



**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

August 2017

**Sixty-fourth Session
Islamabad, Pakistan, 9–12 October 2017**

**GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR MEDICINES (GGM) PROGRAMME IN THE REGION
– RESULTS AND IMPACT TO DATE**

Objectives of the event

The objectives are to:

- highlight the impact of corruption in the pharmaceutical sector;
- discuss the need to institutionalize good governance in pharmaceutical systems;
- discuss implementation of the GGM programme in different Member States;
- discuss the steps needed for establishment of national initiatives which can be integrated in national transparency and accountability frameworks.

Background

In low- and middle-income countries of the Region, 20–60% of the health budget is spent on medicines. This not only represents one of the largest components of health expenditure in these countries but also places a lot of pressure on patients as up to 80–90% of medicines are purchased out of pocket. This trend is increasing as the value of the global pharmaceutical market is also growing in the same manner and at a faster rate than the growth in total health expenditure. The sheer scale of the market and numerous other reasons make it a very attractive target for corruption and unethical practices.

Access to quality-assured and affordable medicines is an essential component of universal health coverage. Underlying the concept of universal health coverage is good governance in deciding which services to provide, who to cover, how to reduce out-of-pocket payments and how to fund health and pharmaceutical care. The WHO GGM programme has now been operational for 13 years and extends to 37 countries globally, which 16 countries are in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The overall objectives of the programme are to improve good governance, prevent corruption in the pharmaceutical sector and contribute to health system strengthening in countries. The GGM programme focuses on the formulation and implementation of appropriate policies and procedures that ensure the effective, efficient, ethical, transparent and accountable management of pharmaceutical systems.

GGM programme has a 3-phase model process for implementation:

- Phase I: National transparency assessment to identify national vulnerabilities to corruption.
- Phase II: Nationwide consultation on the results of the evaluation and generation of a framework which sets out the direction for how good governance in the pharmaceutical sector is envisioned in the country.

- Phase III: Development of a long-term action plan that addresses the eight elements of good governance.

WHO provides technical support throughout the three phases of the programme. Currently, six Member States of the Region are in Phase I; seven in Phase II and three in Phase III. Regional diversity and political instability in some countries has created challenges for countries in implementing the whole programme.

Challenges in the Region

An analysis of all country assessments revealed the following regional challenges.

- Regulation and control of medicines promotion were most frequently identified as vulnerable to corruption.
- There is a widespread lack of public access to information about the pharmaceutical sector (e.g. medicines pricing, information on quality and suppliers, etc.).
- The absence of policies for managing conflict of interest, lack of implementation, and collective adoption of codes of conduct were reported as common gaps in governance across the Region.
- Lack of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and written criteria to guide selection of members of key committees involved in regulation and procurement of medicines.

Way forward

Good governance in the pharmaceutical sector has been recognized as critical for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and reducing corruption will have a lasting impact on countries' investments in health, while improving access to quality medicines. It will reduce the wastage of public and donor funding, as well as out-of-pocket expenditure. Additionally, it will improve the credibility of public institutions, which in turn increases public and donor confidence in governments. As the Eastern Mediterranean Region has the highest number of countries in the GGM programme (43% of all countries), this session aims to update countries on the achievements made and challenges faced in implementing this global initiative.

Expected outcomes of the meeting

- A broader understanding of the impact of corruption in the pharmaceutical sector and bring this to the national health policy agenda.
- Greater awareness of the need to institutionalize good governance in pharmaceutical systems.
- Increased political commitment to move forward with implementation of the GGM programme.
- Identification of steps needed for establishment of national initiatives which can be integrated in national transparency and accountability frameworks.
- Agreement on the need to develop a roadmap to overcome regional and country-specific implementation challenges.