

## WHO CAPACITIES AND ASSETS

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has various capacities to respond to health emergencies. The most important of these include:

- The WHO Health Emergencies Programme, which has dedicated 1,000 core WHO staff globally to work on emergencies,<sup>1,2</sup> with a budget of US\$200 million in core funding for 2018-19.<sup>2</sup> Despite this earmarked funding, the Programme faces chronic budget and HR shortages.
- The WHO Global Health Emergency Workforce has accredited approximately 60 emergency medical teams from 25+ countries. This number is expected to rise to 200 soon, “representing a health emergency workforce of over 100,000 people” who can voluntarily deploy to provide clinical surge capacity.<sup>3</sup>
- The WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies allocated nearly \$21 million to 23 countries for purchasing vaccines, medical supplies, and equipment in 2017.<sup>4</sup> The fund never reached its \$100 million target, and “now its coffers are almost empty” after exhausting its initial \$45 million in donations.
- The WHO is eligible for about \$60-80 million in rapid response funds for large humanitarian emergencies from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund.<sup>5</sup> WHO is the Global Health Cluster lead for UN-led humanitarian operations.

Other capacities with key WHO leadership and coordination include:

- The newly established WHO Health Security Interface Secretariat, which will expand WHO’s capability to prevent, prepare for, and respond to deliberate events involving biological or chemical weapons;
- The World Bank Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility, which provides \$500 million to developing countries in the event of a major pandemic;<sup>6</sup>
- The WHO R&D Blueprint, a new research platform designed to accelerate vaccine research and development;<sup>7</sup>
- The Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), a network of 2,500 health personnel who can respond to emergencies.<sup>1</sup>



## PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES OF INTERNATIONAL CONCERN

The WHO Director-General can declare a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) if there is an emergency that poses a serious threat to international public health.

A PHEIC is defined in the IHR (2005) as “an extraordinary event which is determined . . . :

- i. to constitute a public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease; and
- ii. to potentially require a coordinated international response.’ This definition implies a situation that: is serious, unusual or unexpected; carries implications for public health beyond the affected State’s national border; and may require immediate international action.”<sup>8</sup>

### References

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