

Summary report on the

**Meeting of the Regional
Verification Commission
for Measles and Rubella
Elimination in the Eastern
Mediterranean Region**

WHO-EM/EPI/355/E

Amman, Jordan
15–16 May 2019



REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE

**World Health
Organization**

Eastern Mediterranean

Summary report on the

**Meeting of the Regional Verification
Commission for Measles and Rubella
Elimination in the Eastern
Mediterranean Region**

Amman, Jordan
15–16 May 2019

© World Health Organization 2019

Some rights reserved. This work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo>).

Under the terms of this licence, you may copy, redistribute and adapt the work for non-commercial purposes, provided the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that WHO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the WHO logo is not permitted. If you adapt the work, then you must license your work under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If you create a translation of this work, you should add the following disclaimer along with the suggested citation: “This translation was not created by the World Health Organization (WHO). WHO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original English edition shall be the binding and authentic edition”.

Any mediation relating to disputes arising under the licence shall be conducted in accordance with the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization.

Suggested citation. [Title]. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2019. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Sales, rights and licensing. To purchase WHO publications, see <http://apps.who.int/bookorders>. To submit requests for commercial use and queries on rights and licensing, see <http://www.who.int/about/licensing>.

Third-party materials. If you wish to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, it is your responsibility to determine whether permission is needed for that reuse and to obtain permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

General disclaimers. The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

The mention of specific companies or of certain manufacturers' products does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by the World Health Organization in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned. Errors and omissions excepted, the names of proprietary products are distinguished by initial capital letters.

All reasonable precautions have been taken by the World Health Organization to verify the information contained in this publication. However, the published material is being distributed without warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied. The responsibility for the interpretation and use of the material lies with the reader. In no event shall the World Health Organization be liable for damages arising from its use.

Contents

1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	Summary of discussions.....	2
3.	RVC-MR decision on the status of elimination of measles and rubella in the three countries as of end 2017	3
4.	RVC-MR recommendations	4

1. Introduction

At its 44th session in 1997, the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean adopted resolution EM/RC44/R.6 on the elimination and eradication of diseases, with special reference to measles and tuberculosis, urging Member States to adopt and implement measles elimination strategies with the aim of achieving elimination by 2010. In 2011, due to delay in achieving the measles elimination goal, the Regional Committee in resolution EM/RC58/R.5 on scaling up the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) to meet global and regional targets decided to revise the target year of measles elimination to 2015. However, this goal was not achieved by the new target date and the regional vaccine action plan 2016–2020, adopted by the Regional Committee in 2015, called for this goal to be achieved as soon as possible and for elimination to be verified in any country that achieved it without waiting for regional elimination. In addition, while the Region has not yet established a regional target for rubella/congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) elimination, several countries have set national rubella and/or CRS elimination targets.

To verify achievement of measles and rubella elimination, the Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella Elimination in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (RVC-MR) was established by the WHO Regional Director in February 2018. A guide for the verification of elimination was developed and the Commission Secretariat and national verification committees in 12 (low incidence) countries were trained on documentation of elimination of measles and rubella and preparation of country reports to request verification of elimination. Subsequently, three countries (Bahrain, Islamic Republic of Iran and Oman) have submitted national reports and requested verification of measles and rubella elimination.

Following this, the RVC-MR met in Amman, Jordan, from 15 to 16 May 2019. The objectives of the meeting were to:

- review the reports submitted by the three countries (Bahrain, Islamic Republic of Iran and Oman); and
- declare the conclusion of the RVC-MR on the verification of measles and rubella elimination status in these countries.

The two-day meeting was attended by the Chairperson and members of the RVC-MR and the chairpersons of the national verification committees, EPI managers and laboratory focal persons from Bahrain, Islamic Republic of Iran and Oman. The meeting was also attended by WHO staff from WHO headquarters, the Regional Office and the Jordan country office, as well as the chairperson and two members of the Regional Technical Advisory Group for the Expanded Programme on Immunization in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (RTAG).

Dr Nadia Teleb, WHO Regional Adviser, Vaccine Preventable Diseases and Immunization, inaugurated the meeting, welcoming participants and thanking RVC-MR members, RTAG members, country participants and WHO staff for their support for the verification process. She also commended the efforts of the national programmes and the success achieved so far in progressing towards verification of the elimination of measles and rubella.

2. Summary of discussions

The first day of the meeting was dedicated to updating participants on the global and regional situation of measles and rubella and on best practices in use of laboratory data for verification of measles and rubella elimination status. The chairpersons of the national verification

committees presented the salient features of their country report followed by discussion for further clarification.

The first half of the second day of the meeting was a closed session of the RVC-MR to discuss the initial reports of the three countries and to draft the RVC-MR decision and recommendations for each country.

The Secretariat presented to the RVC-MR amendments to the regional guide for verification of measles and rubella elimination and country report template, based upon updated WHO guidelines for measles and rubella surveillance and the feedback received from countries and the RVC-MR. These were discussed in detail by the RVC-MR and agreement reached on the amendments.

At the end of the meeting, the RVC-MR announced its decision and recommendations for each country, and participants discussed the lessons learned and the next steps for 2019–2020.

3. RVC-MR decision on the status of elimination of measles and rubella in the three countries as of end 2017

Based on the review of the submitted initial country reports and discussion with the participants from the three countries during the RVC-MR meeting, the RVC-MR declared the status of achievement of elimination of measles and rubella in the three countries as follows.

Bahrain

- The RVC-MR verified that measles and rubella have been eliminated in Bahrain.

Islamic Republic of Iran

- The RVC-MR verified that rubella has been eliminated in Islamic Republic of Iran.
- The RVC-MR concluded that further molecular evidence and more information on cases of unknown source are needed to verify the status of achievement of elimination of measles in Islamic Republic of Iran.

Oman

- The RVC-MR verified that measles and rubella have been eliminated in Oman.

4. RVC-MR recommendations

To Bahrain

1. Maintain the high quality performance of the national immunization programme and the high quality of the surveillance system.
2. Address the issues related to the independence of the national verification committee and submit further explanation in a future report.

To Islamic Republic of Iran

3. Update and complete the measles outbreak summary table for better understanding of data.
4. Ensure further orientation for national laboratory staff on inclusion of distinct sequence ID data in the national verification committee report to the RVC-MR.

5. Undertake further efforts to identify the source of unknown source measles cases in order to reach an acceptable level of the related indicator.
6. Compile data related to vaccination coverage and population immunity for both Iranian and non-Iranian populations and include this data in the national verification committee report to the RVC-MR.

To Oman

7. Maintain the high quality performance of the national immunization programme and the surveillance system.
8. Conduct further in-depth evaluation of cases under one year of age and apply more stringent preventive measures regarding the source of infection.

To all countries

9. Sustain elimination efforts/status for measles and rubella.
10. Continue to prepare national reports for verification of elimination, including initial reports and annual progress reports.
11. Address the challenges identified by national verification committees, working together to tackle them where appropriate.
12. Ensure that national reports summarize the published and unpublished data referred to in the report and provide the data as an annex.
13. Communicate a clear plan of national verification committee activities in country reports.
14. Continue to perform risk assessment exercises due to the high risk of importation and put in place response plans.
15. Collaborate with neighbouring countries in the development and implementation of synchronized or coordinated surveillance and immunization activities.
16. Work on improving the accuracy of denominators.

To WHO

17. Continue to provide support to countries for measles and rubella elimination.
18. Conduct capacity-building workshops for countries and national verification committees on drafting country reports for verification of elimination, and provide clear instructions on how to report genotype and distinct sequence ID data in annual country progress reports.
19. Encourage all countries to submit annual reports, even if verification of elimination is not expected.
20. Continue to advocate for elimination efforts in the Region.



World Health Organization
Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean
P.O. Box 7608, Nasr City 11371
Cairo, Egypt
www.emro.who.int