

Key facts

COVID-19 has been the greatest public health challenge in a century, with a devastating impact on families, societies and economies.

Countries and areas of the Western Pacific Region have been guided by the **Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies** in their responses to the pandemic.

WHO has provided tailored support to Member States, including technical and financial assistance, evidence-based guidance, communication and supplies.

COVID-19 has been the **greatest public health challenge in a century**. With millions of lives lost to the virus, the pandemic has also had a **devastating impact** on families, societies and economies. In the Western Pacific Region and other parts of the world, **2021 has seen the pandemic enter a new phase**, with significant case surges in many countries and areas, in part driven by the more infectious Delta variant.

While vaccines continue to be rolled out, **vaccine equity has not yet been achieved** and the Region still faces huge challenges. There continues to be **a need to work together** to ensure vaccines reach all countries, and in particular priority groups – those most at risk of infection and those most vulnerable to severe illness.

It will be important for Member States to continue to explore **new and sustainable ways to limit the spread of the virus**. This includes expanding capacity for early detection and targeted responses, strengthening health systems and protecting vulnerable populations.

WHO response

Since January 2020, WHO has provided tailored support to Member States based on their different needs and contexts. In the Western Pacific Region, Member States are responding thanks in part to capacity developed through 15 years of the **Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies (APSED)**, and recommendations from the APSED Technical Advisory Group convened in both July 2020 and July 2021 to review the Region's progress in response to the pandemic.

WHO's support to countries has included technical and financial assistance, evidence-based guidance on critical topics, deployment of experts, procurement and shipping of supplies and equipment, and targeted information for the public on how they can protect themselves and others. As of 1 September 2021, WHO in the Western Pacific Region mobilized US\$ 313 million for the response and deployed 364 experts to 14 countries to support national COVID-19 responses.

To combat misinformation, identify high-risk areas for transmission and bring supplies to remote locations, **WHO in the Western Pacific Region has partnered with multiple organizations**, including new and non-traditional partners such as big tech firms and logistics companies.

Working closely with countries and partners, **WHO has supported vaccination** planning and preparation, distribution and rollout of safe and effective vaccines, especially with countries and areas that are part of the COVAX Facility.

With each new phase of the pandemic, WHO works with Member States and partners to help ensure **health systems are ready to respond to surges and maintain essential services** to save lives.

As the Western Pacific continues to respond to COVID-19, the Region must **work towards a new future**, one in which real investments in health back commitments to make this the world's safest and healthiest region.

