



World Health
Organization

IHR News

The WHO bulletin on IHR implementation

04 October 2013, No. 22

Issued by the Department of Global Capacities Alert and Response,
World Health Organization (WHO), Geneva and Lyon
<http://www.who.int/ihr/>
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¹ The six WHO regional offices: **AFRO** – Regional Office for Africa; **EMRO** – Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; **EURO** – Regional Office for Europe; **PAHO/AMRO** – Pan American Sanitary Bureau/Regional Office for the Americas; **SEARO** – Regional Office for South-East Asia; **WPRO** – Regional Office for the Western Pacific.

WHAT'S NEW IN IHR COORDINATION AND SUPPORT

- ***Third Meeting of the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee concerning Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), 25 September 2013***

The Third Meeting of the IHR Emergency Committee concerning MERS-CoV was convened by WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan on 25 September 2013, via teleconference. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Qatar provided an update on recent developments in their countries; the WHO Secretariat presented epidemiological developments, information concerning the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages and recent WHO activities related to MERS-CoV. Further to the review and analysis of the information currently available and following a risk assessment approach, the members of the Emergency concluded that the conditions for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) had not been met. For the complete WHO statement on the Third Meeting of the IHR Emergency Committee concerning MERS-CoV: www.who.int/ihr/procedures/statement_20130925/en/index.html

- ***Strengthening health security at ports, airports and ground crossings: WHO-EC project kick-off meeting, Brussels, Belgium, 25 September, 2013***

The kick-off meeting for a WHO project on Strengthening Health Security at Ports, Airports and Ground crossings, funded by DG DEVCO (Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation, European Commission), took place in Brussels on 25 September 2013. The meeting marks officially the start of the first collaboration between WHO and the EU in the domain of implementing IHR at points of entry. The project consists of global, regional and national activities with special attention given to EMRO and EURO regions. The project aims at increasing health security globally by providing technical guidance and tools, information and knowledge sharing, international collaboration, and assisting countries in enhancing and strengthening their capacities for prevention, detection, control and response to public health events related to international travel and transport, notably implementing a learning program for ship inspection, and assisting countries in establishing public health emergency contingency plans following a multi-sectoral approach. The kick-off meeting provided an opportunity for the project management team to meet with representatives of DG DEVCO and discuss project objectives, the programme of work, as well as a communication plan.

- ***Tutorials on the use of Annex 2 of the International Health Regulations (2005)***

The second web-based tutorial for training National IHR Focal Points on the use of IHR Annex 2 on notification assessment has been launched. The tutorial provides a number of scenarios in which NFP personnel assess whether the events must be notified to WHO. Following the completion of each scenario the user is provided with the responses proposed by an expert panel as well as explanations for these responses. The purpose of the IHR Annex 2 tutorials is to support staff of all NFPs in increasing the sensitivity and consistency of the notification assessment process. This tutorial is based on the recommendations made by the IHR Review Committee and is accessible under:

<https://extranet.who.int/ihr/training/course/view.php?id=73>

If required please create an account at:

<https://extranet.who.int/ihr/training/login/index.php>

- ***Training course for epidemiologists, Amman, Jordan, 20-24 August 2013***

The International Health Regulations (IHR) training course for epidemiologists was co-organized by the World Health Organization and the Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET). The course was delivered from 20-24 August 2013 in Amman, Jordan, to 27 participants (including FETP fellows and directors, epidemiologists working at central level in the Ministries of Health, National IHR Focal Points and public health policy maker) from 10 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean region (Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Sudan, United Arab Emirates and Yemen). The overall objective of this course was to reinforce the capacities of current and future epidemiologists of the Region to effectively contribute to IHR implementation in their countries. The IHR training

toolkit for epidemiologists was field tested, and the results will be used to consolidate the design and content of a 5-day IHR training package for epidemiologists. This package is one of the major components of the web-based IHR training toolkit for epidemiologists. The toolkit will be released to assist relevant institutions (FETPs, Schools of Public Health, Ministries...) to integrate IHR components in their training programmes/activities at country level.

▪ ***Ports, Airports and Ground Crossings: Learning programme on ship sanitation inspection***

A learning programme to support the port health inspectors responsible for ship inspections and issuance of the Ship Sanitation Certificate under the IHR 2005 has been finalized. This learning programme is comprised of two components:

- an eLearning course requiring approximately 15 hours of work online
- Face-To-Face (F2F) learning course where participants will have the opportunity to review the theoretical components of the eLearning course and put their newly acquired knowledge and skills in practice through a simulation exercise and real ship inspections.

The programme and materials are now available in English, Spanish and Portuguese; the Russian and French versions will follow shortly. For further information, please visit:

<https://extranet.who.int/ihr/training/?lang=fr>

▪ ***Handbook for inspection of ships and issuance of ship sanitation certificates: New language versions available***

The Estonian, German, Turkish versions of the handbook for inspection and issuance of ship sanitation certificates have been released on the WHO web site. These are in addition to the English, French and Spanish versions. Available at:

www.who.int/ihr/publications/handbook_ships_inspection/en/index.html

▪ ***Public Health Emergency Operations Centre Network (EOC-NET): Report of the consultation 19–20 November 2012, Geneva, Switzerland***

Public health emergency operations centres (EOC) play critical roles in preparing for, and responding to, public health events and emergencies. A consultation meeting on public health EOC collaboration was held on 19–20 November 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting brought together 38 stakeholders from nine States Parties, seven regional and international organizations, WHO headquarters and all six WHO Regional Offices. Participants shared experiences, knowledge, and challenges regarding building, maintaining, using, and collaborating with EOCs, and proposed solutions for improvement. The Public Health Emergency Operations Centres Network (EOC-NET) was launched at the meeting. This report describes the current situation, main roles and challenges of public health EOCs, priority needs, EOC-NET objectives and next steps related to key working areas identified by participants. The report is available at www.who.int/ihr/en/ under the “Latest guidance” tab.

WHAT'S NEW IN RISK MANAGEMENT AND DISEASE CONTROL

▪ ***Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)***

Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 130 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 58 deaths. Based on the current situation and available information, WHO encourages all Member States to continue their surveillance for severe acute respiratory infections and to carefully review any unusual patterns. For updates on MERS-CoV visit WHO Disease Outbreak News: <http://www.who.int/csr/don/en/index.html>

- **Risk assessment: Table top exercises to support multisectoral coordination and reporting under the International Health Regulations**

From July through September 2013, WHO provided support to and/or conducted a series of tabletop exercises designed to build country capacities and strengthen multisectoral coordination and reporting during public health events:

Kampala, Uganda, 2-7 July: Support to tabletop exercise for validation of operability of the framework of the WHO Regional Office for Africa for the investigation of outbreaks of unknown etiology. This exercise included participants from Ministry of Health, as well as other stakeholders in agriculture, environment and NGOs.

Kiev, Ukraine, 25-26 July: Tabletop exercise based on the radiological contamination of imported food during the WHO Sub-Regional International Chernobyl Research and Information Network (ICRIN) Workshop on Using Chernobyl Lessons for Management of Environmental Emergencies.

Kiev, Ukraine, 27-30 August: Multisectoral consultations on IHR implementation in the Ukraine, including a table top exercise on coordination and information sharing during public health events.

Ankara, Turkey, 2-5 September: Tabletop exercise development training workshop for national and provincial level surveillance officers and other stakeholders and development of a tabletop exercise programme for the validation of an early warning system.

- **Food safety: Enhancing INFOSAN in Asia and implementation of regional food safety strategies – Meeting report**

This report sets out the main findings and recommendations of the meeting of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WHO, held from 27-30 November 2012 in Seoul, the Republic of Korea, "Enhancing INFOSAN in Asia and Implementation of Regional Food Safety Strategies." The meeting was organized with the support of the Korea Food and Drug Administration (KFDA). The report is available at: www.who.int/foodsafety/publications/fs_management/infosan_asia/en/index.html

For more information about the WHO Food Safety Programme and INFOSAN activities, visit: www.who.int/foodsafety/en/

WHAT'S NEW IN THE WHO REGIONS

- **AFRO: IDENTIFY project mission, Cameroon, 15-17 July 2013**

The purpose of the mission to Cameroon was to meet with staff from the WHO Country Office and local partners responsible for the implementation of the USAID funded IDENTIFY Project, to review implementation during year 4 of the project, and to finalize the work plan for year 5.

The WHO Country Office in Cameroon, with IDENTIFY Project support, plays an important role in coordinating laboratory capacity strengthening activities in a "one health" framework with local partners such as FAO, national public health laboratories and research institutions.

- **EMRO: Assessment missions to Cairo, Egypt (28-30 May 2013) and Sana'a, Yemen (1-3 June 2013) for the establishment of Laboratory Quality Management System**

As a follow-on activity from the Sub-Regional Laboratory Quality Management System (LQMS) Training workshop provided in November 2012, a team composed of laboratory experts together with WHO staff, visited key laboratories in Egypt and Yemen. In each location, laboratories were reviewed for their implementation of a LQMS. To assess the full process, samples were followed from patient receipt to reporting of results. Feedback and recommendations specific to each laboratory were provided during the visits, and guidance continues to be provided by the laboratory experts through the review of documents. Plans are now underway to establish twinning of these laboratories with specialized public health laboratories in developed countries with a view to exchanging information, sharing experiences and undertaking specific collaborative projects. For more information about laboratory quality management trainings, tools and projects, contact: ihrinfo@who.int

- ***EURO: Training course on ship sanitation inspection and issuance of ship sanitation certificates, Antalya, Turkey, 15-19 April, 2013***

This training brought together 17 participants from the WHO European Region, ship inspectors and staff working at ports and/or competent authorities for ports at the Black Sea in Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey, and Ukraine, and eight doctors from Turkish health control centers. The training used the WHO Learning programme and was facilitated by international ship sanitation experts as well as WHO staff.

- ***SEARO: Regional meeting on IHR core capacities at points of entry, Kochi, India, 26-28 June 2013***

The objective of this meeting was to bring together IHR and points of entry national experts for information sharing on national experiences and discuss regional aspects of implementation of IHR at points of entry in the SEARO Region. The meeting was preceded by a training for ship inspectors on ship inspection and issuance of ship sanitation certificates (24-26 June), using a WHO blended learning programme comprised of e-Learning and face-to-face components and including on-site visits.

- ***WPRO: Regional Workshop to strengthen core capacities at designated points of entry under the IHR, Ningbo, China, 23-26 April 2013***

This workshop brought together 23 staff working at ports, airports and ground crossings to discuss core capacity development at points of entry in China. The main objectives of the workshop were to introduce the updated WHO guidelines on IHR core capacities at designated points of entry; review Member States' experiences and lessons learnt in establishing and strengthening institutional systems for the IHR core capacities at designated points of entry; and develop adequate skills by demonstrating the practical application of the guidelines through a site visit during the workshop.

OTHER NEWS

- ***European Union Joint Action SHIPSAN ACT***

The SHIPSAN ACT is a Joint Action of 23 European Union countries co-funded by the European Commission. It began in February 2013, for a duration of 39-months. The ACT deals with the impact on maritime transport of health threats due to biological, chemical and radiological agents, including communicable diseases, and supports the implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005) in the EU. WHO participates in the Advisory Board of the SHIPSAN ACT Joint Action. For more information please visit: www.shipsan.eu and download the SHIPSAN ACT Leaflet www.shipsan.eu/Portals/0/docs/shipsan_leaflet_final_august2013.pdf

This newsletter seeks to provide useful information for NFPs, countries and partners in implementing the IHR. We welcome your suggestions and comments and invite you to send these, as well as any requests for additional information, to ihrinfo@who.int