

Global road map on defeating meningitis by 2030

Report by the Director-General

1. In resolution WHA73.9 (2020) concerning the global road map on defeating meningitis by 2030, the Seventy-third World Health Assembly requested the Director-General, inter alia, to submit a report to the Executive Board at its 150th session on progress in implementing the resolution, and a report to the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly, through the Executive Board at its 152nd session, to review the global meningitis situation and assess efforts made in meningitis prevention and control. This document provides a summary of WHO activities in that respect since November 2020.
2. As at September 2021, action had been taken to strengthen strategic leadership and coordination with partners; develop regional implementation frameworks; and prepare the monitoring and evaluation plan, business case and official launch of the global road map on defeating meningitis by 2030.¹
3. The WHO Technical Taskforce on defeating meningitis by 2030, composed of partners and international experts engaged in long-term meningitis control, played an essential role in the development of the global road map and will be responsible for leading and coordinating its global and regional implementation via a forum for technical exchange and cooperation on meningitis. Membership of the Technical Taskforce may be further extended to include new institutions and new advisers, where appropriate and taking into account regional relevance. The Secretariat will regularly review the Technical Taskforce's composition and assess whether any rotation of its members is necessary. The term of membership will be for an initial period of three years, renewable once for a further three years.
4. The Secretariat is also planning to establish a strategic support group to support WHO and its partners in the global and regional implementation of the global road map and the achievement of its objectives. The main roles and responsibilities of the members of the strategic support group will include: providing political and/or financial support for implementation and monitoring of the global road map; advocating and acting as ambassadors for meningitis prevention and control; and raising public awareness of the burden of meningitis. The strategic support group will consist of representatives from global and regional donors, ministries of health and civil society organizations who are highly committed to defeating meningitis by 2030. The Secretariat will regularly review the composition of the group and assess whether any rotation of members is necessary. The term of membership will be for an initial period of three years, renewable once for a further three years.

¹ On 28 September 2021, the World Health Organization launched its first global road map to defeat meningitis by 2030: <https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2021/09/28/default-calendar/launch-of-the-defeating-meningitis-roadmap>. (accessed 9 November 2021).

5. The main activities and milestones of the global road map have been integrated into an operational workplan for 2021. An updated workplan for 2022–2023 is being finalized. Under these workplans, some key activities of the global road map have already started, including: (i) development of policies, guidelines and strategies pertaining to the prevention, treatment and detection, as well as the monitoring and management of meningitis and its sequelae; (ii) conducting of outcome-oriented research to inform policy and strategy development; (iii) improvement of the functioning and use of emergency meningitis vaccine stockpiles, including through the repurposing of unused doses for outbreak response; and (iv) strengthening of communication methods to enhance awareness of meningitis and raise its global profile on the global health agenda, including by promoting the integration of meningitis into universal health coverage and primary health care.

6. As a foundation for developing regional implementation frameworks and national meningitis action plans aligned with other related national, regional and global initiatives, the six WHO regions are conducting high-level landscape analyses of key data on meningitis burden and health services by country. The African Region has already finalized its high-level landscape analysis as well as its implementation framework, which was adopted by Member States at the seventy-first session of the Regional Committee for Africa in August 2021.

7. As an additional basis to support and integrate regional and national implementation, it is proposed that the global road map should serve as an illustrative example of how to use the primary health care levers of the operational framework for primary health care for action on meningitis. This, in turn, would help to drive efforts aimed at strengthening the integration of meningitis prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care including management of sequelae into primary health care by increasing service coverage and access to essential medicines, improving surveillance and critical research, and addressing the discrimination and stigma facing people affected by meningitis.

8. The monitoring and evaluation plan of the global road map has been drafted and is expected to be finalized by the end of 2021. The plan is based on the theory of change that underpins the global road map and includes output, outcome and impact indicators that are in line with the global road map's objectives and goals. Since the global road map will reinforce and be integrated with wider initiatives related to strengthening primary health care and health systems, increasing immunization coverage, improving global health security, fighting antimicrobial resistance and ensuring the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities, the monitoring and evaluation plan has been similarly devised to align with the monitoring and evaluation plans of related initiatives.

9. The drafting of the business case to support the implementation of the global road map is at an advanced stage. The objective of the business case is to promote the global road map and ensure that sufficient resources are available for its implementation at the national, regional and global levels. To this end, it makes the case for financing the road map by: (i) describing the current meningitis situation and the overall health and socioeconomic impact of meningitis on individuals, health systems and society; (ii) showing how the global road map will address current gaps in meningitis control and how it will drive change; (iii) highlighting that the global road map has far-reaching and achievable objectives; (iv) demonstrating that the global road map will bring benefits beyond meningitis; (v) estimating the financial resources necessary for the implementation of each category of activities under the global road map; and (vi) setting out the interest and value of investing in the implementation of the global road map.

10. On 28 September 2021, the Director-General officially launched the global road map via a virtual event, with the aim of increasing awareness of its provisions and strengthening the engagement of stakeholders in its implementation. With a rich, diverse and moving programme, the event addressed those personally affected by meningitis as well as country representatives, implementing

partners and other stakeholders, and included contributions from meningitis advocates, donors and key technical partners.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

11. The Board is invited to note the report. In its discussions, it is further invited to provide comments and guidance on the Secretariat's proposed approach, in particular on:

- the proposed establishment of a strategic support group to strengthen coordination and engagement and to raise the profile of meningitis on the global public health agenda; and
- the proposed use of the primary health care levers of the operational framework for primary health care for action on meningitis, including on how to strengthen the integration of meningitis prevention and management in primary health care.

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