Field Epidemiology, Surveillance and Networks

Background

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

The Field Epidemiology, Surveillance and Networks (FSN) team works closely with WHO Regional Offices and in collaboration with other WHO teams in assessing and supporting the acquisition or strengthening of core capacities for surveillance and response as described in Annex 1A of the IHR.

The FSN project focuses on the most vulnerable countries and responds to the priorities they have identified.

A need for guidance and tools for strengthening early warning surveillance systems, including electronic tools has been expressed, and also that of establishing stronger links with laboratory-based surveillance and with points of entry.

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


Vision

Support countries in the acquisition or strengthening of surveillance and response capacities as required by the International Health Regulations (2005).

Strategic axes

In response to the priorities expressed by the most vulnerable countries, two strategic axes guide the work of FSN in supporting IHR implementation:

i. Development and dissemination of guidance and tools, and implementation of surveillance activities at a country level

ii. Strengthening of human resources for surveillance and field epidemiology

Activities

1. Development and dissemination of guidance and tools, and implementation of surveillance activities at country level

Event-based surveillance

Objective: develop global guidance and training materials on event-based surveillance (EBS).

Early warning

Objective: develop global guidance and training materials for implementing or strengthening early warning, alert and response (EWAR) functions within surveillance and response systems.
Information technology tools for surveillance
Objective: establish, upgrade and maintain solid, user-friendly electronic applications that can be deployed at all levels of national surveillance systems.

Surveillance at points of entry
Objective: develop guidance to strengthen the coordination of surveillance activities at points of entry with the relevant levels of national surveillance systems.

2. Strengthening of human resources for surveillance and field epidemiology

- **Human resources strategy**
  Objective: support development of national strategies for strengthening human resources in surveillance and in field epidemiology.

- **Field Epidemiology training**
  Objective: support the implementation and improve quality of Field Epidemiology Training Programmes (FETPs) in collaboration with TEPHINET.

- **IHR training toolkit for epidemiologists**
  Objective: provide an IHR implementation toolkit for the development of a training module to be integrated into field epidemiology training courses.

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