

Global road map on defeating meningitis by 2030

Report by the Director-General

1. In resolution WHA73.9 (2020), on 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 action and progress in that respect at all levels since November 2020.

SECRETARIAT APPROACH

2. As at September 2022, the main actions taken included: strengthening advocacy, strategic leadership and coordination with partners; supporting countries in the assessment of meningitis risk factors and capacity for engagement, as well as in scaling up their ability to implement and monitor multidisciplinary, integrated interventions for meningitis prevention and control; ensuring sufficient meningitis vaccine stockpile while promoting equitable access to such vaccines; and developing a research and innovation agenda for meningitis to improve implementation of existing interventions and promote evidence-based best diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and prevention practices in respect of meningitis and related disabilities.

SECRETARIAT ACTIONS

Strategic leadership and coordination with partners

3. Since November 2020, the WHO Technical Taskforce on defeating meningitis by 2030, composed of partners and international experts engaged in long-term meningitis control, has been convened regularly under the leadership of WHO. The Technical Taskforce is responsible for leading and coordinating implementation of the global road map on defeating meningitis by 2030, globally and regionally, by providing a forum for technical exchange and cooperation on meningitis and activities related to the global road map.¹

Strengthening advocacy and resource mobilization

4. On 28 September 2021, the Director-General officially launched the global road map on defeating meningitis by 2030 through a virtual event, with the aim of increasing awareness of the road map's

¹ Defeating Meningitis by 2030: a global road map - Technical Taskforce (TTF) Terms of Reference: [https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/defeating-meningitis-by-2030-a-global-road-map-technical-taskforce-\(ttf\)--terms-of-reference](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/defeating-meningitis-by-2030-a-global-road-map-technical-taskforce-(ttf)--terms-of-reference) (accessed 2 November 2022).

provisions and strengthening the engagement of stakeholders in its implementation.¹ With an inclusive, diverse and comprehensive 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, including members of the WHO Technical Taskforce. On 8 September 2022, the WHO Regional Director for Africa launched the regional implementation framework to defeat meningitis by 2030, which had been adopted by Member States at the seventy-first session of the Regional Committee for Africa in August 2021.²

5. At the 150th session of the Executive Board in January 2022 and the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly in May 2022, Member States expressed their strong support for the establishment of a strategy support group to further strengthen the impact of the global road map and speed up its implementation, while raising the profile of meningitis on the global health agenda and providing political and financial support for its implementation and monitoring.³ The Secretariat formally appointed the members of the strategy support group in November 2022.⁴ The initial composition of the strategy support group will include a health ministry representatives from each of the six WHO regions; representatives from six civil society organizations with regional and global reach, selected through an open call for nominations and review process; and donor representatives at the global and regional levels, including bilateral or multilateral government agencies and philanthropic foundations. All members have demonstrated a strong commitment to defeating meningitis by 2030.

6. To defeat meningitis in the shortest period and with maximum impact, sufficient resources are required at the national, regional and global levels. An investment case setting out the financial resources required to implement the global road map is being finalized, with input from a subgroup of members of the WHO Technical Taskforce. It is expected to be launched in mid-2023 as part of a pledging event. The case for investing in implementation of the global road map will be made at the pledging event by demonstrating the global road map's interest and value in the light of the current global impact of meningitis on individuals, health systems and society. There were an estimated 2.5 million new cases of meningitis worldwide in 2019, including 1.6 million cases of bacterial meningitis leading to almost 240 000 deaths. In addition, one in five people affected by bacterial meningitis experience long-term disability after recovering from the disease, and an estimated 16.3 million disability-adjusted life years are lost each year worldwide to bacterial meningitis, more than 95% of them in low- and middle-income countries.⁵

¹ On 28 September 2021, WHO 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 2 November 2022).

² Regional Committee for Africa, 71. (2021). Framework for the implementation of the global strategy to defeat meningitis by 2030 in the WHO African Region: report of the Secretariat. World Health Organization. Regional Office for Africa. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/345323> (accessed 2 November 2022).

³ See document EB150/2022/REC/2, summary record of the eighth meeting section 3 and ninth meeting, section 1; and document WHA75/2022/REC/3, summary record of the thirteenth meeting of Committee A, section 2.

⁴ Defeating Meningitis by 2030: a global road map - Strategy Support Group (SSG) Terms of Reference: [https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/defeating-meningitis-by-2030-a-global-road-mapstrategy-support-group-\(ssg\)---terms-of-reference](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/defeating-meningitis-by-2030-a-global-road-mapstrategy-support-group-(ssg)---terms-of-reference) (accessed 2 November 2022).

⁵ Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network. Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 (GBD 2019) Results. Seattle, United States: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), 2020: <http://ghdx.healthdata.org/gbd-results-tool> (accessed 2 November 2022).

Multidisciplinary, integrated interventions for meningitis prevention and control

7. The main activities and milestones of the global road map have been integrated into operational workplans covering the period 2021–2023. Under this workplan, significant progress has been made on some key activities of the global road map, including (i) developing policies, guidelines and strategies pertaining to the prevention, detection, and treatment, as well as the monitoring and management of meningitis and its sequelae; (ii) conducting outcome-oriented research to inform policy and strategy development; (iii) defining rapid diagnostic test product profiles to guide the development of priority tests based on the diagnostic needs of affected populations and for all levels of care; (iv) improving the functioning and use of the emergency meningitis vaccine stockpile, including reallocating unused doses for outbreak response to prevention; (v) increasing communication to enhance awareness of meningitis and raise its profile on the global health agenda, including by promoting the integration of meningitis prevention and management into universal health coverage and primary health care; and (vi) developing regional and country implementation plans.

8. Vaccination can prevent many cases of meningitis and the long-term consequences of meningitis, including neurological consequences. The Immunization Agenda 2030 and its seven strategic priority areas continue to provide a powerful framework to strengthen meningitis immunization programmes and guide operational planning.¹

9. In order to promote best practices, essential work to develop evidence-based policies and strategies has begun. The working group on meningococcal vaccines and vaccination of the WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization resumed its activities in May 2022 and the WHO Technical Advisory Group on Group B Streptococcus Vaccine was established in June 2022. In addition, a proposal to develop comprehensive guidelines for the diagnosis, treatment and management of meningitis was finalized in September 2022, with a guideline development group expected to be convened and start work by early 2023. The guidelines will be developed in close conceptual and strategic synergy with other WHO action plans and strategies, such as the intersectoral global action plan on epilepsy and other neurological disorders 2022–2031.² Furthermore, this work will be aligned with WHO's efforts to move towards making health services more people-centred and providing good-quality essential health care services in the context of universal health coverage.

10. Thanks to a recent stepping up of long-term efforts by WHO and its partners, affordable multivalent meningococcal conjugate vaccines will be available imminently for use in the emergency meningitis vaccine stockpile. This will be a key asset in strengthening and integrating epidemic prevention and response efforts, by ensuring high uptake of adequate routine vaccination strategies and improving the functioning of stockpiles at the global, regional and national levels.

Supporting countries in the assessment of meningitis risk factors and capacity for engagement

11. As a foundation for developing regional implementation frameworks and national meningitis action plans aligned with other related national, regional and global initiatives, each of the six WHO regions has begun conducting a high-level landscape analysis of key data on meningitis burden and health services by country, using information that is already available or easily obtainable. Two regions, the African Region and the Region of the Americas, have already finalized their high-level landscape

¹ Immunization Agenda 2030: A Global Strategy to Leave No One Behind: <https://www.immunizationagenda2030.org/> (accessed 2 November 2022).

² Document A75/10 Add.4.

analyses. Regional frameworks for implementing the global road map are currently in various stages of development.

12. To further support countries in translating the global road map into action, WHO has also begun work on producing an operational manual to guide countries in developing their national strategic plans to defeat meningitis by 2030. This will involve and engage national stakeholders, at all levels, including those not traditionally involved in meningitis prevention and control. It is a country-led effort that draws on the expertise and contributions from technical experts from all WHO regions to produce an advanced draft of the operational manual by the end of 2022. A key objective is to ensure that national strategic plans are dynamic, multi-year, operational and made up of various integrated components. Core components will relate to national surveillance frameworks, monitoring of antimicrobial patterns, existing disability inclusion initiatives and community services for persons with disabilities, ongoing health awareness activities and risk and communication strategies, maintaining primary health care and immunization services, and engaging communities.

13. To further support and integrate regional and national implementation, Member States have emphasized the relevance of strengthening the integration of meningitis prevention, diagnosis and care into primary health care, and to prevent, recognize and treat disability resulting from the disease. A subgroup of members of the WHO Technical Taskforce from across WHO's six regions is being set up to direct efforts towards strengthening the integration of meningitis prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care, including management of sequelae, into primary health care by strengthening service coverage, enhancing access to essential medicines and vaccines, improving surveillance and critical research and addressing discrimination and stigma in primary health care. The Secretariat has developed an operational framework for leveraging action and integration in primary health care that will serve as the initial basis for this work.¹ The Immunization Agenda 2030, which positions immunization as an integrated component of primary health care, will be instrumental in helping achieve integration. The global road map on defeating meningitis by 2030 will, in turn, reinforce and be integrated with wider initiatives, such as those aimed at improving global health security, fighting antimicrobial resistance and advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities. It will also facilitate the strengthening of primary health care in high-burden countries.

Monitoring and evaluation

14. Leaving no one behind means ensuring robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The monitoring and evaluation plan of the global road map is expected to be released in mid-2023. The plan, which is based on the theory of change underpinning the global road map, aims not only to provide clear indicators for the global road map, but to generate synergies with the monitoring and evaluation plans of related initiatives, such as those aimed at strengthening primary health care and health systems, in particular services and support systems for persons with disabilities and their families and carers; increasing immunization coverage; improving global health security; fighting antimicrobial resistance; implementing the intersectoral global action plan on epilepsy and other neurological disorders 2022–2031; and advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities.

15. Meningitis can be defeated, and related interventions will generate health benefits far beyond the impacts of meningitis. The global road map, once implemented, will save millions of lives.

¹ Primary Health Care Health Systems Levers for action: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/primary-health-care-health-systems-levers-for-action> (accessed 2 November 2022).

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

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

- the approach of encouraging region-to-region collaboration, in order to strengthen commitment, foster synergies and better direct concrete efforts towards strengthening the integration of meningitis prevention and management into primary health care; and
- whether the Board wishes to consider the following draft decision:

The Executive Board, having considered the report by the Director-General,¹

Decided to request the Director-General to submit the next report on progress in implementing resolution WHA73.9 (2020) on the global road map on defeating meningitis by 2030 to the Seventy-eighth World Health Assembly in 2025, through the Executive Board at its 156th session.

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¹ Document EB152/10.