

## Executive Summary

# Strategies to enhance community engagement in research: The way forward for Ethiopia

### + Included:

- Description of problem statement and barriers for community engagement in research
- Strategies to enhance community engagement in the research process



*This report was prepared by Knowledge Translation Directorate of EPHI and Department of Health, Behavior, and Society, Jimma Institute of Health, Jimma University*

### Who is this evidence brief for?

Researchers, academicians, policymakers, funders, and other stakeholders with an interest in the problem addressed by this evidence brief

### Why was it prepared?

To inform **deliberations**, initiate and **facilitate discussions** among the researchers, academicians, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders about engaging communities in research projects by providing the best available evidence on enhancing community engagement in research in resource-limited settings like Ethiopia.

### What is evidence brief?

Evidence brief bring together **global research evidence** (from systematic reviews\*) and **local evidence** to inform deliberations about health policies and programmes

**\*Systematic Review:** A summary of studies addressing a clearly formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically appraise the relevant research, and to collect and analyse data from this research

### Full Report

The evidence summarised in this Executive Summary is described in more detail in the [Full Report](#)

# Executive Summary

This evidence brief summarizes the best available evidence describing the problem in resource-limited settings like Ethiopia and effective strategies to address the issue within the context.

## *The problem: Minimal or non-existent community engagement in research*

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Research efforts are poorly embedded in and linked with communities, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) (George et al., 2015). A recent systematic review conducted by Birhanu et al revealed that there is minimal community engagement in research projects in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and this is even worse when community empowerment is considered (Birhanu et al., 2022). There is also a lack of in-depth accounts of what constitutes effective community engagement and is still determined largely by a combination of intuition, experience, and opinion (Birhanu et al., 2022; George et al., 2015; Vanderslott et al., 2021). Moreover, there are no studies, that reported community engagement in research addressing poverty-related diseases in the Ethiopian context (Birhanu et al., 2022).

## *Barriers for community engagement in the research process*

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Several factors that could affect community engagement in the research process in resource-limited settings have been identified. These factors include:

- Lack of understanding about the concept of community engagement in research
- Difference in expectation and interest regarding the goal of research
- Absence of shared understanding between communities and researchers
- Lack of representativeness (diverse perspectives and populations)
- Lack of exchanging in knowledge, experience and lessons learned among researchers
- Lack of trust and respect
- Lack of transparency in communications and the research process
- Lack of funding and sustainability after the project ends
- Absence of standard frameworks for recording and reporting community engagement activities

## *Strategies to enhance community engagement in research*

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The following strategies are forwarded to inform researchers; research and academic institutions and research funders for considerations to develop, expand, and effectively engage communities in research.

- Enhancing researchers' and relevant stakeholders' understanding of concepts, processes, and values of community engagement in research
- Promoting and adapting community-based participatory research and collaborative relationships
- Ensure inclusions of diverse perspectives and populations in the research methods and fitting the methods into the local context
- Exploring and using existing community structures and platforms
- Embedding mechanisms for accountability, transparency and responsibility in the research process
- Developing standardized procedures for community engagement in research and standard reporting mechanisms

### *The way forward for Ethiopia:*

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A practical guideline, framework, and institutional platform or structure should be developed to strengthen community engagement in the research process.

### *References*

- Birhanu, Z., Gebreyohannes, Y., Ababor, S., Abraham, G., & Morankar, S. (2022). *Community engagement in Research Addressing Infectious Diseases of Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa : A Systematic Review (Issue May)*.
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