Under the International Health Regulations (2005), adopted by the 58th World Health Assembly, WHO Member States have made a legally binding commitment to detect and communicate events that may constitute a potential public health emergency of international concern.

WHO’s Support to National Surveillance (SNS) team works closely with WHO regional and country offices as well as with other WHO teams in assessing and supporting the acquisition or strengthening of core capacities for surveillance and response.

The SNS team focuses on the most vulnerable countries and responds to the priorities they have identified.

Strengthening the skills and competencies of public health personnel has been set as a priority for the sustainment of public health surveillance and response at all levels of the health system and for the effective implementation of the IHR.

Activities carried out by the SNS team also aim at strengthening health systems with essential public health functions, such as public health surveillance.
Guiding

To guide Member States, WHO develops guidance on a range of topics, including:

- implementation of early warning and response with a focus on event-based surveillance,
- coordinated public health surveillance between points of entry and national health surveillance systems.

Supporting

Beyond support at the normative level, WHO provides Member States with technical assistance for the establishment of effective national surveillance and response systems. Furthermore, in order to facilitate these strengthening efforts, WHO develops a variety of tools, including informatics applications.

Training

Along with TEPHINET (Training Programs in Epidemiology and Public Health Interventions Network), WHO assists in the implementation of field epidemiology training programmes. In addition, WHO produces material and toolkits for the development of training modules to be integrated into field epidemiology courses.