

ENHANCING CAPACITY TO ADDRESS HEALTH EMERGENCIES IN THE WHO AFRICAN REGION

- Collaboration between the WHO Secretariat in the African Region and Member States has strengthened public health emergency preparedness and response, encompassing emerging infectious diseases, natural and human-made disasters, and the impacts of climate change.
- From July 2022 to June 2023, WHO AFRO provided support to countries to contain acute outbreaks of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, of Marburg in Equatorial Guinea and Tanzania, along with cholera outbreaks in 14 countries, and yellow fever outbreaks in 12 countries.
- WHO AFRO's implementation of three flagship programmes — PROSE (Promoting Resilience of Systems for Emergencies), TASS (Transforming African Surveillance Systems), and SURGE (Strengthening and Utilizing Response Groups for Emergencies) — continues to establish the necessary physical and organizational infrastructure to prepare for, detect and respond to health emergencies. PROSE has supported countries to mobilize over US\$ 200 million for emergency preparedness and response while, under SURGE, 1500 emergency responders are now ready to be deployed within 24 to 48 hours of the declaration of an emergency.
- WHO AFRO has collaborated closely with Member States, the Africa Centres for Disease Control (Africa CDC) and other key partners to enhance continental emergency preparedness and response systems, facilitate cross-border coordination, promote information sharing, and provide technical assistance. This translated into a five-year joint Emergency Preparedness and Response action plan of over US\$ 1 billion, to which several partners have expressed interest in contributing.
- The average score for 13 International Health Regulations core capacities increased from 42% in 2015, to 52% in 2022.
- The proportion of public health emergency events detected and responded to in a timely manner increased by 26%. from 54% in 2018, to 80% in 2021.
- Challenges remain significant, however. In 2022–2023, AFRO member states reported over 20 vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks. This is due to suboptimal vaccine coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, vaccine coverage for polio, measles and yellow fever was 70%, 68% and 47%, respectively.
- Overall, more Africans are now better protected from the disruptive effects of public health emergencies.