

## **REFLECTION: APP-DRR FORUM**

8-9 December 2021

### **Learnings from COVID-19 pandemic driving opportunities for more inclusive disaster risk reduction interventions**

The WHO South-East Asia Region (SEAR) is committed to seizing this opportunity arising out of the pandemic adversity to transform health systems to ensure enhanced health security; and re-orienting the system towards comprehensive primary healthcare to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and resilience during emergencies, in line with the Region's Flagship Priorities on strengthening emergency risk management and achieving UHC, reemphasized at the 74<sup>th</sup> Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia, when the Member States unanimously adopted the "Declaration of COVID-19 and measures to build back better essential health services to achieve UHC and the health-related SDGs."<sup>1</sup>

The Regional Office recently concluded consultations with the Member States, group of experts and the operational partners to review the achievements and challenges related to readiness and response to COVID-19; and sought their recommendations for utilizing opportunities to integrate health emergencies and disaster risk reduction approaches into the existing National Action Plans for Health Security (NAPHS). Drawing on learnings and recommendations, the following action points have been proposed:

1. Accelerating use of **WHO Strategic Tool for Assessing Risks** (STAR) while following whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches to improve integration of disaster risk reduction into NAPHS.
2. Development of **regional guidance and mechanisms** for the Member States on improved reporting on status of health-related components of the Sendai Framework.
3. Improving **safety and operational readiness of health systems and facilities** with focus on safe, smart, green, sustainable, and equitable facilities and service delivery models.
4. Facilitating and supporting integration of **climate change adaptations into NAPHS**.
5. **Strengthening existing partnerships** (Global Outbreak Alert & Response Network, Emergency Medical Teams, WHO Collaborating Centres, Global Health Clusters etc) **and engaging with more partners** including private sector; and civil society and community - based organizations for accelerating disaster risk reduction in the health sector.

The existing "Preparedness Stream" of the South East Asia Regional Health Emergency Fund will be further strengthened along with strong impetus on stockpiling and streamlining the health emergencies supply chain systems.<sup>2, 3</sup> The SEAR will be prioritizing risk mapping, comprehensive assessment and enhancement of IHR core capacities, implementing the WHO Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management Framework,<sup>4</sup> strengthening community level resilience and advocating and promoting One Health approaches as part of DRR.

## References

1. WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia. Resolution of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia, SEA/RC74/R1: “Declaration of the Health Ministers of Member States on COVID-19 and measures to ‘build Back Better’ essential health services to achieve Universal Health Coverage and the health-related SDGs”. Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/344914/Covid19-Declaration-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
2. WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia resolution SEA/RC69/R6 on expanding the scope of the South-East Asia Regional Health Emergency Fund (SEARHEF). New Delhi: World Health Organization Regional Office for South-East Asia; 2016 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/250288/sea-rc69-r6.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>).
3. WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia. Resolution of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia, SEA/RC72/R1 on ‘Delhi Declaration on Emergency Preparedness in the South-East Asia Regions’; 6 September 2019. (<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/327921/sea-rc72-r1-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>)
4. Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management framework, Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO. (<https://www.who.int/hac/techguidance/preparedness/health-emergency-and-disaster-risk-management-framework-eng.pdf>)