2. Progress on AMR national action plans

Already vulnerable health-care systems in the Pacific are challenged regularly by outbreaks of infectious diseases, as seen over the past year in Fiji, Kiribati and Tonga. Local laboratory data already have revealed the emergence of microorganisms resistant to conventional antibiotics in most Pacific island countries and areas. Unless driving factors affecting the health systems – such as insufficient hospital supplies or training of staff – are addressed in a systematic and sustainable manner, they will continue to occur.

To address this situation, Pacific island countries and areas have requested WHO support in developing national action plans. DPS, in coordination with the Regional Office and WHO country offices, has taken the lead in supporting AMR-related activities, including strengthening medical laboratories in testing of antimicrobial sensitivity, providing training on identifying and confirming multidrug-resistant pathogens, and monitoring AMR in Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati and the Marshall Islands.

WHO has also supported the review of infection control policies and the development of antibiotic guidelines using the results of local antibiograms or antibiotic sensitivity tests in Cook Islands, Samoa and Tonga. In addition, DPS supports efforts to improve AMR surveillance and information systems through the installation of the WHONET system – an information system developed to support the WHO goal of global surveillance of bacterial resistance to antimicrobial agents – in Cook Islands, Fiji and Samoa, including training staff members in its use.

DPS also coordinated WHO support in assisting with the development of national AMR action plans. Cook Islands and Fiji have launched multisectoral national action plans, and the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Samoa and Tonga are developing plans. Furthermore, WHO is supporting Fiji to collect and analyse data on antimicrobial consumption in both humans and animals. This support will be extended to other Pacific island countries and areas.

The World Antibiotic Awareness Week campaigns are an important entry point for raising the political agenda of AMR. Eight Pacific island countries participated in 2015, and twelve took part in 2016. AMR was heavily discussed at the Meeting on Quality Assurance and Rational Use of Essential Medicines in the Pacific Island Countries on 14–17 February 2017 in Nadi, Fiji.

Sustained technical assistance is still needed, in particular for surveillance, infection prevention and control, and supply chain management of antimicrobials. DPS will continue to support Pacific island countries and areas in their efforts to prevent and control AMR and its consequences, tailoring guidance from WHO global and regional action plans to the context of each country and area.