

Meeting Report

Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet Asia), Third Steering Group Meeting



20-21 February 2009
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



World Health
Organization

Western Pacific Region



WPR/DHS/05/SAP(3)2009
Report series number: RS/2009/GE/38(MAA)

English only

REPORT

**EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY NETWORK (EVIPNET ASIA),
THIRD STEERING GROUP MEETING**

Convened by:

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL OFFICE**

**Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
20–21 February 2009**

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**World Health Organization
Regional Office for the Western Pacific
Manila, Philippines**

May 2009

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21 JUL 2009

NOTE

The views expressed in this report are those of the participants in the Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet Asia) Third Steering Group Meeting and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the World Health Organization.

This report has been prepared by the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific for governments of Member States in the Region and for those who participated in the Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet Asia) Third Steering Group Meeting, which was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 20 to 21 February 2009.

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Keywords: Evidence/ Policy-making / Asia

1. INTRODUCTION

An Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet Asia) Third Steering Group Meeting was convened by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Western Pacific from 20 to 21 February 2009 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The meeting was intended for leaders and team members to finalize the regional brochure, develop a regional workplan for 2009, develop a fundraising plan, nominate resource group members, and nominate a new Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for EVIPNet Asia.

1.1 Objectives

- (1) To discuss EVIPNet Global updates in the following areas:
 - (a) WHO directions for EVIPNet
 - (b) WHO Regional Office for Africa and Pan American Health Organization
 - (c) Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (AHPSR)
 - (d) skills building strategy
 - (e) EVIPNet portal
 - (f) monitoring and evaluation
- (2) To discuss regional EVIPNet updates in the following areas:
 - (a) joint EVIPNet Asia activities
 - (b) accomplishments and activities since June 2008 by the teams
 - (c) issues and challenges
 - (d) priority activities for 2009
- (3) To discuss the communication plan, brochure and portal/website development among teams.
- (4) To discuss fundraising strategies.
- (5) To discuss EVIPNet Asia resource group.
- (6) To discuss management and organizational issues.

The meeting agenda is in Annex 1.

1.2 Participants, resource persons and guests

Thirty-six participants, including team leaders and representatives from seven EVIPNet teams in five countries, the coordinator of EVIPNet teams in China, resource persons, observers and guests attended this meeting. The list of participants is in Annex 2.

1.3 Opening

The meeting was officially opened by Ms Maylene Beltran, Philippine team leader and Chairperson of the EVIPNet Asia Steering Group. She welcomed and thanked all the participants from China (Beijing, Sichuan and Shandong) the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines and Viet Nam for joining the meeting.

Dr Reijo Salmela, Co-Chair of EVIPNet Asia, also welcomed and thanked team leaders, participants from country teams and guests for joining the meeting.

2. PROCEEDINGS

Ms Maylene Beltran facilitated the two-day meeting with Dr Reijo Salmela. Guests and resource persons included Dr John Lavis, Dr Tikki Pang, Professor Gøran Tomson, Dr Tomas Pantoja, Dr Kent Ranson and Dr Sunil Senanayake.

2.1 EVIPNet Global updates

2.1.1 WHO directions for EVIPNet

Dr Tikki Pang reflected on the impressive evolution of EVIPNet since its inception in 2005 and the achievements it has attained in such a short period. EVIPNet received a lot of attention at the 124th session of the WHO Executive Board in January 2009. It was also acknowledged and praised in *Health is Global: a UK Government Strategy*. Even within WHO, many departments are realising the importance and value of EVIPNet. Several more countries are interested to join EVIPNet and the momentum to progress is building.

Translating knowledge into policy and practice is one of the four pillars of the WHO health research strategies. The strategies have been endorsed and will be tabled for approval at the next World Health Assembly in May 2009. Under the strategies, WHO will have an overall organizational mandate to facilitate the process of translating knowledge into policies.

The latest region to join EVIPNet is the Eastern Mediterranean Region. A workshop was conducted in Beirut in January 2009, involving all countries in the region except Afghanistan, to raise awareness about the use of evidence in policy-making and to discuss the establishment of national networks. The next steps for EVIPNet Eastern European Region is to discuss country implementation plans and to organize regional workshops.

Fundraising has been flagged as an important area in 2009. Instead of each activity raising its own funds, the WHO Department of Research Policy and Cooperation will use its research strategy as an umbrella for overall fundraising. The funds raised will be allocated primarily to country-specific activities, but some amount will be used to support coordinating activities at the global level. Several donors, especially Wellcome Trust, expressed interest at the Bamako Ministerial Forum on Research for Health (November 2009) in supporting EVIPNet at country level. Discussion will be held with the Cochrane Collaboration to use its training module on developing a protocol for systematic reviews.

Other activities planned for this year include: a workshop on engaging civil society in supporting research use at McMaster University in Canada; development of methodologies to absorb best practices and issues of passive knowledge; continuing work on rapid response mechanisms, issues on standards and ethics in use of research evidence in policy-making; and building partnerships where key institutional partners have to be identified and joint activities have been defined.

2.1.2 Updates from EVIPNet Africa and EVIPNet Americas

Dr John Lavis presented updates on both regional networks. EVIPNet Africa has received more funding than any other region. Funding has come from the European Union (EU), through SUPPORT and SURE projects, and the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (AHPSR), which funds specific activities in Zambia and Cameroon.

EVIPNet Africa, which has had many opportunities to meet and to discuss what it should be doing, has begun to produce products, such as policy briefs, and to conduct policy dialogues. It has carried out two policy brief trainings and a third one will be conducted in March 2009. It has also conducted policy-maker training on finding and using evidence efficiently in Cape Town and will conduct another session in Kampala Uganda in August.

EVIPNet Americas, with help from the SUPPORT project, has conducted and will continue to conduct training for policy-makers. In addition to policy-makers training, it is enhancing the researchers' network using existing platforms such as INCLEN and America's Cochrane. It is using the Internet for training purposes. Dr Tomas Pantoja gave additional insight into the activities of countries, which are in the process of consolidating country implementation plans focusing on capacity-building.

2.1.3 Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research

AHPSR aims to promote the generation and use of health policy and systems research as a means to improve the health systems of developing countries. Funds are usually given by AHPSR on a competitive basis and proposals are reviewed internally and externally by experts. Most of the activities funded involve country-specific research. The objectives of AHPSR are: (1) to stimulate generation and synthesis of policy-relevant health systems knowledge; (2) to promote dissemination and use of health policy and systems knowledge to improve the performance of health systems; and (3) to facilitate the development of capacity for the generation, dissemination and use of health policies and systems research.

Activities conducted or funded by AHPSR include the following:

- (1) systematic review centres in Bangladesh, China (Shandong), Uganda and Chile;
- (2) research on specific topics, e.g. salary, financial and non-financial incentives to attract workers to rural and underserved areas;
- (3) creation of SUPPORT Network summaries of systematic reviews;
- (4) country-specific projects, e.g. writing of policy briefs;
- (5) young researchers programme' to build capacity among young researchers to teach health systems research; and
- (6) put up calls for proposals to develop innovative strategies to help policy-makers incorporate evidence into decision-making.

2.1.4 Skills Building Strategy

The Pan American Health Organization received funding from the Canadian Government to develop a comprehensive Skills Building Strategy for EVIPNet. The document, which will be distributed soon, describes the goals and objectives of the Strategy and lists the skills needed by researchers, policy-makers and the team to support evidenced-informed policies.

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