

Global road map on defeating meningitis by 2030

Report by the Director-General

1. At its 152nd session, the Executive Board noted the report on the global road map on defeating meningitis by 2030.¹ It also adopted decision EB152(8) (2023), in which it requested the Director-General to submit the next report on progress in implementing resolution WHA73.9 (2020), on the global road map, to the Seventy-eighth World Health Assembly in 2025, through the Executive Board at its 156th session. This document provides a summary of action by the Secretariat and progress in that respect since November 2022.

Secretariat approach

2. As at September 2024, the Secretariat's approach included strategic leadership and collaboration with partners; advocacy initiatives; supporting national efforts to evaluate meningitis risk factors and capacity for engagement, and to scale up the ability to implement and monitor multidisciplinary, integrated interventions for meningitis prevention, control and management; ensuring a sufficient stockpile of, and promoting equitable access to, meningitis vaccines; developing and promoting evidence-based best practices in the diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and prevention of meningitis and its sequelae; and developing a research and innovation agenda to improve implementation of existing interventions.

Secretariat actions

Strategic leadership and collaboration with partners

3. Since November 2020, the Secretariat has convened several meetings of the WHO Technical Taskforce for the global road map on defeating meningitis by 2030, which is made up of partners and international experts involved in long-term meningitis control and has dedicated working groups of additional experts to accelerate progress. The Technical Taskforce is responsible for leading and coordinating the global road map's implementation at global and regional level, facilitating a forum for technical exchange and collaboration on meningitis and related activities. Annual meetings of the Taskforce are now hosted by WHO regional offices to inform discussions and accelerate national adoption of the road map. The Eastern Mediterranean Region hosted the first such meeting in Amman in June 2023.

¹ Document EB152/10; see also the summary records of the Executive Board, seventh meeting, section 2.

4. Since November 2022, the WHO Strategy Support Group on defeating meningitis by 2030, which has Member State representatives from each of the six WHO regions, civil society organizations and global partners, has been convened regularly. The Strategy Support Group provides support for mobilizing resources and high-level endorsements, and for advocating implementation of the global road map at global and regional levels.

Advocacy initiatives

5. On 26 April 2024, the Director-General officially launched the first high-level meeting to defeat meningitis, which was hosted by the Government of France under the high patronage of the President of the French Republic.² The high-level meeting provides a platform for all stakeholders to commit to raising awareness and taking action to defeat meningitis. Commitments were made in Paris by Member States, partners, civil society organizations and the private sector. The case for investing to defeat meningitis was presented.³

6. The funding needed for the road map's full implementation (US\$ 440 million) has been calculated and categorized to maximize investment impact. It includes an initial catalytic investment of US\$ 130 million to kickstart and accelerate priority research activities, update and develop key strategies and policies, and support targeted countries in all six WHO regions as they formulate their national meningitis plans and integrate/implement key activities covered by the global road map's five pillars. The focus on country-level impact is reflected in the distribution of funds: for every US\$ 1 required by WHO and partners, US\$ 4 are needed for Member States. The road map's implementation is projected to prevent 2.75 million cases of meningitis, 780 000 cases of long-lasting sequelae and 920 000 deaths by 2030. Healthcare savings are estimated at US\$ 3.8 to 10.0 billion, with economic benefits in the form of greater workforce participation and productivity projected to amount to US\$ 86.0 to 100.4 billion by 2030.

7. Investing in meningitis prevention and treatment has far-reaching implications that extend beyond the disease itself. Strengthened meningitis programmes can lead to improvements in the overall healthcare system, including better vaccination coverage and disease surveillance. By addressing meningitis effectively, Member States can reduce the burden of other communicable diseases, improving public health and enhancing quality of life.

8. World Meningitis Day, observed on 5 October each year, was established by civil society organizations and continues to build momentum, strengthen global partnerships, raise awareness and highlight the importance of the global road map and its goals.

Multidisciplinary, integrated interventions for meningitis prevention, control and management

9. The main activities and milestones of the global road map have been integrated into WHO and partner operational workplans covering the period 2021–2025. Significant progress has been made on key activities, including developing policies, guidelines and strategies for the prevention, detection treatment and management of meningitis and its sequelae; conducting outcome-oriented research to inform policy and strategy development; defining product profiles

² Webcast available at [The first High-level meeting to defeat meningitis – Institut Pasteur Paris, France](#) (accessed 9 December 2024).

³ [Investing to defeat meningitis and beyond](#). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (accessed 9 December 2024).

for rapid diagnostic tests to guide the development of priority tests; improving the functioning and use of the emergency meningitis vaccine stockpile, including reallocating unused doses for outbreak response; stepping up communication to raise awareness of meningitis, particularly by promoting the integration of meningitis prevention and management into universal health coverage and primary healthcare; and developing regional and country implementation plans.

10. An affordable pentavalent ACWYX meningococcal conjugate vaccine (Men5CV), the first vaccine to target all relevant circulating serogroups of meningococcus in the most affected countries, was prequalified by WHO in July 2023. The Director-General endorsed the recommendations of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization on the vaccine's use in countries in the African meningitis belt, which were issued in September 2023. In December 2023, the Board of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, approved a decision expanding the Gavi meningococcal vaccine programme to include support for multivalent meningococcal conjugate vaccines.

11. A WHO Guideline Development Group formulated recommendations that will be reflected in the forthcoming WHO Guidelines on Meningitis Diagnosis, Treatment and Care, to be published in 2025, to provide evidence-based, quality-assured recommendations for the clinical management of children, adolescents and adults with community-acquired, acute meningitis from any cause. The guidelines address the diagnosis, treatment and management of sequelae. They are aligned with related WHO action plans and strategies, such as the Intersectoral global action plan on epilepsy and other neurological disorders 2022–2031.

12. Member States have stressed the importance of strengthening the integration of meningitis prevention, diagnosis and care into primary healthcare, and of preventing, recognizing and caring for disabilities resulting from the disease, with a view to supporting and integrating the road map's regional and national implementation. The Secretariat has therefore worked to develop the meningitis module of the WHO database of health interventions,⁴ to allow countries to easily access data that can be readily contextualized for their national package and to support implementation. The module will be updated in the light of new recommendations in the first half of 2025.

13. Vaccination can prevent many cases of meningitis and its long-term effects, including neurological complications. The Immunization Agenda 2030, along with its seven strategic priority areas, serves as a powerful framework to strengthen meningitis immunization programmes and guide operational planning. For example, strategic and integrated planning for the prevention and control of cases and epidemics was immediately activated to implement the Men5CV vaccine at public health scale. This included its use in the emergency meningitis vaccine stockpile and active planning for its high uptake through routine vaccination strategies in countries at highest risk. In the first half of 2024, reactive Men5CV vaccination campaigns were conducted in two countries, with a total of 4.9 million persons vaccinated in Nigeria (2.2 million aged 1–29 years) and in the Niger (0.9 million and 1.8 million aged 1–19 years and 1–29 years, respectively), as part of the response to an epidemic predominantly caused by meningococcal serogroup C (cases of serogroups W and X were also reported). To inform their routine vaccination strategies, the two countries conducted a meningitis risk assessment in August 2024 (for Nigeria, in the context of an

⁴ [UHC Compendium. Health interventions for Universal Health Coverage \(version 1.3\)](#) (accessed 1 November 2024).

integrated risk analysis for meningitis, yellow fever and cholera) and in September 2024 (for Niger).

14. Consultations are under way with national and international experts to develop a standardized protocol for assessing the sequelae of brain infections and a framework to strengthen surveillance and health systems to address care and support needs. Standardized protocols for research on the impact of such sequelae are expected to be ready for use in pilot countries in at least three WHO regions in the first part of 2025. A framework to strengthen routine surveillance and health systems for monitoring and service delivery for the sequelae of brain infections is also being developed. A workshop to strengthen routine surveillance systems and healthcare for meningitis sequelae was organized in Burkina Faso in October 2024.

Supporting national efforts to evaluate meningitis risk factors and capacity for engagement

15. In response to Member State requests, WHO drew up an operational manual to guide countries developing a national strategic plan to defeat meningitis by 2030 and facilitate regional implementation frameworks.⁵ Early versions of the manual have been piloted in several countries. The manual proposes an approach that involves a range of national stakeholders, including those not traditionally involved in meningitis prevention and control. A key objective is to help countries define context-specific objectives and activities, in line with the road map's five pillars and with existing national and local initiatives and plans.

16. All six WHO regions have started implementing the road map. The European Region and the Western Pacific Region are in the initial phase of 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. The African Region, the Region of the Americas and the Eastern Mediterranean Region have already completed their regional frameworks for implementing the global road map, while the South-East Asia Region has developed an advanced draft. A number of countries in the African Region have started developing national plans. Brazil used World Meningitis Day to officially launch its national plan to defeat meningitis by 2030. The national plans of other countries in the Region of the Americas are at various stages of development and integration with other existing plans. To accelerate the road map's implementation, regional workshops are being organized in the African Region and the Region of the Americas, with a particular focus on early diagnosis, rapid quality treatment and access to long-term care (Saint Lucia, November 2024) or on surveillance, preparedness and prevention (Congo, October 2024).

Monitoring and evaluation

17. Mid-term monitoring and evaluation of global road map progress is expected to be conducted at the end of 2025, with a view to informing the way forward.

⁵ [Developing national meningitis plans: an operational manual](#). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (accessed 9 December 2024).

Conclusion

18. Meningitis can be defeated, and related interventions will generate health benefits that extend well beyond the disease itself. Once implemented, the global road map has the potential to save millions of lives.

Action by the Executive Board

19. 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 with respect to the two questions set out below.

- What opportunities have countries identified and what barriers do they face when implementing the road map's five pillars?
- How can the Secretariat further help Member States accelerate the road map's implementation in terms of meningitis prevention, control and management, awareness raising and advocacy?
