Under the International Health Regulations (2005), countries are required to develop the capacity to identify, investigate and report potential public health emergencies of international concern. An efficient laboratory service is a cornerstone of any country's capacity to investigate such events.

In many countries, however, laboratory confirmation of infectious diseases continues to be hindered by a lack of investment in several elements of the national laboratory services, such as quality assurance mechanisms, sustainable financing, suitable workforce or biosafety and biosecurity adequate practices.

WHO supports national processes aimed at building laboratory capability for the safe, reliable and timely detection, confirmation and reporting of public health events. WHO assists countries in:

- strengthening national laboratory system policies and strategic plans,
- implementing laboratory quality systems,
- enhancing biosafety and biosecurity,
- increasing domestic testing capacity in range and volume,
- developing highly qualified and well-trained laboratory workforces,
- supporting global, regional and national laboratory networks.

In 2014, 35 countries received laboratory capacity support worth over US$ 5.5 million.
WHO hosts workshops and meetings to offer stakeholders neutral platforms for sharing information on best practices, opportunities and challenges concerning key laboratory issues. Such convening role is crucial for shaping laboratory and biosafety strengthening strategies, matching donors and partners’ resources as well as countries’ priorities.

To assist countries in building reliable and efficient public health laboratory systems, WHO produces and disseminates concept papers, practical tools and policy guidelines. These technical resources are developed together with various experts and collaborating centres, upon needs and gaps identified by Member States.

WHO, through its regional and country offices, supports countries in strengthening their national laboratory capacity, biosafety and biosecurity by conducting training activities, procuring essential reagents and equipment, providing technical assistance for laboratory assessment and transfer of knowledge, and facilitating proficiency testing.

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WHO helps Member States to strengthen laboratory services and improve biosafety and biosecurity

Convening

Guiding

Supporting

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