

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE  
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN  
Sixty-fifth Session  
Khartoum, Sudan, 15-18 October 2018**

**October 2018**

**SIDE EVENT**

**IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTH INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES**

**Objectives of the event**

The objectives of the event are to:

- highlight WHO efforts in improving access to, and availability of, reliable and updated health knowledge resources to support evidence-informed health policy-making in the Region at national, regional and international levels;
- highlight achievements in indexing peer-reviewed health and biomedical journals published in the WHO Index Medicus for the Eastern Mediterranean Region;
- raise awareness of Member States on open access repositories, such as the Institutional Digital Repository and Institutional Repository for Information Sharing platforms;
- raise awareness of Member States on access to international scientific publications through public–private partnership programmes as critical components of strategic efforts to strengthen health systems and research;
- build consensus on recommended actions to improve access to health information and support existing WHO knowledge management and sharing projects.

**Background**

Inequity of access to health information resources further increases disparities in health outcomes between high- and lower middle-income countries. Therefore, WHO, as a leader in public health works towards identifying, producing and improving access to health information and resources to reduce knowledge gaps through global and regional initiatives to respond to Member States' needs. This is achieved through an effective network of peers, external partners and public–private partnerships.

**Resources to improve access to health knowledge resources**

*Institutional Digital Repository (IDR)*

IDR is a multilingual digital library to share health knowledge through a single access point in order to improve accessibility to, and availability of, Regional Office information products, including publications, WHO governing bodies documentation, annual reports of the Regional Director, messages and speeches, technical and intercountry meeting reports, videos and WHO campaign materials. IDR provides online open access to the full text of more than 19 000 official documents.

*Institutional Repository for Information Sharing (IRIS)*

WHO's global digital library, IRIS, provides access to over 200 000 archived items, including WHO governing bodies documentation, publications, technical documents, guidelines and journal articles in full text. Its content is freely accessible and searchable in eight languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish). Over the past 6 months, the repository served over 19 million downloads.

### *Access to international scientific publications*

A special public-private partnership programme provides eligible health and medical institutions from low- and middle-income countries free or low-cost online access to leading international scientific journals, books and databases. This programme is collectively called Research4Life and includes five sub-programmes – Hinari Access to Research for Health programme, Research in Agriculture (AGORA), Research in the Environment (OARE), Research for Innovation (ARDI) and Research for Global Justice (GOALI).

### *Hinari Access to Research for Health programme*

The Hinari Programme, set up by WHO together with major publishers, enables low- and middle- income countries to gain access to one of the world's largest collections of biomedical and health literature. It includes 13 500 journals, 60 000 e-books and 110 other information resources available to eligible registered health institutions, benefiting many thousands of health professionals, health workers and researchers, and in turn, contributes to improving world health.

### *Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture (AGORA)*

The AGORA programme, established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations together with major publishers, provides access to an outstanding collection of 10 000 key journals and 26 500 books in the fields of food, agriculture, environmental science and related social sciences.

### *Online Access to Research in the Environment (OARE)*

The OARE programme enables academic, research and government institutions in developing countries to gain free or low cost access to an impressive body of research on the environment and related fields. Set up by the United Nations Environment Programme in 2006 together with Yale University and major scientific publishers, OARE provides access to a collection of up to 11 500 scientific journals, 27 000 e-books, 40 databases and other information resources.

### *Access to Research for Development and Innovation (ARDI)*

The ARDI programme, coordinated by the World Intellectual Property Organization together with its partners in the publishing industry, aims to increase the availability of scientific and technical information in developing countries. Currently, over 100 publishers provide access to around 30 000 journals, books and reference works.

### *Global Online Access to Legal Information (GOALI)*

GOALI is a new programme launched on 2018, set up by the International Labour Organization together with its major partners, Brill Nijhoff, Lillian Goldman Law Library at Yale Law School and the Cornell Law School Library to provide free and low cost online access to law and law-related content to eligible institutions in developing countries.

### **Access to Research4Life programmes**

One thousand and seventy-six (1076) institutions from 14 countries of the Region have registered and are eligible to access Research4Life programmes.

- Group A (free access): Afghanistan (100), Djibouti (15), Somalia (65), Sudan (226), Syrian Arab Republic (60) and Yemen (114).
- Group B (low-cost access): Egypt (14), Iraq (210), Jordan (40), Libya (19), Morocco (79), Pakistan (24), Palestine (56) and Tunisia (54).

## **Access to national and regional scientific publications**

### **Index Medicus for Eastern Mediterranean Region (IMEMR)**

The IMEMR includes more than 196 000 citations from more than 664 peer-reviewed health and biomedical sciences journals published in 20 countries of the Region.

### **Global Index Medicus (GIM)**

The GIM is a unique platform that provides access to health and biomedical science literature published in peer-reviewed scientific journals from low- and middle- income countries, as a compendium of the six regional indices. It is a unique and crucial resource for providing access to content that feeds into systematic reviews and the creation of evidence-based guidance for Member States. Through the GIM portal, users worldwide can search across more than 1.7 million bibliographic and full text records from low- and middle-income countries.

### **Way forward**

The WHO Regional Office will continue:

- expanding reach and usage of WHO digital repositories as a crucial source of evidence to facilitate decision-making;
- improving access to, and utilization of, health information resources through Research4Life Programmes, with special emphasis on supporting and securing the annual subscriptions of eligible regional institutions under Group B;
- sustaining IMEMR as a unique source provides great visibility of scientific information produced in countries (not accessed through public access platforms such as PubMed), with earmarked resources from Member States;
- supporting capacity-building in knowledge management, including: information literacy, use of knowledge tools, and accessing key information products and resources in health and biomedical sciences.

### **Expected outcomes**

- Improved recognition of the importance of access to, and usage of, reliable health information resources as a central building block for improving health research and systems in the Region.
- Agreement reached on the need for recommended regional/national mechanisms to support national institutions to sustain their access to, and use of, Research4Life resources.