

# Vision 2023

Eastern Mediterranean Region



a call for  
solidarity  
and action



World Health  
Organization

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE Eastern Mediterranean

## Vision

Health<sup>1</sup> for all, by all so that everyone in the Eastern Mediterranean Region can enjoy a better quality of life.

## Mission

To collectively strive and accelerate progress towards the health and well-being of the people of the Eastern Mediterranean Region by leveraging all opportunities and mobilizing all regional assets in line with WHO's global mission outlined in GPW 13: promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable.

## Introduction

The Eastern Mediterranean Region is a dynamic and diverse world region with challenging social, economic and demographic conditions. This vision supports countries' ongoing efforts to move towards health for all by all and builds on the Regional Roadmap 2017–2021, which was presented to the 64th session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean in 2017. It is anchored in and contributes towards implementation of the following:

- WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 (GPW 13)
- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs)
- The Agenda for Humanity<sup>2</sup>
- United Nations reform.

The Eastern Mediterranean Region is rich in cultural assets and opportunities that can contribute to achieving better health. We are endowed with community-centered values of sharing and solidarity, large numbers of confident and aspirational young people, renowned intellectual heritage and a strong societal fabric that promotes platforms and partnerships able to give a voice to the voiceless.

<sup>1</sup> "Health" is the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, based on the definitions and principles set out in the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1978 including attention to the social determinants of health.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org>. The Agenda for Humanity originated the increasingly influential concept of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.

Countries of the Region vary greatly in terms of income, from among the world's highest to the lowest. While some enjoy cutting-edge technology, others lack access to water, sanitation and electricity. Some countries still struggle to control infectious diseases while others face a greater threat from chronic noncommunicable diseases. Poverty, conflict, unhealthy lifestyles and environmental degradation have undermined efforts to reduce and prevent disease, disability and death.

Crises are a defining feature of the Region, directly or indirectly affecting nearly two-thirds of its countries. Aggravated by brain drain, these crises have unprecedented, grave consequences for social and economic life and health: severely disrupted health systems, retrograde health indicators, fragile or shattered institutions and the re-emergence of high-threat pathogens. In some countries, emergencies have reversed the hard-won health gains of previous decades. Vulnerable groups such as women, children, people with disabilities, displaced populations, refugees, migrants, nomadic groups and inhabitants of rural and urban slum areas are particularly exposed to the effects of emergencies. The high level of insecurity also further complicates efforts to eradicate poliomyelitis in the Region, which includes the only two countries in the world still reporting wild poliovirus.

Together with its Member States and health partners, WHO should ensure that it continues to be a trusted authority in public health and is fully equipped to support countries to tackle these challenges. This can be achieved by focusing efforts on four cross-cutting regional strategic priorities and transforming the way we address these challenges while remaining true to WHO's principles of the right to health and the responsibility of governments for the health of their peoples.<sup>3</sup>

## Regional strategic priorities

### 1. Expanding universal health coverage

by building equitable, resilient health systems based on primary health care, a people-centered approach and quality and safe services; and focusing on implementing the recommendations of the Salalah Declaration on Universal Health Coverage of 2018; ensuring that at least 100 million more people benefit from universal health coverage by 2023.

### 2. Addressing health emergencies

through forecasting, comprehensive preparedness, prompt response and well-planned recovery guided by the humanitarian, development and peace nexus; and focusing on ensuring access to health services during emergencies, initiating early recovery and promoting the transition to health and fostering peace.

### 3. Promoting healthier populations

by advocating for Health in All Policies, multisectoral action, community engagement and strategic partnerships with focus on addressing the social and economic determinants of health across the life course, addressing risk factors for health including NCDs and injuries, and leaving no one behind.

### 4. Making transformative changes in WHO

by reforming the Organization's business models, systems and culture in the Region to ensure that it is fit for business, accountable and a dynamic catalyst in health; by focusing on creating an enabling working environment; strengthening and streamlining strategic communications as a core function; increasing the availability and sustainability of financial resources for WHO-supported health programmes in the Region; optimizing use of those resources; and strengthening WHO's country presence.

<sup>3</sup> As set out in the WHO Constitution: [www.who.int/about/mission](http://www.who.int/about/mission).

## Driving public health impact in countries

Six approaches will be used to enhance WHO's impact at country level:

1. **Building public health capacity** including multisectoral needs assessment, priority setting, generating intelligence, planning and evidence-based policy development that is responsive to local needs to ensure equitable and resilient health systems.
2. **Enhancing preparedness** by expanding capacities for effective and timely response to, and recovery from, the variety of current and potential emergencies and post-conflict situations affecting the Region, and mitigating risk by building resilience into health systems.
3. **Strengthening partnerships** with professional organizations, civil society and local communities to protect people's health, build strategic alliances, and ensure effective engagement for health among individuals, experts, champions, organizations, academia, the private sector, civil society and regional foundations.
4. **Effectively advocating for health**, working on and building regional expertise for Health in All Policies, equity and gender mainstreaming and community-based actions to address health determinants and strengthening regional experience in community-based actions to meet the SDGs and ensure a people-centered approach to public health actions, including in times of emergencies.
5. **Mobilizing resources** employing innovative approaches. Resources for health are not just financial; they include human resources, knowledge, information, science and technology.
6. **Fostering innovation** by investing in technological advances that are appropriate for national needs and that support the achievement of the regional priorities, and supporting the generation, translation and dissemination of knowledge and its systematic use in policy-making.



## Key initiatives for 2019

In pursuing this vision, WHO will focus on transformative actions that complement and extend ongoing work to implement the Regional Roadmap 2017–2021. Work will be informed by a detailed document covering each regional strategic priority; plans were developed through consultation and are currently being finalized. Key initiatives in the next 12 months will include:

1. Forming an Alliance for Health for All by All with key partners and stakeholders in the Region
2. Establishing a leadership and health diplomacy development programme
3. Addressing the Sustainable Development Goals by revitalizing the community-based initiatives programme including healthy cities, healthy villages, healthy markets and health-promoting schools
4. Launching regional essential health service and intersectoral packages to support the achievement of universal health coverage
5. Promoting the Patient Safety Friendly Hospital Initiative in the Region
6. Launching a health innovation programme and advancing the use of information technology by introducing the latest tools and innovations
7. Scaling up contributions by the WHO Collaborating Centres in the Region
8. Accelerating functional reviews to strengthen WHO's country offices and the Centre for Environmental Health Action (CEHA)
9. Expanding rosters of human, institutional and financial resources in the Region, including experts, partners, research and academic institutions and donor agencies
10. Building capacity among future public health experts by promoting and streamlining the WHO internship and junior professional officer programmes.

## The way forward

This vision was developed through an extensive consultation process including a five-day regional workshop held at WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean in Cairo, Egypt, 16–20 September 2018. In the coming months, the following supporting documents will be finalized:

1. Health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: time for transformation
2. Short-term (2018–2019) and medium-term (2020–2023) action plans identifying transformative actions to operationalize this vision, building on the Regional Roadmap 2017–2021
3. Four strategic documents, one for each regional strategic priority, discussed and developed during the September workshop.