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Resolution

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

**EM/RC68/R.4
October 2021**

**Sixty-eighth session
Agenda item 3(c)**

Building resilient communities for better health and well-being in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The Regional Committee,

Having reviewed the technical paper on building resilient communities for better health and well-being in the Eastern Mediterranean Region;¹

Mindful of accelerator 3 of the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All, which brings together 12 multilateral health, development and humanitarian agencies to better support countries to accelerate progress towards the health-related Sustainable Development Goals;

Concerned at the unprecedented crisis of COVID-19 and the impact of this and other emergencies on governments, societies, communities and individuals, including vulnerable populations such as marginalized, refugee and displaced populations;

Recognizing the importance of engaging and involving communities to support the implementation and enforcement of the different public health and social measures needed to manage and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic;

Considering the active role that can be played by communities and civil society organizations in identifying health issues, assessing needs, ensuring the effective allocation of resources, and participating in health programmes and interventions for development and emergency prevention, preparedness and response;

Welcoming World Health Assembly resolution WHA69.10 and World Health Assembly document A70/53 on engagement with non-State actors: criteria and principles for secondments from nongovernmental organizations, philanthropic foundations and academic institutions; recognizing the valuable role that nongovernmental organizations play and encouraging WHO to strengthen partnerships with non-State actors through the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors to proactively involve civil society in national planning and policy processes;

- 1. ENDORSES** the roadmap on building resilient communities for better health and well-being in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (annexed to this resolution);

¹ EM/RC68/6.

2. URGES Member States to:

- 2.1 Establish clear governance structures and mechanisms through which community representatives and civil society can actively contribute to public health policies, plans and programmes;
- 2.2 Develop an effective community engagement plan based on the proposed regional roadmap to build resilient communities for better health and well-being, guided by specific country context, and allocate the budget needed for its implementation;
- 2.3 Ensure that the role of communities and civil society is specified in all national strategies and plans for health emergency prevention, preparedness and response;
- 2.4 Implement community-based initiatives that can create multisectoral platforms and engage communities, such as healthy settings;
- 2.5 Enhance health literacy and build the capacity of formal and informal frontline workers, including community health and social workers (midwives, nursing assistants, health volunteers and health promoters), to support communities, drawing on existing skills in surveillance, data collection, risk communication and response;
- 2.6 Enhance social mobilization as a process that engages and motivates a wide range of partners and allies at national and local levels through social dialogue to ensure their input into governance, health policies and strategies at all levels;
- 2.7 Apply social sciences to better understand communities and to create evidence to inform health programmes and interventions; and
- 2.8 Establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the health outcomes of community-based interventions to ensure accountability and further improve outcomes;

3. REQUESTS the Regional Director to:

- 3.1 Provide technical support to Member States to develop national plans for community and civil society engagement;
- 3.2 Provide guidance to support the establishment of governance structures and mechanisms at the national and subnational levels for community engagement;
- 3.3 Support community-based participatory research approaches to assess and monitor community and civil society engagement and capacity-building at both national and regional levels;
- 3.4 Establish a regional platform accessible to community and civic representatives for knowledge- and practice-sharing;
- 3.5 Support the documentation of best practices in community and civil society engagement at regional and country levels to inform future health programmes for development and emergency prevention, preparedness and response; and
- 3.6 Report to the Regional Committee at its 70th and 72nd sessions on progress in implementing the roadmap.

Annex. Roadmap on building resilient communities for better health and well-being in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

1. The following regional roadmap, with its proposed actions for countries, will help guide the building of resilient communities for better health and well-being, including in emergency situations. WHO will provide tools, technical support and capacity-building materials, and establish regional platforms for experience exchange and advisory groups at the regional level, as needed.
2. The roadmap can be implemented by establishing platforms or bodies at the national level, such as supreme councils encompassing representatives from the community and civil society organizations, through which public consultation and discussion can take place. These national bodies need to be linked to the local level (provincial, district and city levels) through multisectoral platforms that also include community and civil society representatives and are led by the local authorities, such as the governor, mayor or *wally*. Accordingly, the role of local government will shift from “governing” to that of “governance”, whereby governments work with communities to plan, design and deliver decisions and policies.
3. The roadmap includes proposed actions by strategic direction for countries to consider and the desired outcomes that can be used as a basis to track progress in implementation of the actions.

Strategic direction	Proposed actions for countries	Outcomes
Engage community and civil society representatives in governance structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish working groups/entities, platforms or coalitions, including at peripheral levels, dedicated to community engagement • Engage community and civil society representatives in existing governance structures, including at peripheral levels • Review and enact legislation or develop decrees or administrative procedures to provide legal support and guarantee a space for communities and civil society in the decision-making process and the planning and implementation of strategic interventions, and identify those responsible and reporting lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working groups/entities, platforms or coalitions established • Communities and civil society represented in the different government bodies, with clear mandates and reporting lines
Map existing communities, networks, practices and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map and identify communities of priority concern to the country, such as those at high risk, refugees, youth, religious leaders, internally displaced people, and urban and rural communities • Map leading civil society networks and identify their mandate and priorities • Create a repository or database of community engagement interventions • Map existing modalities, practices, platforms and approaches for engaging different communities • Map budgetary allocations for community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority communities identified • Active civil society/nongovernmental organization networks identified • Existing modalities, practices, platforms and approaches for engaging communities mapped • Investments for community engagement mapped
Establish links and build trust with communities and civic institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify trusted community leaders or representatives • Discuss and agree on representatives of communities and civil society in governmental structures • Ensure community and civil society representatives are well represented in governance structures • Promote the participation of communities and civil society in the national planning and implementation of health programmes and interventions • Hold forums to exchange knowledge about community engagement interventions and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected and mutually accepted community and civil society representatives linked with governing bodies within a legal framework • Community- and civil society-led initiatives active and aligned with national strategies • Lessons learned documented and disseminated
Enhance collaboration and coordination for effective interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop standard operating procedures for operationalizing community and civic engagement and align them with national strategic directions • Ensure the role of communities and civil society is defined in national development and emergency strategies and plans • Ensure the participation of community and civil society in coordination structures such as health cluster coordination mechanisms and public health emergency operation centres • Facilitate accountability and provide opportunities for communities and civil society to access regional and global platforms, such as the League of Arab States and Gulf Cooperation Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and civic engagement operational with concrete actions • Role of community and civil society integrated in national strategies and plans • Community- and civil society-led programmes and initiatives are monitored and evaluated

Strategic direction	Proposed actions for countries	Outcomes
Streamline listening and community feedback to ensure two-way communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a mechanism for social listening, including online tools to capture insights from social media platforms and offline platforms such as community meetings, hotlines and surveys, to facilitate the collection of community feedback • Establish mechanisms to analyse community insights and collect feedback to be used for the design of community-based programmes and interventions • Share community insights in the different coordination mechanisms to ensure integration of community feedback and inputs in interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities and successful examples of effective interventions are advocated for and promoted regionally and globally • Social listening and community feedback mechanisms in place • Community programmes and interventions are planned according to local needs and context
Localize community engagement approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and support community-based participatory approaches for community and civil society engagement • Regularly assess the acceptability and feasibility of community-based programmes and interventions, and adapt to local contexts accordingly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based programmes and interventions are implemented and operational
Build the capacity of communities and civil society and provide support to maximize community participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and develop capacity-building programmes for communities and civil society and develop materials as needed • Provide human and financial resources to implement capacity-building programmes • Establish a network of community volunteers to support community engagement initiatives and scale up good practices • Participate in regional and global initiatives to build the capacity of civil society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities and civil society are enabled and engaged in planning, design and implementation of programmes and interventions to achieve national targets
Advance evidence-based and innovative interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and allocate resources to support research to inform evidence-based community and civil society engagement programmes and interventions • Disseminate, promote and support evidence-based interventions among stakeholders in developing and implementing community engagement programmes • Support the integration of evidence-based interventions into national health and development plans and in emergency prevention, preparedness and response plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence-based programmes and interventions designed and implemented • Innovative approaches developed to facilitate implementation of programmes and interventions
Document and communicate linkages between improved public health outcomes and community-based programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a mechanism for the assessment, monitoring and evaluation of community-targeted projects • Monitor the progress of community-based programmes and interventions and include them in national progress reports • Promote documentation of public health outcomes of community-based programmes and interventions • Organize forums and facilitate the dissemination of community-based programme outcomes related to diseases and risk factors at the national, regional and global levels • Develop guidance and tools for adopting and integrating standards for community-based programmes and interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent and responsive reporting system established • Learning centres, such as centres of excellence, established and used as hubs to promote information exchange among countries