



**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE  
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

9 October 2013

**Sixtieth Session  
Muscat, Oman, 27-30 October 2013**

**TECHNICAL MEETING**

**HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEMS: AN UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
A LIST OF CORE INDICATORS**

**Objectives of the session**

The session aims to provide an update on the progress in developing a core list of indicators to monitor the health situation, determinants of health, risk factors and health system response in the Region.

The session will focus on:

- the rationale for developing a core list of indicators, as part of the initiative to strengthen the health information system;
- the categorization and use of the list, and the link with other international frameworks;
- challenges and gaps in data sources, analysis and dissemination;
- the need to develop national health observatories.

**Background and discussion points**

Reliable and timely health information and evidence are essential for public health planning and decision-making, health management, resource allocation and for monitoring and evaluation. Regular monitoring of health system progress and performance is an integral part of every country's efforts to achieve universal health coverage. This requires a well-functioning health information system. Such a system provides information from the health sector and other relevant sources and converts data into a powerful tool for policy development and health-related decision making.<sup>1</sup> Ideally, it should bring together information from different sectors and relevant partners to ensure that the users of health information have access to reliable, comparable, usable and understandable data.<sup>2</sup>

As part of the regional efforts towards strengthening national health information systems and aligning regional and global monitoring and evaluation frameworks, a set of core and optional indicators is being developed in close collaboration with countries. The selection of indicators was informed by considerations of scientific soundness, relevance, usefulness for decision-making, responsiveness to change, and data availability. The core indicators should have clear baselines and targets that are highly relevant and measurable. The target-setting should be based on criteria related to the level of aspiration and feasibility desired. The core indicators are divided into 3 categories:

<sup>1</sup> Health Metrics Network, "Defining HIS - HMN Framework - Health Information Systems Knowledge Hub - The University of Queensland, Australia," accessed February 13, 2013, <http://www.uq.edu.au/hishub/definition-of-health-information-systems>.

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization, "Draft Toolkit on Monitoring Health Systems Strengthening," accessed February 13, 2013, [http://www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/toolkit\\_hss/EN\\_PDF\\_Toolkit\\_HSS\\_InformationSystems.pdf](http://www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/toolkit_hss/EN_PDF_Toolkit_HSS_InformationSystems.pdf).

1. **Health determinants and risks.** These indicators include exposures responsible for a wide array of outcomes on a community level. They include important social determinants of health and key risk factors;
2. **Health outcomes.** These indicators cover selected morbidities and cause-specific mortality;
3. **Health system response.** These indicators focus on the financial and strategic inputs for care, control, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation including infrastructure and human resources. They also capture programme outputs detailing the accessibility, quality, readiness, and safety of health services.

Establishing a regional core list of indicators with country-specific indicators that also highlight health inequalities, requires strong analytical skills in data collection, compilation, analysis and quality assessment and wide dissemination for use. Therefore, developing a platform for dissemination will go a long way in providing users with needed information and in turn encourages countries to provide reliable and timely information. This requires an easily accessible and up-to-date database that includes the country health and health-related information at national and sub-national levels.

The indicator list was initially discussed at the Regional Director's Technical Advisory Committee meeting in April 2013 and subsequently in the regional stakeholder's meeting on strengthening health information system in May 2013. Following the stakeholder's meeting, the proposed core indicators were reviewed to ensure alignment with programme and country priorities. The list was then shared with the countries for further input and feedback.

### **Expected outcomes**

The session will provide inputs for the next steps in implementing this initiative, and discuss ways of supporting countries in improving data collection, analysis, data quality assessment and dissemination for better use of national data. The full list of both core and optional indicators as well as a trend analysis of existing data and interactive maps charts on a compact disc will be shared and is also available on the Regional Office Health Observatory (RHO) website <http://rho.emro.who.int/rhodata/>. The indicators metadata registry (IMR) will be presented and discussed to ensure that each indicator has a unified definition, sources of data, method of measurements or estimation, frequency of reporting and the limitation and data deficiency, and that critical data gaps can be addressed.