

Summary Report on the Eastern Mediterranean Region intercountry dialogue on the WHO Acceleration Plan to STOP Obesity

Amman, Jordan
18–20 October 2022



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE **Eastern Mediterranean**

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1. Introduction

The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean held the first regional Inter-country Dialogue on the WHO Acceleration Plan to STOP Obesity on 18–20 October 2022 in Amman, Jordan. It was attended by country teams, including government officials and WHO country office staff, from Bahrain, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait and Tunisia (which joined virtually).

The objectives of the meeting were to;

- present an overview of current regional and country initiatives to tackle the obesity epidemic, including impact, challenges, gaps and priorities;
- develop a shared understanding of the WHO Acceleration Plan to STOP Obesity;
- discuss delivery approaches for country engagement, goal-setting and problem-solving to achieve impact;
- provide recommendations and plan the next steps towards the regional roll-out of the plan; and
- develop country acceleration roadmaps to execute the plan.

2. Summary of discussions

Dr Ayoub Al Jawaldeh, Regional Adviser for Nutrition at the WHO Regional Office, provided an overview of the current work being undertaken in the Region, including the regional approach to obesity prevention, proposed policy priorities and the regional framework to scale up action on obesity. He observed that this work could provide a platform for the Acceleration Plan.

Dr Francesca Celletti, from the Nutrition and Food Safety Department at WHO headquarters, introduced the Acceleration Plan, including its five work streams and a plan for its implementation.

The country teams then presented their landscape assessments on obesity trends, risk factors and current interventions and priorities in their countries.

Dr Melanie Bertram and Dr Claire Chaumont, of the Delivery for Impact Department at WHO headquarters, introduced delivery approaches for goal setting and problem-solving.

After this, the country teams built an “issue tree” to unpack and analyse the root causes of obesity in their country and worked in small groups to define their overall goals for the Acceleration Plan.

The seven areas of intervention in the new WHO obesity technical package were presented, including: fiscal policies, marketing food and beverages, food labelling, early food environments, public food procurement, building capacity in the health system to deliver obesity management services and innovations, and tools for impact modelling and service delivery.

The country teams reviewed their current activities and policies and assessed to what extent these addressed the root causes they had previously identified. They identified the importance of prioritizing a few activities and monitoring their implementation to achieve an impact. They then developed a prioritization matrix and identified and prioritized interventions that need to be improved or implemented to address the root causes of obesity in their countries. The country teams also assessed the key factors and practical challenges regarding delivery, in terms of governance, accountability and data.

Experts from France, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom shared their experiences implementing interventions to curb obesity and overweight, and discussed challenges faced during implementation and

how they addressed them, while an expert from the WHO Regional Office reflected on current successes and challenges related to implementation.

The country teams then developed a stakeholder matrix and engagement strategies for key stakeholders and discussed the importance of engaging stakeholders early and continuously at key points. All participants discussed how the Acceleration Plan can be successfully implemented and reflected on the next steps.

3. Next steps

- Following the Intercountry Dialogue, virtual sessions will be organized by the WHO Regional Office until the finalization of the Acceleration Plan roadmaps and the launch of the first in-country stocktakes.
- Sessions will be organized at regular intervals (for instance, every week) to cover key aspects of the Acceleration Plan, such as developing a theory of change, indicators, targets and acceleration scenarios, identifying innovations, assessing delivery chains and optimizing routines
- Private SharePoint teams will be set-up for all country impact teams, where all recordings, tools, templates, and so on, will be shared and where participants will be able to save their work-in-progress.
- After the finalization of the Acceleration Plan roadmap (tentatively by the end of January 2023), quarterly meetings will be organized with the country teams to review progress, discuss roadblocks and share best practices.
- Thematic sessions and subgroups focused on specific topics (for example, sugar-sweetened beverages taxes, menu labeling and marketing restrictions) will be organized, with expert focal points from the WHO Regional Office and WHO headquarters.


4. Action points

- The WHO Regional Office will disseminate the Intercountry Dialogue summary report and communicate the tentative virtual session agenda and schedule to frontrunner countries for the Acceleration Plan by 7 November 2022.
- The WHO Regional Office will schedule the first virtual session and send invites to the frontrunner countries by 21 November 2022.
- Countries will identify the appropriate people to take active responsibility for developing an Acceleration Plan roadmap and to attend virtual sessions by 21 November 2022.
- WHO will continue to coordinate across its three levels to ensure progress.

A tentative schedule for the virtual sessions is outlined below. Each session will last 60 minutes on average.

Virtual sessions	Overview	Approximate timeline
1. Overview of virtual sessions agenda + Finalization of priority interventions	This session builds upon discussion during the Intercountry Dialogue, followed by internal discussion with country stakeholders	21 November 2022
2. Developing a theory of change	This session will build on the goals, objectives and activities developed during the Intercountry Dialogue to develop a theory of change	28 November 2022 (90 minutes)
3. Developing indicators, targets and acceleration scenarios	This session will build on the theory of change to develop quantifiable targets, indicators and acceleration scenarios for the Plan	29 November 2022 (60 minutes)
4. Indicators, targets and Acceleration Plan scenarios	This session will look at indicators, targets and Acceleration Plan scenarios	5 December 2022 (60 minutes)

5. Identify innovations	This session will present a menu of evidence-based innovations and discuss whether they can be useful based on challenges identified during the Inter-country Dialogue	12 December 2022
6. Assessing the delivery chain	This session will develop a delivery chain and identify potential implementation risks and bottlenecks	19 December 2022
7. Developing an action plan	This session will develop an action/delivery plan, clarifying who needs to do what and when to implement activities and objectives identified during the inter-country dialogue	10 January 2023
8. Optimizing progress-tracking routines	This session will build upon the stakeholder analysis and engagement plans and reflect on how participants can review progress and course corrections, building upon their current governance mechanisms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What routines currently exist? • Do they fit their current purpose? • Do they allow us to track progress and course correct? • What new routines are needed and why? 	17 January 2023
9. Resources for the plan: fundraising	This session will develop a country-level fundraising plan to identify new funding sources for activities in the plan	25 January 2023
10. Plan your first stocktake	This session will support participants to develop their first stocktake	Target date: end of January 2023
11. Launching the acceleration plans and next steps	This session will allow country teams to share key elements of their Acceleration Plans and reflect on what lies ahead	Target date: end of January 2023



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