

SUBJECT IN FOCUS: Partner Coordination

The WHO COVID-19 Incident Management Team is working closely with partners across all levels to provide support to countries, strengthen technical and operational networking and collaboration, and support operational coordination of the global response.

To strengthen day-to-day operations, key agencies are embedded in the global team, including UNICEF, the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The major partner coordination mechanisms are the Emergency Medical Team (EMT) Initiative; the Global Health Cluster (GHC); and the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), which includes technical agencies, major NGOs, including Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) International, United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the IFRC, and other international organizations.

The core elements of health operations include clinical care and management, laboratory capacity strengthening, surveillance, case and contact tracing, infection prevention and control, risk communications and community engagement. These core elements are supported by technical networks worldwide, which draw on and support capacities in GOARN, GHC, and EMTs. In the area of risk communications and community engagement, IFRC, UNICEF and WHO have established a dedicated tripartite group to scale up and implement activities globally.

In response to the call from WHO, GOARN partners have mobilized international technical assistance to support preparedness and response missions at country request, and to also support capacity in WHO regions and headquarters in Geneva. In addition, Public Health England, the Indo-Pacific Health Security Centre, the Australian government, and the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention have sent staff to WHO to work on COVID-19 response in Geneva, Switzerland, Manila, Philippines and New Delhi, India.

The GHC and country Health Clusters have placed heavy emphasis on the following:

- Readiness planning
- Support to in-country key pillar leads and agencies
- Mapping partner capacity and geographical presence
- Ensuring coordination and collaboration on technical guidance and support for preparedness and response for fragile and vulnerable populations.

The EMT initiative is working with the global and regional networks of emergency medical teams currently on the front lines of major national outbreaks and supporting international deployment of support where needed and requested.

A major focus of the response is on case detection and contact tracing. To support country activities, partners are working closely on the deployment and implementation of Go.Data, an outbreak investigation tool for field data collection during public health emergencies. Over 50 countries have requested support, and GOARN partners are implementing a strategy for wide-scale rollout including direct country support, technical briefings, webinar/online presentations, and comprehensive remote support.