1. Tailoring APSED III to the Pacific for regional health security

Significant progress has been made over the past decade in strengthening surveillance and response systems in the Pacific, as required under IHR (2005). Despite those gains, challenges remain in strengthening and maintaining IHR core capacities, including national surveillance, risk assessment and response.

Reducing vulnerability to acute threats to health requires coordinated and adaptive national and regional responses. It also requires resilient national health systems that can respond effectively to common epidemic-prone diseases and sudden-onset emergencies caused by natural, environmental or technological hazards. Timely regional public health technical surge capacities are also necessary to ensure health security in the Pacific. Some capacities, such as advanced diagnostics and reference laboratories, and stockpiles for medical countermeasures, require significant establishment and maintenance costs.

The One Health approach strengthens multisectoral coordination for health interventions at the human-animal-ecology interface. The approach is essential to fight antimicrobial resistance and safeguard health security in the Pacific.
as well as specialized expertise. Such capacities may be better organized as regional public goods to ensure that all countries have access at reasonable cost and efficiency.

WHO consulted extensively with Pacific island countries and areas and development partners to produce a dedicated chapter in APSED III that addresses the unique challenges in implementing IHR (2005) in the Pacific. Strengthening IHR (2005) implementation through APSED III was discussed at the 60th Pacific Island Health Officers’ Association Executive Board Meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii in September 2016; the 20th anniversary meeting of the Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network and the Pacific Heads of Health Meeting in Suva, Fiji in April 2017; and the Pacific Meeting on Implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005) in Nadi, Fiji in May–June 2017.

APSED III implementation aims to ensure that all Pacific island countries and areas have core public health capacities and capabilities in place to detect, assess and respond to common epidemic-prone diseases, as well as arrangements with regional response partners for timely technical assistance and surge capacity in the event of a transnational threat or disaster.

Strengthening IHR (2005) core capacities in the Pacific, through APSED III, will continue to focus on the core public health functions required by all national health systems for outbreak and emergency preparedness, alert and response, including disease surveillance, risk assessment, operational capacity, laboratory diagnosis, risk communication, capacity at points of entry and the functions of the National IHR Focal Points.

WHO is working closely with national health authorities and partners in the development and retention of health workers and the establishment of sustainable health system financing – both necessary to sustain gains made through IHR (2005).

Beginning in 2017, the priority for IHR (2005) through APSED III implementation in the Pacific is continual quality improvement, including outbreak review, exercises and voluntary Joint External Evaluation (JEE), and the development of updated national work plans.

In April 2017, the Pacific Heads of Health reaffirmed commitments by Pacific island countries and areas and partner agencies to accelerate IHR (2005) implementation for national, regional and global health security. They also agreed to the development of a multi-year action plan at the regional level for coordinated national and regional investments for health security in the Pacific. Major regional partners in the Pacific including WHO worked together to draft the multi-year Pacific Health Security Coordination Plan. A consultative process with national authorities will be completed before the Pacific Health Ministers Meeting in August 2017.

Collective action for Pacific health security, including more coherent, coordinated, transparent and adaptive support to IHR (2005) implementation by Pacific partners, and regional alert and response capacities, were two key themes of the seventh biennial Pacific Meeting on Implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005).