Asia Pacific Health Security Action Framework
Executive Summary
Climate change is bringing multiple challenges to the region, impacting ecosystems and health through flooding, droughts, wildfires and rising sea levels. Small island developing states are particularly vulnerable to these shocks due to factors including small population size, geographic isolation, limited economic diversification, and fragile land and marine ecosystems.

In the Asia Pacific region, collective work by countries and areas, WHO and partners has strengthened implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005), or IHR (2005), beginning with the launch in 2005 of the original Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases (APSED). APSED principles and approaches have provided a common road map for countries and areas in the South-East Asia and Western Pacific regions to strengthen their health security systems, while also responding to ongoing public health emergencies, including the 2009 H1N1 pandemic; human cases of infection with avian influenza viruses including A(H3N2), A(H5N1), A(H7N9) and A(H9N2); Middle East respiratory syndrome; outbreaks of dengue, measles and polio; food safety events; chemical and environmental events; and emergencies triggered by natural hazards including typhoons, floods, heatwaves, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Since December 2019, COVID-19 has had a severe impact globally and in the region, with more than 265 million cases and 1.2 million deaths officially recorded as of 7 June 2023 in the Asia Pacific region alone. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted regional health security challenges in areas including decision-making, surveillance and data systems, surge capacity, maintenance of essential health services, regulatory preparedness, supply chain management, communication and community engagement. It also had the effect of drawing attention to the difficulties in accessing health care for populations with vulnerabilities, highlighting the continued need to apply a gender, disability and equity lens to ensure inclusive health security efforts and to reach the un-reached. The pandemic has also had wide-ranging social and economic impacts, which in turn have led to setbacks in broader development gains and efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and universal health coverage (UHC).

Despite these challenges, the Asia Pacific region was able to mount a relatively successful response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Lancet COVID-19 Commission highlighted the comparatively lower morbidity and mortality of the Asia Pacific region compared to other regions, with the WHO Western Pacific Region performing especially well in the early phase of the pandemic. The Commission also highlighted the significant role played by APSED and its approaches and principles in providing a foundation for countries in the region to respond quickly and effectively. While APSED has supported countries and areas in the region to build a strong base of core health security capacities and systems, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that more still needs to be done.

This Asia Pacific Health Security Action Framework builds on the achievements and approaches of APSED, as well as the experiences of the region in responding to public health emergencies over the past 20 years. It works towards...
a vision of an “Asia Pacific region that is prepared for and resilient to public health emergencies through collective action and that contributes to global health security”. It is designed to engage health and non-health sectors to support prevention, preparedness, readiness and response for multi-hazard public health emergencies, and therefore to strengthen the resilience of health security systems at subnational, national and regional levels. In doing so, the Framework is also consistent with the goals of other global and regional initiatives that advocate for strengthened health systems, such as the SDGs, UHC, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, and For the Future: Towards the Healthiest and Safest Region, the shared vision for WHO’s work with countries, areas and partners in the Western Pacific Region.

The Framework is founded on core values of equity, inclusivity and coherence to guide policy and practice. It provides a collective approach for countries and areas in the Asia Pacific region, WHO and partners to advance multisectoral health security capacities in the region, and is guided by the following approaches and principles: whole-of-government and whole-of-society; country-focused; multi-hazard; future-facing; solidarity and partnership for collective action; step-by-step, strategic system building; continuous learning for improvement; and sustained long-term investment.

The Framework identifies six interconnected and multisectoral domains of a health security system, based on the shared experiences and lessons of responding to public health emergencies in the Asia Pacific region over the past two decades. Together, the domains offer a strategic framework to conceptualize and plan the necessary elements of a comprehensive health security system. The domains are:

- Lead and Coordinate
- Plan and Prepare
- Assess and Respond
- Readiness and Resilience
- Support and Enable
- Monitor, Evaluate and Improve

Fig. 1. Six interconnected domains for effective health security in the Asia Pacific region
The Framework is intended to have a flexible implementation period of five to 10 years in order to accommodate different national planning cycles and variations in existing national capacities across the region. This time frame is also intended to accommodate global health security developments that may affect regional and national planning, such as a proposed international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response and targeted amendments to IHR (2005). Furthermore, while the Framework focuses on strategic health security domains, it provides for flexible implementation by countries and areas, including small island developing states, depending on their context and national priorities.

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