in addition to the weak contribution of the private sector in supporting research.

In light of this, the participants called for a set of solutions, most notably:

- Integration of research centers within decision-making units
- Establishment of official committees to monitor the implementation of results
- Strengthening cooperation between different sectors.

They also recommended the development of sustainable funding plans and the encouragement of applied research in partnership with civil society, while highlighting the need to improve the quality of research and link it to national priorities. They emphasized the importance of capacity building through training on the use of scientific evidence, simplifying results using visual aids, and integrating critical and analytical thinking into education. Recommendations also arose regarding the development of easy and effective communication methods between researchers and decision-makers, the domestication of research and its terminology in Arabic, and the involvement of stakeholders from the outset to ensure that results are consistent with national realities.

#### **Fourth: Ideas and Innovations for Transforming Research into Policies and Programs**

A key aspect of the workshop was to identify innovative ways to enhance the role of research in policy formulation, most importantly linking research to national priorities, engaging stakeholders at various stages, simplifying research language using infographics and interactive tools, in addition to linking results to current realities and success stories. They also emphasized the need to highlight economic benefits of research at the short and long terms and to transform them into practical applicable policy papers.

However, these ideas face several challenges, including conflicting agendas between national and research priorities, a poor national research environment, lack of effective stakeholder participation, and the difficult research vocabulary. There are also problems in linking results to practical reality and clarifying their economic impact, as well as the weakness of national capacities able to handle this transformation.

To overcome these obstacles, participants recommended the following:

- Adopting national incentive systems that support research with development priorities
- Involving researchers in policy formulation and giving them an advisory role at the decision-making stage
- Simplifying research language to make it more accessible to decision-makers.
- Developing research capacities and formulating advocacy models that are tailored to the cultural, political, and social context of each country, while taking into account the appropriate presentation and persuasion approach. In some contexts (such as Oman), calm indirect dialogue is preferred, while in others (such as Tunisia), constructive criticism can be adopted, provided it is coupled with practical solutions.

## Conclusion

By examining these themes, it is evident that the workshop reflected the participants' conviction that transforming scientific evidence into practical policies and programs is not merely a technical process, but rather a procedural one that requires alignment between research and national reality, in addition to building partnerships between researchers, decision-makers, and the civil society.

To achieve this, the participants called for the development of an integrated Arab system for data and research management, including the establishment of updated databases, the standardization of measurement tools and standards, the allocation of sustainable financial resources, capacity building, and the strengthening of partnerships and digital integration between countries. They also called for directing research toward early childhood issues, particularly from birth to three years, while developing curricula and professional competencies and studying the impact of digitization and crises on child development. They emphasized the need to integrate research centers into the decision-making system, simplify study results, domesticate scientific terminology, and activate communication channels between researchers and decision-makers. They also called for adopting national incentive mechanisms and encouraging applied research to ensure that research is transformed into practical policies and programs that can be implemented and tracked.