

**Knowledge to Policy (K2P)
and
Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and
International Affairs**

Workshop Summary

Capacity Building of Civil Society Organizations
in Framing Policy Problems and Developing
Evidence-Based Policy Options for Non-
Communicable Diseases in Lebanon

Description

This document is a summary of the two-day workshop held by the Knowledge to Policy (K2P) Center and the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut on April 15-16, 2016.

Funding

K2P Center and the Issam Fares Institute provided support to conduct the workshop.

Acknowledgements

K2P Center and the Issam Fares Institute would like to thank Ms. Sawsan Allam, Ms. Lamy El Bawab, Ms. Diana Jamal and Ms. Rachel Ashkar for their support to coordinate and organize the workshop.

Contents

Background	1
Objectives and Description	1
Target Participants	1
Activities	2
Workshop Outcomes	3
Group work	3
Workshop Evaluation	5
Recommendations and Lessons Learned	6
Post-Workshop Activities	6
Appendix 1- List of Participants	7
Appendix 2- Selected Pictures	8

Background

In a joint collaboration, the Knowledge to Policy (K2P) Center and the Issam Fares Institute at the American University of Beirut, conducted a two-day workshop to promote evidence-informed policy-making and knowledge translation among Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Lebanon. The workshop informed CSOs working on non-communicable diseases about the policy cycle, specifically on defining and framing problems, and developing evidence-based policy options.

Objectives and Description

The objective of this workshop was to build the capacity of CSOs from Lebanon in defining and framing high priority policy problems related to non-communicable diseases, such as: diabetes, cardiovascular, cancer, mental health and others to come up with better more efficient evidence-based policy options.

Participants in the two-day workshop were exposed to the following domains and discussed, based on specific examples, the relevance to their work:

- The nature of public policy-making processes
- Existing knowledge about various approaches in evidence-informed policy-making
- Nature and quality of evidence
- Knowledge translation strategies
- Accessing recent quality evidence about health system topics
- Clarifying policy relevant research priorities to policy-makers; packaging evidence in simple user-friendly language

Through interacting with colleagues from diverse fields, participants discussed the following areas:

- Clarifying the policy problem
- Framing the problem
- Developing policy options

Target Participants

Target participants included civil society organizations working on non-communicable diseases in Lebanon. Twenty-five participants representing 17 different CSOs attended the workshop.

Activities

The workshop was facilitated by three main speakers: Dr. Robertus Hoppe, Dr. Fadi El-Jardali, and Dr. Nasser Yassin. Dr. Hoppe is a Senior Non-residential Public Policy Fellow at Issam Fares Institute and a Professor of Policy Studies at Twente University, the Netherlands. Dr. Yassin is the Director of Research at the Issam Fares Institute and Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Systems at the Faculty of Health Science at AUB. Dr. El-Jardali is the Director of the Knowledge to Policy (K2P) Center, Co-Director of the Center for Systematic Reviews on Health Policy and Systems Research (SPARK), and Associate Professor of Health Policy and Systems at the Faculty of Health Science at AUB.

The workshop involved a mix of presentations, discussions and hands-on exercises. The workshop included the following activities:

- Lectures by experts from diverse fields of public and health policy
- Review of real life examples and open discussion on case studies
- Group work among participants followed by presentations of problem statements and policy options

The first day started with participants introducing one another and an opening note by all three facilitators. Dr. Yassin presented the role of CSOs in influencing policy-making. This was followed by Dr. Hoppe's theoretical lecture on public policy-making focusing on defining a policy problem, the social and political construction of policy problems, and the framing of reflective policy analysis. A hands-on exercise was then carried out by the participants on defining a policy problem. The second day was facilitated by Dr. El-Jardali and was based on discussions and hands-on exercises. The focus was on framing the policy problem, identifying policy options, accessing evidence and tacit knowledge to frame problems and find options, and addressing possible implementation barriers.

Workshop Outcomes

Group work

Participants were divided into three groups to work on defining and framing a policy problem and developing policy options. The following is the result of each group's work:

Group 1	
Problem	Lebanese population has restricted access to palliative care
Framing the problem	<p>→ 96,000 people are in need of palliative care and thus living with unnecessary pain, suffering and high healthcare costs.</p> <p>→ Palliative care is recognized and has been developed worldwide. In Lebanon, the Ministry of Public Health recognized palliative care as a public health right and undertook several initiatives to support it, such as: establishing the national committee for palliative care in 2012, recognizing palliative care as a medical specialty in Lebanon, and facilitating the prescription of opioids. Yet, accessibility to palliative care is still very limited in Lebanon where less than 1000 patients receive the services, which means less than 1% of the population in need has access to palliative care.</p> <p>→ Among the causes leading to the problem is the lack of financial coverage for palliative care.</p>
Options	<p>→ Option 1: integrate early palliative care within the bundles of the National Social Security Fund (NSSF)</p> <p>→ Option 2: integrate early palliative care in the coverage packages of private insurance</p> <p>→ Option 3: provide financial reimbursement by the government to centers that provide palliative care services</p>

Group 2

Problem	Lack of coverage of Lebanese patients with chronic and pre-existing congenital diseases by private insurance
Framing the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ There is no financial coverage for preventive care and early screening of chronic diseases→ Patients with chronic and pre-existing congenital diseases are excluded from insurance plans→ Public and private third party payers do not share hospital bills→ Increase in morbidity and mortality→ Increase in work absenteeism→ Increase in hospitalization bills
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Option 1: develop co-payment policies between public and private third party payers→ Option 2: remove chronic and pre-existing congenital diseases as exclusion criteria from insurance plans and increase the premium for these patients

Group 3

Problem	Gap in the comprehensive follow up of NCD patients by Primary Healthcare Centers
Framing the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Ministry of Public Health recently started promoting prevention goals among Primary Healthcare Centers (PHCs) and created a model for NCDs→ Patients with NCDs have increased complications, which increase their financial burden→ There is no preventive care that is provided, which increases hospitalization and thus hospital bills and the financial burden on NCD patients→ There is no proper follow up on NCD patients and this is mostly due to the financial burden it incurs on PHCs
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Option 1: provide awareness sessions to NCD patients, to improve their lifestyle and reduce medical complications→ Option 2: provide a coordinated approach of services between different stakeholder for patients at risk→ Option 3: provide financial accessibility to PHCs or other CSOs that deal with NCD patients by decreasing price of services and care and sharing responsibility between public and private third party payers

Workshop Evaluation

Participants provided their feedback through completing an evaluation form that was distributed at the end of the workshop. The response rate reached 68% with 17 out of 25 participants submitting the form. The evaluation revealed the following:

- The mean rating for “overall assessment of the workshop” was 6.3 on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 7 (excellent).
- The highest mean score, of 6.8, was attained by the following criteria:
 - “the material presented is relevant to my professional development”
 - “the workshop enhanced my appreciation of the importance of finding and using the best available research evidence in the time I have available”
 - “the workshop enhanced my skills in finding and using research evidence to frame options to address the problem”
 - “the workshop enhanced my skills in finding and using research evidence to clarify a problem”

Some of the feedback provided by participants showed that:

- What they liked most was: the group exercises, second day sessions, and the clarity this workshop brought to their role as CSOs in influencing policies.
- What they liked least was: the time distribution to some of the sessions where participants found first day’s theoretical sessions to be somehow lengthy while the group exercises to be short.
- What they recommend for future improvement was: dedicating more time to the exercises, coming up with practical solutions for future follow up, and providing better guidelines and explanation on how to fill in the exercise sheets. Some also mentioned their interest to be involved in future workshops and research projects conducted at AUB.
- The three activities most participants agreed they would do differently based on what they learned in the workshop were: defining the problem in a correct manner, using evidence and the literature to frame their problems and coming up with solutions, and look at the problem from different stakeholders’ perspectives.

Recommendations and Lessons Learned

- CSOs requested to be involved in future research work conducted by AUB.
- Participants agreed that there is a need for future collaboration between them to share knowledge and practices.
- Participants agreed that they need to cooperate and work together to target policymakers and tackle their problems.
- CSOs suggested that they send a list of problems to K2P and Issam Fares Institute, so that the center helps them frame and define the problems and develop solutions.
- CSOs are pre-occupied with operational work and often forget how to solve their problems and look at things from different perspectives, the workshop helped remind them to look at work differently to be able to solve their problems.
- CSOs agreed that they should engage in political work to solve their problems.

Post-Workshop Activities

- K2P Center and the Issam Fares Institute will adopt priority policy issues that emerged from the workshop and will work in close collaboration with the concerned CSOs on developing Policy Briefs related to these topics.
- Post workshop evaluation and assessment will be conducted.
- Follow-up on CSOs activities related to identifying policy issues, framing them and coming up with options/ solutions to be conducted periodically.

Appendix 2- Selected Pictures











ABOUT AUB POLICY INSTITUTE

The AUB Policy Institute (Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs) is an independent, research-based, policy-oriented institute.

Inaugurated in 2006, the Institute aims to harness, develop, and initiate policy-relevant research in the Arab region.

We are committed to expanding and deepening policy-relevant knowledge production in and about the Arab region; and to creating a space for the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas among researchers, civil society and policy-makers.

Main goals

- ▶ *Enhancing and broadening public policy-related debate and knowledge production in the Arab world and beyond*
- ▶ *Better understanding the Arab world within shifting international and global contexts*
- ▶ *Providing a space to enrich the quality of interaction among scholars, officials and civil society actors in and about the Arab world*
- ▶ *Disseminating knowledge that is accessible to policy-makers, media, research communities and the general public*

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Knowledge to Policy Center draws on an unparalleled breadth of synthesized evidence and context-specific knowledge to impact policy agendas and action. K2P does not restrict itself to research evidence but draws on and integrates multiple types and levels of knowledge to inform policy including grey literature, opinions and expertise of stakeholders.

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