

# Country Emergency Preparedness Assessment

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**Introduction:** The following document is intended to support the Central American Regional Commission of Ministers (COMISCA, Spanish acronym) of the Central America and Panama Region (CAP) in the preparedness planning of the resources, assets, and coordination in relation to public health threats that affect health systems throughout the region. In addition, this initial assessment tool is to provide basic emergency preparedness information for each country of the CAP region as to better integrate the CDC Global Health Initiative (GHI) into the Ministries of Health. COMISCA represents the assembly of Ministers and regional international health agencies such as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and CDC's efforts to improve the quality of public health needs for the region. This draft is intended catalyze a regional awareness of emergency humanitarian preparedness concepts needed to allocate resources and technical support where assessment gaps have been identified.

The preliminary tool is to be implemented in the CAP region in collaboration with PAHO through the COMISCA Cooperative Agreement. These basic topics relate directly to emergency preparedness for public health emergencies.

## Assessment Functional Elements:

### 1. Developing a Public Health Emergency Plan

A comprehensive, written plan is essential to responding to a public health emergency. This plan for responding, integrating into the national response plan and mediation of a host of events will likely be part of a countries comprehensive emergency operations plan.

- Is there a public health emergency preparedness plan for the MOH?
- Identify where the Public Health Emergency Preparedness plan is in relation to the National Emergency Plan and the regional Humanitarian network. Is it an annex to the national plan?
- Is it updated at least annually?
- Does the plan contain standard operating procedures linked to assigned positions within the organization?
- Does the plan incorporate emergency humanitarian assistance plans for support from external stakeholders? List the stakeholders mentioned here..

### 2. Command and Control

The way a country or a region manages its response to a public health emergency is considered the command and control (C&C) function. C&C is how political leadership, emergency management, public health, law enforcement, and other groups coordinate their response to an emergency.

- Has staffing been identified both on the national and regional levels?

- Has this staff been trained?
- Are job action sheets developed?
- Is there a unified command concept?
- Is there a system for information management (data collection)?
- Are there protocols and standards that are in place that support emergency preparedness and response with in the nation and region?
- What are the triggers that activate foreign disaster humanitarian assistance for public health complex emergencies?
- Identify common or similar standards operating procedures that relate to preparedness planning and health infrastructures
- Is there a MOH EOC or situation room dedicated to linking with stakeholders during a national emergency and what are the triggers for activation?

### 3. Communications Infrastructure

A country will need a robust and redundant communication system to effectively execute your plan in order to respond to a public health emergency. Communications will be the key element in an effective public health response.

- Are there national standards to communicate during public health emergencies
- Identify the types of communications systems related to operational support and response.
- How often does training occur and who receives the training?
- How often are the systems tested?
- Is redundancy assured?
- Are there SOP's to guide the communication process?

### 4. Public Information and Risk Communication

A country will need to develop effective messages, methods, and materials to effectively inform, educate, and mobilize the public. This will be critical to the success of any response and mitigation effort.

- Public Information staff have been identified and trained on both national and regional levels?
- Is there is a written communication plan?
- Is there a national risk communication liaison and back-up identified?
- Risk Communication needs and standards for the Latin American region are in collaboration with PAHO and other international health entities?
- Identify mechanisms for risk communication, and the process involved to distribute messages, awareness and concepts (both for the MOH and the general populations).

- Is there a database of pre-existing (canned) messages that can easily be modified during an emergency?

## 5. Logistic and Operational Processes:

### A. Receiving, Staging, and Storing Public Health Assets

The location of your receiving, staging, and storing facilities and the effectiveness of the team that operates it will be important determinants of the speed with which you protect the public and treat the sick.

- Is there a warehouse(s) identified to receive medical material – both donated and existing?
- Does the warehouse have temperature control capacity?
- Is there a plan in place to manage incoming medical material?
- What are the security measures?
- Is the warehouse(s) easily accessible and removed from high-risk areas?
- Are there staff identified and trained to staff these warehouses?
- Is there a communication plan in place for these warehouses?

### B. Distributing Oral Medications or vaccinations

The dispensing function is the most important, complex, and resource-consuming of all of the preparedness planning functions. A mass vaccination campaign may employ several methods of depending on the nature, size, and scope of the emergency.

- Is there is a distribution manager identified and trained?
- What trucking resources are available for MOH distribution?
- Is there a security plan in place for the distribution of resources?
- Are there mechanisms in place to ensure surge capacity?
- Are there pre-determined distribution sites?
- Do the distribution sites have communication capacity?

## 6. Medical Coordination

A large-scale emergency event can quickly overwhelm the resources of a medical center (hospitals and other providers of acute care). This function coordinates efforts that treatment centers will need to consider to better prepare for a massive influx of sick or injured during an emergency.

- Have points of contacts been established and listed at all hospitals?
- Is there a plan for surge capacity at national or regional levels?
- Is there a plan in place for medical facilities to request supplies and materials?

7. Train, Exercise, Evaluate

This function is about what needs to be done after creating a plan. You can be confident your plan is workable if you prepare, train, exercise, and evaluate

- A person has been assigned to lead, plan and oversee public health emergency preparedness-related training, exercise and evaluation?
- There is an exercise training plan?
- How often are exercises conducted?

8. Surveillance Systems: Identify the systems that are in place and catalog the different systems that assist in the reporting of important information related to health and complex humanitarian emergencies.

- Is there an early warning system?
- Is there an existing surveillance system that regularly collects population-based disease data?
- What diseases are documented by the early warning system?
- Are there case definitions developed and agreed upon nationally for the early warning system?
- What are the sources of surveillance data?
- Is there a lab component to the surveillance system?
- Is there adequate lab capacity in the country to test, ship and report samples?
- Is there a system to rapidly expand the financial resources of the embassy, NGO's and other country mission stakeholders?
- Can the data collected in the early warning system be viewed and analyzed at the local level?
- Is there a multi-disciplinary (e.g. water/sanitation, lab, health) rapid response team to investigate potential outbreaks?
- Is there a community based component to the surveillance system?