Implementation steps up of WHO emergency reform Roadmap for Action

WHO is now implementing its “Roadmap for Action” to reform its work in outbreaks and emergencies in response to the decision of the 68th Health Assembly and the resolution of the Special Session of the WHO Executive Board. Led by the Director-General, and with the guidance of the WHO Advisory Group, the Roadmap’s focus is on ensuring that capacities throughout WHO are in place to prepare for, identify and mitigate health risks posed by the full range of hazards, and to engage effectively with partners in the process. WHO staff from across the Organization are moving forward on the six main areas of the emergency reform roadmap, and the multiple work streams and deliverables within each. For example, to unify WHO’s work in outbreaks and emergencies, a range of deliverables will be finalized before the end of 2015, including the structure of an operations platform to ensure WHO is ready to respond to outbreaks and emergencies. In particular, this reform will include an effective partnering approach that ensures WHO can operationally engage with relevant United Nations, operational, and technical agencies and stakeholders for rapid international emergency action. Download the Roadmap

WHO building partnerships with emergency medical teams worldwide

From Chile to the Philippines, WHO has been working closely in recent weeks with partner governments and organizations committed to delivering the fastest, most effective life-saving response to outbreaks and emergencies worldwide. Such partnerships with expert operational emergency teams are a critical component WHO’s development of a global health emergency workforce, one of six key areas of the ongoing strengthening of the Organization’s work in outbreaks and emergencies.

On 22-26 September, the WHO foreign medical team unit participated in the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group’s earthquake response simulation in Chile. Seven international medical teams joined two Chilean teams (one military and one civil), along with Ministry of Health representatives, in a simulated exercise between the national health emergency operations centre and the FMT coordination cell. WHO supported a similar exercise in Mongolia on 30 June.

WHO’s Western Pacific Regional Office also staged an informal consultation in Manila from 21-23 September on strengthening national capacities for disaster preparedness and response, with eight governments sharing lessons learned on emergency medical team management and coordination after disasters in the Philippines, Nepal, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands.

To effectively respond to health emergencies, the global health emergency workforce requires national, international responders and WHO-specific responders, as well as the response capacity from sister UN agencies, funds and programmes. Workforce competencies required include public health, clinical care, leadership and coordination, social mobilization,
WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies to support rapid, effective response

To deliver a rapid, effective response to disease outbreaks and humanitarian emergencies, WHO has established a Contingency Fund for Emergencies, to finance its acute response. Established in May 2015 by the World Health Assembly, the fund is envisioned as a replenishable cash flow tool to finance the deployment and equipping of WHO staff and other health partners. The Fund’s operation will emphasize predictability, timeliness, and country ownership; humanitarian principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality, and independence; and practices of good humanitarian donorship. It is to be capitalized with voluntary contributions and replenished through retroactive financial agreements with other emergency financing mechanisms and donors. The Fund capital is to have no earmarking beyond its use in emergencies and its use is to be at the discretion of the WHO Director-General, who will prioritize in-field operations in affected countries. Through the Fund, WHO should have at its disposal assured financing to fulfill its mandate in leading the health sector response to emergencies, particularly in the critical period before other financing sources are available. The United Kingdom and India were the first donors to support the Contingency Fund; several others are considering contributing.

WHO Advisory Group on emergency reform to hold face-to-face meeting

The Advisory Group on the Reform of WHO’s work in outbreaks and emergencies will meet in Geneva on 26-27 October to provide guidance on key emergency reform issues, including implementing the Roadmap for Action. This is the first face-to-face meeting of the Advisory Group, which has so far held three teleconference since being established in July. The latest teleconference on 22 September discussed the need for defining the operations platform’s shape and functions, identifying triggers for WHO and stakeholders to launch the platform’s actions, and clarifying roles of partners. During the upcoming face-to-face meeting, Advisory Group members will meet with WHO staff working on the Roadmap deliverables. The gathering will focus on WHO's core functions in outbreaks and emergencies, pre-arranged partnerships and collaboration, best practices to effectively manage health emergencies, standing capacities and a mechanism to scale up required resources for response, and the overall management of the WHO emergency platform.

Upcoming events

- 26-27 October: WHO Advisory Group face-to-face meeting (WHO Geneva)

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