

# Introducing WHO's sexual and reproductive health guidelines and tools into national programmes

Principles and processes of adaptation and implementation



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## Acknowledgements

This document provides general principles for a systematic approach to the adaptation and adoption of guidelines developed by WHO to improve sexual and reproductive health. Its purpose is to encourage the implementation of evidence-based interventions identified in various WHO sexual and reproductive health practice guides. The introduction of interventions depends on the circumstances, contextual issues and development stages of programmes.

The compilation of this document was coordinated by Kathryn Church, Rita Kabra and Michael Mbizvo. The contributions of the following are gratefully acknowledged: Nathalie Broutet, Peter Fajans, Metin Gülmezoglu, Sarah Johnson, Jitendra Khanna, Alexis Ntabona, Julie Samuelson and Paul Van Look, and all colleagues from WHO regional offices who commented on earlier drafts. We acknowledge the support of the WHO-UNFPA Strategic Partnership Programme (SPP).



# 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The Departments of Reproductive Health and Research (RHR) and Making Pregnancy Safer (MPS) at the World Health Organization (WHO) have developed a series of guidelines and tools to promote evidence-based practices in sexual and reproductive health within programmes.

The guidance developed by WHO/RHR and WHO/MPS includes:

- **norms, standards and protocols** designed to inform the development and revision of national policies and standards;
- **programmatic guides** to inform the development of sexual and reproductive health programmes;
- **tools and clinical guides** designed to be used by health-care providers in clinical settings, according to evidence-based norms.

The guidance covers a range of themes, including maternal and neonatal health, family planning, prevention and control of reproductive tract infections and sexually transmitted infections (RTIs/STIs) and the prevention of unsafe abortion. The various documents are based on scientific evidence and have been developed by WHO/RHR and WHO/MPS as generic global materials that are not specific to any one national context.

## Definitions and rationale

To be used and implemented successfully within national programmes, WHO's sexual and reproductive health guidance must be introduced through well-planned and consensus-driven processes of adaptation and implementation. Depending on the nature of the guidance being considered, the adaptation and implementation processes may either involve the updating and revision of existing national guidelines and tools, or the creation of a new national guideline or tool based on the WHO material.

**Introduction** of a guideline or tool is an all-embracing process whereby externally developed guidance is integrated into a national or local programme. It includes adaptation and implementation.

**Adaptation** transforms an externally developed guideline or tool into an accepted product that fits a particular country's or region's needs, circumstances and context. It may include the updating or revision of existing national guidelines and tools.

**Implementation** is a specified set of activities or interventions designed to ensure that new guidance is applied within programmes and that evidence-based practices are successfully utilized by health-care providers.

A well-planned and participatory introductory process helps to ensure that new guidance is accepted, promoted and utilized at the national or sub-national level. This document outlines the principles of adaptation and implementation promoted by WHO/RHR and WHO/MPS, and recommends a process to follow when introducing guidelines and tools into programmes.

<sup>1</sup> This document is presented as a document for national introduction efforts but the same principles and processes apply for subnational introduction.



## Who is this document for?

This document is designed to be used by *policy-makers, programme managers and other health professionals* who are embarking on a process to introduce evidence-based practices in sexual and reproductive health into their national or local programmes.

Many of WHO's guidelines and tools in sexual and reproductive health are also accompanied by technical adaptation guides that contain specific recommendations on content that can be adapted, and the present document may be used in conjunction with such guides. This document gives an overview of the principles and process of adaptation, rather than technical information on specific content that might be adapted.

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