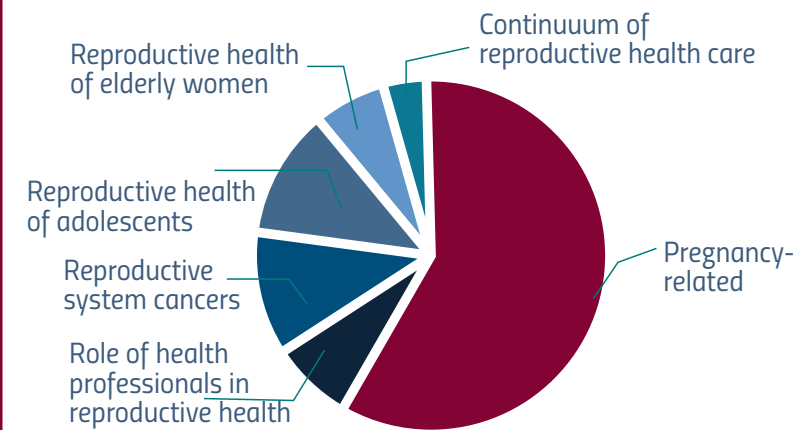


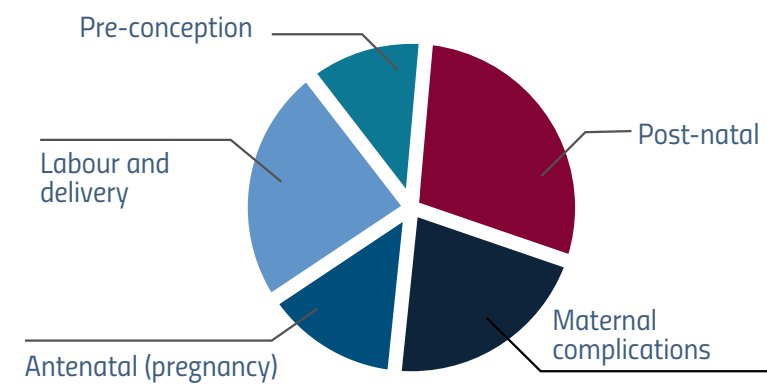
The top 20 research priority questions were mainly descriptive and epidemiological aimed at evaluating and assessing existing reproductive health services.

17 of the top 20 research questions addressed health system issues and only 3 questions targeted reproductive health issues in relation to the community

Priority research questions by reproductive health area



Pregnancy-related sub-questions



We shared the list of research priorities with all the participants and those who responded agreed with the results. They also brought attention to some missing items from the top 20 priorities, such as effectiveness of **reproductive health educational services**, community's knowledge and perceptions towards **early marriage and its impact on reproductive health**, and quality of existing **pre-conception care services**.

Recommendations

- The list of the top research priorities was built by a number of Palestinian reproductive health stakeholders. This list can serve as a valuable resource for targeted research on reproductive health that can guide **evidence-based practice**.
- The research agenda should prompt **inter-sectoral collaboration and coordination** among various reproductive health stakeholders in Palestine to avoid duplication of work.

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Policy Brief 12

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Setting Research Priorities for Reproductive Health in Palestine

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Executive Summary

The current policy brief highlights **priority research questions in reproductive health** in Palestine based on input from Palestinian reproductive health stakeholders.

Results revealed that most of those who work in the field of reproductive health view the **health system** as a main area of concern. Of the top identified priorities, research on **pregnancy-related issues** made more than half of the top 20 research priority questions, with a focus on **post-natal and maternal complications (mortality and near-miss)**.

The resulting research agenda serves as a resource for Palestinian reproductive health stakeholders to provide the needed **research-based evidence** that could ultimately improve reproductive health practice.

Background

Broad definition of Reproductive Health

Reproductive Health (RH), as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), is: "A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of reproductive disease or infirmity. Reproductive health deals with the reproductive processes, functions and system at all stages of life and for both sexes."

The concept of **Reproductive Health** follows a client-centered, integrated, life-cycle approach that targets the reproductive health needs of women, men, couples, adolescents and families.

The 2014-2016 National Reproductive Health Strategy emphasized action geared towards making pregnancy and childbirth safe, promoting healthy families across the lifespan (with a focus on youth health services) and assuring adequate number and quality of human resources. However, available indicators on reproductive health mostly address the health of married women, with a limited focus on the *health of single women, men and adolescents*.

The main objective of this brief is to build a research agenda for reproductive health in Palestine that can be utilized by reproductive health stakeholders. Ultimately, the research agenda can provide research-based evidence to guide practice.

Methods and Main Findings

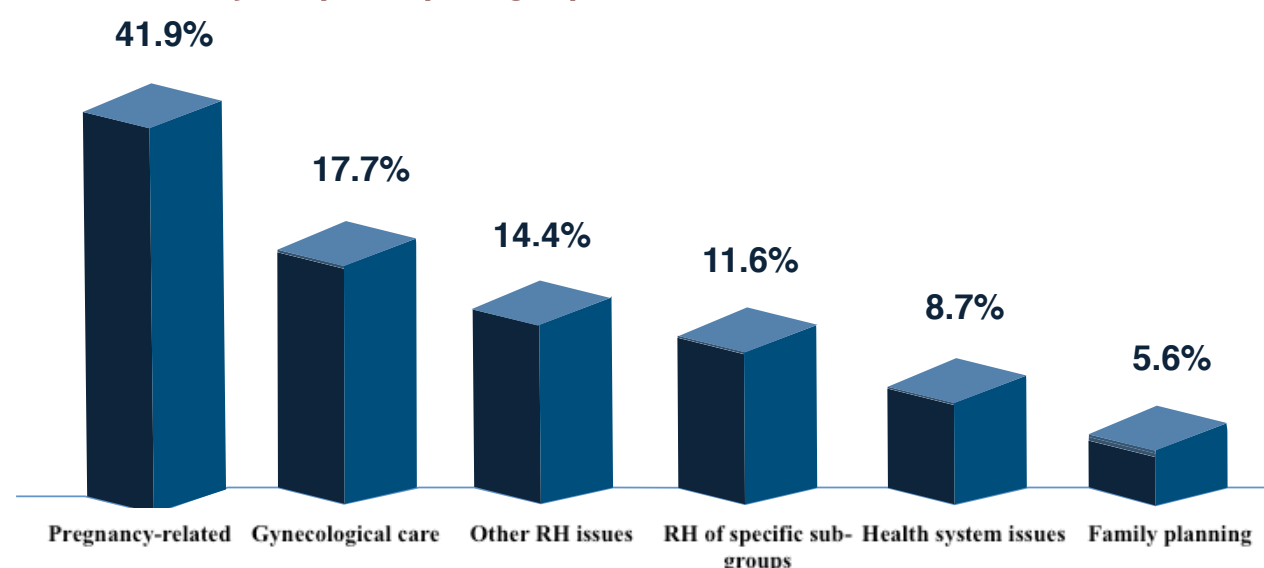
We conducted a **research priority-setting** exercise using the research prioritization methods developed by the World Health Organization's Child Health and Nutrition Research Initiative. We first identified a number of Palestinian reproductive health stakeholders (individuals and organizations) to participate in the exercise.

The reproductive health stakeholders included **Palestinian ministries and governmental bodies, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and reproductive health clinicians and consultants.**

The exercise was conducted in **three** phases.

PHASE 1: 34 individuals, from the identified reproductive health stakeholders, independently proposed 1,239 research questions

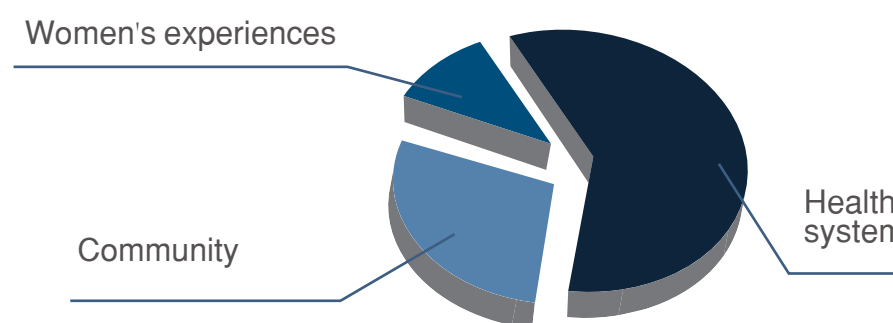
Research areas in reproductive health (RH) as proposed by the participating reproductive health stakeholders



Other reproductive health issues cover: early marriage, nutrition, chronic illnesses (including the aging transition), gender-based violence (including domestic violence, intimate partner violence, emotional and psychological abuse, harmful traditional practices ...), mental health and psychological well-being (psychosocial services), women empowerment towards equity and equality and social factors.

PHASE 2: Thematic analysis for the 1,239 questions from phase 1 was conducted. Results revealed that most of the raised questions were related to health system issues followed by community and women's experiences in reproductive health.

Main themes in reproductive health from the thematic analysis of the research questions of phase 1



The thematic analysis generated a total of **232 research questions**

PHASE 3: A total of 30 individuals (from the 34 participants of phase 1) partook in a priority-setting exercise. They scored the 232 questions from phase 2 against five pre-defined criteria. An overall score was calculated and the research questions were ranked.

Criteria (score range 0-5)

- 1. Answerability:** The research question can be ethically answered.
- 2. Effectiveness:** The new knowledge is likely to result in an effective intervention or program in the reproductive health field.
- 3. Deliverability:** The research is likely to generate new knowledge that can help in improving reproductive health in an acceptable and affordable manner.
- 4. Potential impact:** The results of this research will have a positive public health impact.
- 5. Equity:** The research will include and target the most vulnerable sectors of society.

Twenty research priority questions were identified based on input from Palestinian reproductive health stakeholders

	Research question
1	Evaluate the effectiveness of existing reproductive health services to prevent post-partum haemorrhage
2	Assess and evaluate the methods adopted by health professionals in spreading awareness and education on reproductive health among adolescents
3	Evaluate the effectiveness of existing reproductive health services to prevent maternal mortality
4	Assess and evaluate the support system for women during labour and delivery
5	Clarify the understanding of the role of health professionals (physicians/ nurses/ midwives/ community health workers) in reproductive health services
6	Assess the level of knowledge among health professionals on nutritional values during prenatal/pre-conception
7	Evaluate the effectiveness of existing reproductive health services to prevent maternal near miss
8	Epidemiology: prevalence/ distribution/ determinants/ associated factors with maternal mortality and near miss
9	Assess the protocols and guidelines implementation cycle (availability, comprehensiveness, knowledge, training and application) for elderly women
10	Evaluate the effectiveness of existing reproductive health services to prevent birth complications (including high-risk pregnancies, genetic counselling, mode of delivery)
11	Assess the community preparedness and acceptability for reproductive system cancers
12	Evaluate the level of community knowledge, attitudes and perceptions towards reproductive system cancers (including screening and detection)
13	Evaluate the knowledge, attitudes, practices and complimentary role of health professionals (physicians/ nurses/midwives/ community health workers) on their role in reproductive health service provision
14	Assess and evaluate the current status of health professionals (physicians/ nurses/ midwives/ community health workers) in terms of continuous educational and practical training on reproductive health
15	Assess the level of knowledge among health professionals on nutritional values during antenatal period
16	Assess the level of knowledge among health professionals on nutritional values during postnatal period
17	Assess and evaluate the management practices and treatment among high risk pregnancies
18	Assess and evaluate the continuation of care in reproductive health: referral and follow-up
19	Assess the role of health professionals in gender-based violence services related to reproductive health
20	Evaluate the level of community knowledge, attitudes and perceptions towards postnatal services