

Learning from Ebola: readiness for outbreaks and emergencies



In an **editorial** for the *WHO Bulletin*, Director-General Dr Margaret Chan discusses the need for WHO to become a fully operational emergency organization so it can do more to support communities and countries impacted by outbreaks and emergencies with health and humanitarian consequences. This will require, according to Dr Chan, the collaboration and support from operational partners to ensure that WHO will be “well positioned to deliver what the world needs when outbreaks and emergencies occur: a timely response that rapidly contains the consequences – for economies and societies as well as for human health.”

*For an overview on the WHO outbreak and emergency reform process, watch this **video**.*

WHO steps up its role in health emergencies



Dr David Nabarro, Chair of the Advisory Group on the reform of WHO's work in outbreaks and emergencies, provided this **interview** on the guidance the group is giving to strengthen the Organization's capacities and process in crises. In the interview, Dr Nabarro says describes the Advisory Group's deliberations and views on the development of a new WHO programme on outbreaks and emergencies that spans the whole organization and answers to one point of authority, the Director-General. “This means creating a culture of rapid response that is new for much of WHO, but which is routinely practised by humanitarian organizations,” Dr Nabarro says. “The new approach will provide WHO with the tools and resources to respond more independently and proactively to emergencies than it has been able to do so far.”

WHO consultative group established, providing inputs into strengthening Organization's emergency capacities



To involve all levels of WHO in the ongoing strengthening of the Organization's outbreak and emergencies capacities and systems, a consultative group comprising WHO emergency personnel from Country, Regional and Headquarters levels has been established.

The group was established by the WHO Director-General and the Organization's six Regional Directors, and will consult on a weekly basis to provide inputs on the design, structure and timelines for the ongoing reform process, including the creation of a unified Programme for WHO's emergencies work covering all phases of the emergency risk management cycle.

A fundamental objective of the group is to ensure that Regional and Country Office perspectives are factored into the development of the new Programme and its operational response Platform..

WHO holds workshops on emergency risk communications, community engagement



During 24-27 November, WHO staged two back-to-back workshops in Geneva on emergency risk communications and community engagement, two overlapping areas of work that have been identified as Cross-cutting Areas of the Organization's ongoing work to strengthen its capacities in outbreaks and emergencies.

The workshops brought together approximately 80 practitioners in the two fields, from throughout the WHO network, partner UN and civil society organizations and academia to provide valuable experiences and perspectives for the Organization to consider when performing communications and community engagement activities as part of its new Programme for outbreaks and emergencies.

One of the main outcomes of the meeting was recognition of the need in emergency risk communications and community engagement to ensure affected people and communities received accurate, understandable information that can ensure they can protect their health in outbreaks and emergencies. Critically, the need to involve affected communities,

and operational partners, in the development and dissemination of life-saving health information was stressed.

PAHO/WHO and Foreign Medical Teams examine how to strengthen emergency response to outbreaks and disasters

WHO and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), along with organizations that provide personnel for foreign medical teams, met in Panama from 1-3 December to discuss actions and instruments to improve the response to outbreaks and disasters and help save lives. [Read more](#)

Upcoming events

- 22 December, 2015: Teleconference, Advisory Group on Reform of WHO's work in outbreaks and emergencies
- 25-30 January, 2016: WHO Executive Board: 138th session

Contact email: emergencyreform@who.int

Website: http://www.who.int/about/who_reform/emergency-capacities/en/

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