



**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

October 2015

**Sixty-second Session
Kuwait, Kuwait City, 5-8 October 2015**

**ASSESSING ESSENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH FUNCTIONS IN THE EASTERN
MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

Objectives of the event

The objective of the event is to brief Member States on the development of the essential public health functions (EPHF) initiative in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, its components and implementation.

Background

Essential public health functions are an indispensable set of actions, under the primary responsibility of the State, that are fundamental for achieving the goal of public health which is to improve, promote, protect and restore population health through collective action. In response to a request by Member States, an initiative was launched in 2013 to assess public health capacity and performance in countries of the Region and provide best advice for improving performance.

The objectives of the assessment are to: 1) provide a baseline status of national public health functions and capacities; 2) identify areas of strength, as well as areas for further development and actions needed at country level; and 3) develop institutional capacity within the Region to undertake an assessment of essential public health functions.

A steering group comprising international public health experts has worked closely with WHO to identify a framework for essential public health functions in the Region and develop corresponding assessment tools. Different methodologies have been developed and tested in other WHO regions. Pilot assessments have already been conducted in Qatar and Morocco with the support of WHO and a team of international public health experts. Throughout the process, WHO has been keen to involve other partners, such as the World Bank, UNICEF, Public Health England, the International Association of Public Health Institutes, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

The scope of an assessment is country-wide and follows a multisectoral approach. Through the assessment, countries, led by ministries of health, are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the public health system and, based on the results, develop interventions to sustain good practices and bridge gaps. The assessment will provide an opportunity for countries to develop concrete and focused action plans to strengthen public health capacity.

Expected outcomes

By the end of the session, country delegates will be briefed on the essential public health functions initiative in the Region and progress to date. The session will also provide advice on the next steps for Member States interested in conducting their own assessments and encourage greater commitment in advancing this area of work at country and regional level.