



Progress report on the regional strategy on health and the environment 2014–2019

Introduction

1. In October 2013 the 60th session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean issued resolution EM/RC60/R.5 in which it endorsed the Regional strategy on health and the environment 2014–2019 and its framework for action.
2. In the resolution, the Committee requested WHO to: provide technical support to Member States to adapt and implement the regional strategy on health and the environment; build partnerships with United Nations organizations and other relevant stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of the strategy; and monitor and report to the Regional Committee the progress achieved in the implementation of the strategy on a biennial basis.
3. A progress report on implementation of the strategy was presented to the 62nd session of the Regional Committee in 2015. The current report describes activities and progress undertaken by WHO and Member States to implement the regional strategy in the past two years.

Progress achieved since 2015

4. A methodology and tools for implementation of the regional strategy at national level were developed by WHO, shared with Member States and used for the development of national strategies in Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan and Sudan. Field missions to assess the environmental health situation and identify priorities were conducted in 2015 to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia and Sudan. Afghanistan, and Kuwait developed national strategic health and environment frameworks for action in 2016.
5. In March 2017 the first joint meeting of Arab health and environment ministers was convened at the League of Arab States in collaboration with WHO and the United Nations Environment Programme. The meeting endorsed an updated regional strategy on health and environment for Arab states and an action guideline with an expanded timeline (2017–2030) to coincide with the Sustainable Development Goals. The Ministers also agreed to establish a joint ministerial forum on health and the environment.
6. Table 1 summarizes the status of achievement of the targets of the regional strategy in the countries of the Region, based on a survey conducted by the Centre for Environmental Health Action in 2017 and additional input from some Member States.

Priority area	Indicator	Baseline (2014)	Current (2017)	Target (2019)
Water and sanitation	No. of countries participating in GLAAS	8	11	15
	No. of countries actively verifying WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) profiles	15	15	22
	No. of countries with updated drinking-water quality standards	15	17	20
	No. of countries adopting water safety plans	7	10	12
	No. of countries with updated wastewater reuse standards	7	12	12
Air quality	No. of countries that are reporting particulate matter data to the WHO Global Database	8	15	15
	No. of studies on burden of air pollution on health	0	1	6

Priority area	Indicator	Baseline (2014)	Current (2017)	Target (2019)
Waste management and environmental health services	No. of countries with ambient air quality early warning systems	1	1	3
	No. of countries that assessed environmental health services in their health care facilities	6	12	12
	No. of countries with 50% of health care facilities meeting the WHO essential standards on environmental health services in health care facilities	6	10	12
Chemical safety	No. of countries that have assessed the public health impact of waste management policies	0	1	6
	No. of countries with public health strategies on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)	4	4	5
	Percentage of countries with capacity developed to deal with chemical events under the International Health Regulations (2005)	45%	72%	85%
Environmental health in emergencies	No. of countries covered by functional poison information centre services	11	11	15
	No. of countries with environmental health in emergency profiles	0	1	6
	Functional network for environmental health emergency experts and institutions	0	0	1
	Percentage of emergencies adequately responded to with integrated environmental health services	50%	50%	90%
Climate change and health	No. of countries with vulnerability assessment and adaptation strategies on health adaptation to climate change	2	4	7
	No. of countries incorporating climate data into national health information systems	1	1	4
Sustainable development	No. of countries integrating public health into sustainable development policies as recommended by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012	0	2	3
	No. of countries with programmes on greening the health sector	0	2	3

Challenges

7. Some countries are not on track to achieve several targets due to a range of challenges. In some countries, environmental health is still not considered a priority in public health policies and allocation of resources. Emergencies in several countries of the Region not only negatively affect health and the environment but also compromise planning and decision-making for environmental health. Information continues to be scarce and fragmented, reflecting the need for a multisectoral mechanism for systematic collection of reliable data.

The way forward

8. Member States are urged to undertake the following actions to accelerate implementation of the regional strategy.

- Establish/strengthen specialized environmental health units/entities in all ministries of health.
- Conduct a thorough situation analysis of each priority area in the strategy, focusing on those with least progress, and map all challenges and resources needed, taking into consideration the cross-cutting nature of environmental health.
- Collaborate with WHO to continue developing policy, plans, networks and capacity to implement the strategy at national level.

Utilize the joint ministerial forum on health and the environment to share experiences and lessons learnt.