

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Seventieth Session
Cairo, Egypt, 9–12 October 2023**

October 2023

**DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING PRIMARY HEALTH CARE-ORIENTED MODELS OF
CARE IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

Objectives of the event

On 9 October 2023, a technical discussion will be held on designing and implementing primary health care-oriented models of care in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: where do we go from here?

The objectives of the event are to:

- brief Member States on the latest knowledge on implementing primary health care-oriented models of care and the potential contribution toward advancing universal health coverage;
- define and reorient the key components of an effective model of care in the regional context;
- gain inputs to the development of a framework of action for designing and implementing primary health care-oriented models of care, including a focus on multisectoral action and collaboration, and community engagement.

Background

WHO's operational framework for primary health care¹ outlines 14 levers (four core strategic levers and 10 operational levers) and accompanying actions and interventions to operationalize primary health care. One of the operational levers is on developing context-specific models of care. A model of care is a conceptualization and operationalization of how services should be delivered, including the processes of care, organization of providers and management of services, supported by the identification of roles and responsibilities of different platforms and providers along the pathways of care.²

Developing primary health care-oriented models of care is part of WHO's work in the Eastern Mediterranean Region to support countries in improving access to quality health services for all, in collaboration with partner agencies. Recently, WHO has led initiatives to understand and improve models of care in the Region. A key initiative is the pilot programme to assess and reorient subnational models of care in Palestine, Pakistan and Sudan. As part of this process, each country/territory has developed a workplan to conceptualize and initiate the implementation of the model of care approach in selected districts. In parallel, WHO has been working with these same countries/territories to develop delivery and implementation plans. The pilot project has highlighted the importance of having a common understanding of a model of care, mapping initiatives at different levels of care and putting key components in place to help to mobilize action.³ In order to leverage the primary health care approach in developing context-relevant models of care, it is important to evaluate what has been learned from the experiences of Palestine, Pakistan, and Sudan and work towards expanding implementation to more districts and countries.

¹ WHO and UNICEF. Operational framework for primary health care: transforming vision into action. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020 (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240017832>, accessed 8 March 2023).

² Developing primary health care-oriented models of care: guidance for the Eastern Mediterranean Region; WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean Region (in press).

³ PHC-oriented models of care [website]. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (<https://www.emro.who.int/uhc-health-systems/access-health-services/phc-oriented-models-of-care.html>, accessed 20 March 2023).

In 2022, WHO held a regional expert consultation and an intercountry meeting, both of which focused on: defining a model of care in the context of the Region; sharing experiences; and, linking conceptualization with implementation of models of care. Meeting participants concluded that assessing country context, disease burden and population needs (especially those of the most vulnerable populations, including refugees) and assessing the strengths of the current health system (including existing successful programmes) are critical in the operationalization of models of care. In October 2022, the 69th session of the Regional Committee adopted resolution EM/RC69/R.2 on Building resilient health systems to advance universal health coverage and ensure health security in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, which urged Member States to establish primary health care-oriented models of care as one of seven priority actions.

Challenges in the Region

Every health system has a model of care or, more typically, multiple models of care that co-exist; these may not be formally recognized and may not appear in policy documents. In the Region, understanding and implementation of models of care has been limited. In practice, countries may have multiple, interrelated models of care functioning at national and subnational levels, and in many Member States the existing models of care can be described as specialized, fragmented and hospital-oriented. The family practice-based model of care has been implemented to a varying degree in several countries, however, the same model may not be suitable for all contexts. There are missed opportunities in identifying roles, functions and linkages between service delivery platforms. In addition, community engagement in some parts of the Region is ad hoc and lacks sustained mechanisms for social accountability. Multisectoral action and regular engagement between health and other social sectors also remains limited.

Moreover, health systems face entrenched challenges related to: unfit governance arrangements along with weak institutions; high out-of-pocket payments and inadequate financial protection arrangements; service delivery arrangements and models of care that are not fit for purpose and which are designed to focus on curative care rather than health promotion; shortage of and imbalances in the health workforce and inadequate capacity; inaccessible essential medicines and technologies with questionable quality and fragile medical supply chains; and inadequate health information systems.³

Expected outcomes

- Member States briefed on the latest knowledge on implementing primary health care-oriented models of care and the potential contribution to advancing universal health coverage.
- Defining and reorienting the key components of an effective model of care, as described in the forthcoming regional strategic paper on primary health care-oriented models of care and corresponding guidance.
- Inputs gained on developing a framework of action for designing and implementing primary health care-oriented models of care, including a focus on multisectoral action and collaboration, and community engagement.