

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Sixty-ninth Session
Cairo, Egypt, 10–13 October 2022**

October 2022

**IMPROVING THE MONITORING OF RESPONSE TO PUBLIC HEALTH EVENTS
AND EMERGENCIES IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

Objectives of the event

On 10 October 2022, a technical discussion will be held on improving the monitoring of response to public health events and emergencies in humanitarian and fragile settings in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

The objectives of the event are to:

- highlight the critical impact of multiple emergencies of various origins on the health of populations in the Region;
- highlight the need to monitor response activities in order to guide resources and provide the appropriate response;
- brief Member States on the development and rollout of the updated response monitoring framework in 2022; and
- collect feedback from Member States on how WHO could support evidence-based response more effectively and efficiently.

Background

The Eastern Mediterranean Region is the WHO region most affected by health emergencies. Every year, natural and man-made disasters, societal unrest and armed conflict – compounded by complex humanitarian crises – threaten health security and the lives, livelihoods and health of millions of people in the Region. Currently, there are 10 fragile, conflict-affected and vulnerable (FCV) countries in the Region, with more than 100 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.

Reliable and timely information on the health status of crisis-affected populations and the level of service provision is crucial in order to establish and adjust public health priorities and to mobilize funds. While extensive work has been conducted in recent decades to establish and standardize surveillance systems for emergency settings, the operational component is far less developed and lacks standardization across actors, responses and countries.

Over the years, various activity-/sector-specific indicators have been developed to monitor operations and are used for internal reporting purposes by individual agencies including United Nations entities, nongovernmental organizations and government agencies. These global efforts have led to increased availability and standardization of information in various domains (for example, nutrition and epidemics). However, the lack of standardization, difficulties in aggregating indicators at various levels (i.e., from subnational to national to regional) and difficulty in measuring many of the proposed indicators due to extrinsic factors translate into limited quality and standardization of data used to monitor the performance of humanitarian action in FCV settings.

In 2019, in collaboration with health cluster/sector coordinators, a regional response monitoring framework was developed to monitor the emergency response of the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. This framework included a set of indicators covering WHO's operational process, health cluster operations, humanitarian contexts and health systems performance. Data have been collected and

analysed for the last two years, although indicators could not be calculated in some countries because of the unavailability of data, or due to its poor quality. In 2021, the Regional Office revised the framework by removing indicators that could not feasibly be collected. The revised framework includes key performance indicators (KPIs) encompassing a range of thematic areas: health service delivery, workforce, essential medicines, communicable diseases, child health (morbidity, nutrition and vaccination), reproductive, maternal and newborn care, and noncommunicable diseases (trauma and mental health). This set includes KPIs only, as the objective is to track results of the humanitarian response and health needs of the affected populations in order to define strategic priorities. (Besides the KPIs, there remains a need to measure other indicators at country and regional levels, including input and output indicators, to inform programming and programmatic decisions; however, this is beyond the scope of this session.)

Collaboration has been established with the Johns Hopkins Center for Humanitarian Health with the aim of assessing and strengthening operationalization of the KPIs to ensure that humanitarian response monitoring is effective at both country and regional levels. Four FCV countries (Palestine, Somalia, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen) have been selected to pilot test the revised set of KPIs. A desk review and interviews were conducted with emergency focal points in health ministries, nongovernmental organizations and WHO country offices to collect information on country-specific data systems, data sources and ongoing initiatives, as well as on challenges related to data collection, analysis and use. In December 2021, a regional stakeholders meeting brought together participants from the health ministries and health clusters of FCV countries, along with WHO and international experts. Participants agreed on a revised list of KPIs that would be pilot tested in the four countries.

Challenges in the Region

All four countries reported fragmented systems that challenge their capacity to access, analyse and comprehensively use data. The lack of standardization, difficulties in aggregating indicators at various levels, as well as the difficulty in measuring many of the proposed indicators (because data are either not available or not shared) hinder monitoring of the performance of humanitarian action in FCV settings. Given the challenges in establishing accurate target population figures and therefore denominators, data are too often presented solely as numerators and are infrequently converted to rates, proportions, percentages, and so on. In addition, indicators rarely have targets against which to measure the success of the humanitarian health response. In consequence, it is difficult to track performance over time, to compare performance with established technical standards, or to aggregate results at the regional level to establish a regional response monitoring framework.

Expected outcomes

- Member States sensitized on the importance of monitoring the response to health emergencies in the Region.
- Member States support gained for the implementation of the humanitarian response monitoring framework.