

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTE
Bureau régional de la Méditerranée orientale



مَنْظَرَةُ الصَّحَّةِ الْعَالَمِيَّةِ
المكتب الإقليمي شرق المتوسط

**Regional Committee for the
Eastern Mediterranean**

EM/RC58/INF.DOC.6
October 2011

Fifty-eighth Session

Original: Arabic

Agenda item 2 (g)

Progress report on

**Regional emergency solidarity fund and progress
made in operationalizing the regional hub for logistics
and supply management**

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Introduction

Regional Committee resolution EM/RC52/R.2 in 2005 requested the Regional Director to take the steps necessary to establish a regional emergency solidarity fund, thereby creating a mechanism to ensure predictable financing of surge/rapid response to natural and man-made disasters in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The fund will be used to address immediate financial needs for life-saving interventions and to fill critical, life threatening gaps. The fund will complement existing and well-established major humanitarian financing mechanisms such as Flash Appeals, the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) and Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). Resolution EM/RC57/R.2 in 2010 further addressed the issue of establishing the fund, and requested the Regional Director to report on the regional solidarity fund and the progress made in operationalizing the regional hub for logistics and supply management.

Action taken

Initial work has been done to identify membership and criteria for a regional task force to develop a transparent mechanism, structure and plan for the regional emergency solidarity fund. Membership might include representation from ministries of finance, planning and health, the Islamic Development Bank, the League of Arab States, leading international banks and charities active in the Region. Draft terms of reference and a concept note has been prepared to be reviewed by the task force once established.

WHO actively utilizes the services offered by the regional United Nations Hub in Dubai. Responses to the floods in Pakistan, conflict in Libya and Yemen, and drought in Somali all had access to the prepositioned supply of life-saving medicines and consumables stored at the regional hub. Discussions were initiated with Libyan humanitarian institutions to establish a second hub in Tripoli in Libya. It is hoped these discussions will continue with the new government. This hub is proposed to support both the Eastern Mediterranean and African regions.

With the support of HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, WHO temporarily operated some of its functions out of the International Humanitarian City (IHC) in Dubai during the events in Egypt in February 2011. WHO has decided, in close collaboration with IHC, to base a permanent office in Dubai. However, due to financial constraints, options with regard to securing continued staffing are still being studied.

In order to support integration of health in all national emergency management and disaster risk reduction programmes, strong advocacy efforts coupled with technical support are being provided to Member States to develop, pilot test and execute, where warranted, national emergency plans that incorporate an all-hazards approach, with health as a key sector. The campaign for hospitals safe from disasters has been a key success. The Regional Office is working with national authorities in three countries – Afghanistan, Lebanon and Oman – to ensure capacity to deliver functioning and safe health services during crises.

To support emergency preparedness and risk reduction in all health development programmes, linkages between crisis recovery and development were included in health systems recovery strategies in Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan. Linkages between WHO and mainstream development partners in health, such as UNDP, World Bank and the League of Arab States, were strengthened to emphasize the effectiveness and efficiency of linkages within the disaster management spectrum, spanning from preparedness to recovery with development.

Review of the WHO headquarters roster of expertise in the humanitarian sector is being conducted and a regional roster is being developed. The Regional Office is collaborating with the Arab Medical Union for humanitarian work in emergencies and a memorandum of understanding was agreed and implemented to provide rapid response in Libya. Discussion is taking place with academic institutions in the Region and elsewhere to develop programmes in disaster management in order to increase the availability of experts in the Region.

Collaboration took place with WHO headquarters to offer humanitarian response courses in the Region in health cluster coordination, management of public health risks in emergencies, and public health pre-deployment. Over 150 mid to senior level staff from ministries of health and national crisis management structures were trained with representation from all the countries. Country-specific trainings are planned in Bahrain, Egypt and Qatar.

WHO, Johns Hopkins University and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Atlanta, have embarked upon review of programme effectiveness and conduct of operational research in disaster management in order to improve programmatic outputs and the cost-effectiveness of selected interventions. WHO and CDC have successfully conducted evaluation of disease early warning systems (DEWS) in Sudan and South Sudan to determine the cost-effectiveness of these programmes. The same evaluation was conducted in Pakistan. Research is being conducted on cost-effectiveness of the flood response interventions in Pakistan in 2010.

Next steps

Among the major challenges facing emergency and humanitarian action in the Region are:

- a worsening scale of disaster impact, with several countries currently experiencing acute emergency;
- continuing presence of long-standing protracted complex emergencies in some countries; and
- the uncoordinated use by governments and humanitarian organizations of donations made in response to crises in the Region.

Immediate actions required include the following.

- Nominations are expected from Member States that wish to join a regional task force and contribute to governance of the fund.
- Resources need to be identified in order to staff the WHO office at the regional logistics hub in Dubai.
- The regional roster of expertise in the humanitarian sector needs to be finalized.
- Collaboration needs to be further developed with relevant and appropriate regional institutions that can supplement emergency preparedness and response activities at the regional level.
- The Regional Office is planning for a regional forum before the end of this year in collaboration with Organization of Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States to address utilization of resources and enhanced coordination.
- A regional stakeholder consultation needs to be organized to promote and support research into programme effectiveness in emergencies and to strengthen capacities in emergency preparedness and response.