Developing respiratory pathogen pandemic preparedness plans

Steps for respiratory pathogen pandemic planning
Summary

Planning for public health emergencies should ensure that capabilities developed during previous emergencies are maintained, incorporated, and put into practice when a new event of public health concern arises. Investments in pandemic preparedness lead to more rapid detection and a stronger response to public health threats, thereby shielding communities from the debilitating social and economic effects of epidemics and pandemics.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) recognizes the efforts of countries in the Region of the Americas to develop and/or strengthen their respiratory pathogen pandemic plans. PAHO supports planning activities with tools and expertise, aligning these efforts with the Preparedness and Resilience for Emerging Threats (PRET) initiative.

The PRET initiative is an innovative approach to improving disease pandemic preparedness. It recognizes that the same systems, capacities, knowledge, and tools can be leveraged and applied for groups of pathogens based on their mode of transmission (respiratory, vector-borne, foodborne etc.). PRET incorporates the latest tools and approaches for shared learning and collective action established during the COVID-19 pandemic and other recent public health emergencies. It places the principles of equity, inclusivity, and coherence at the forefront.

This document outlines four steps for respiratory pathogen pandemic planning (PRET Module1).
Scope

Guide the process of updating and developing preparedness and response plans for pandemics caused by respiratory pathogens, in order to strengthen their basic capacities and encourage the countries of the Region of the Americas to have operational, proven plans, and with a regular monitoring and updating plan to address epidemics and pandemics in the face of this type of threat.

Objectives

General objective

Facilitate a roadmap for the national implementation of pandemic planning of respiratory pathogens and identify points of technical cooperation, aligned with the PRET initiative, in the countries of the Region of the Americas.

Specific objectives

- Inform all countries in the region about global initiatives including respiratory pathogen pandemic preparedness guidance from the WHO
- Facilitate the ‘how’ of national planning for respiratory pathogen epidemics and pandemics including specificities for each pathogen and aligned with the efforts, tools, and mechanisms already existing in each country.
- Provide tools for planning, updating, implementation, and monitoring of the plan for epidemics and pandemics caused by respiratory pathogens.
Steps for respiratory pathogen pandemic planning

Step I
Prepare, analyze the situation and engage stakeholders

1. Establish a multisectoral planning committee
2. Do a situation analysis to set plan’s scope and contents
3. Raise awareness of committee members
4. Develop workplan

Step II
Draft the plan

1. Draft, discuss and agree on plan contents
2. Consult stakeholders
3. Consolidate plan

Step III
Evaluate, finalize and disseminate the plan

1. Test the plan with a simulation exercise
2. Revise and finalize the plan
3. Get government approval
4. Review and evaluate
5. Disseminate plan

Step IV
Implement, monitor and continuously improve the plan

1. Embed preparedness in health system & multisectoral action
2. Use indicator results to strengthen preparedness
3. Conduct exercises for all sectors
4. Update plan regularly including after events
5. Maintain advocacy, financing & coordination
**Strategy:** Identify a national committee or working group to coordinate multisectoral planning

**Goal:** Ensure strong leadership and multisectoral and multi-level government commitment in epidemic and pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response

**Tasks**

- Conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify all sectors relevant to prevention, preparedness, and response to a respiratory pathogen pandemic.
- Convene a multisectoral planning committee reflecting whole-of-government and whole-of-society representation. Include experts in respiratory pathogens (e.g., clinicians, epidemiologists, microbiologists etc) or identify relevant technical advisory bodies/groups that provide relevant scientific inputs and guidance.
- Identify lessons learned from past events and scope the core content of the new/updated respiratory pathogen pandemic preparedness plan.
- Develop a workplan with a budget and assign tasks.

**Actions**

1. Establish a multisectoral planning committee
2. Raise awareness of committee members
3. Do a situation analysis to set plan’s scope and contents
4. Develop workplan

**Step I**

Prepare, analyze the situation and engage stakeholders
**Strategy:** Establish mechanisms to have an updated national plan with key actors in the planning, preparedness, response, and recovery process.

**Goal:** Have the draft document of the national plan for preparedness and response to respiratory pathogens (or respiratory viruses)

### Step II
**Draft the plan**

#### Tasks
- **Draft, discuss and agree on plan contents**
- **Consult stakeholders**
- **Consolidate plan**
- **Update the draft plan following stakeholder engagement**

- Assign specialists from each sector to develop or update the plan with actions needed during each operational stage.
- Collate and consolidate the different sectoral inputs into a cohesive document. Check the logic flow and the list of planned actions to ensure feasibility of implementation.
- Seek inputs from stakeholders including users who implement preparedness and response activities. This can be done through targeted consultations, workshops or focus groups.
Step III
Evaluate, finalize and disseminate the plan

**Strategy:** Perform a table or desk simulation exercise, using progressive scenarios for participants to review and reflect on different components of their plan.

**Goal:** Evaluate the draft updated plan through a simulation exercise to identify critical management areas and aspects that need to be strengthened.

**Actions**
1. Test the plan with a simulation exercise
2. Review and evaluate
3. Revise and finalize the plan
4. Get government approval
5. Disseminate plan

**Tasks**
- Test the draft plan by conducting simulation exercises, evaluate its fitness-for-purpose and incorporate any learnings. The multisectoral planning committee needs to oversee this process including its contextualization in broader emergency and disaster risk management.
- Revise and finalize the plan, and seek approval from the relevant government authorities.
- Disseminate the approved plan broadly through the multisectoral committee and other whole-of-society and whole-of-government channels to stakeholders including the public.
Step IV
Implement, monitor and continuously improve the plan

**Strategy:** Generation of mechanisms to ensure implementation, monitoring for all sectors to improve bread on a regular basis

**Goal:** Ensure high-level leadership to maintain the continued usefulness and functionality of the plan.

**Tasks**
- Implement the actions outlined in the plan to strengthen preparedness at the national and subnational levels, and accounting for different contexts and population needs.
- Establish a schedule to exercise different aspects of the plan, including multisectoral aspects.
- At least yearly, gather the multisectoral planning committee to monitor progress, especially measures in line with the IHR (2005) core capacities and specific functional capacities for respiratory pathogen pandemic preparedness (Chapter 7).
- Use the routine monitoring and exercises to identify gaps and to continually update the plan and drive improvements in functional multisectoral and multi-level preparedness.

**Actions**

1. Embed preparedness in health system & multisectoral action
2. Conduct exercises for all sectors
3. Use indicator results to strengthen preparedness
4. Update plan regularly including after events
5. Maintain advocacy, financing & coordination
Key resources

WHO58.5

Preparedness and Resilience for Emerging Threats
Module 1: Planning for respiratory pathogen pandemics

WHO74.7

A checklist for respiratory pathogen pandemic preparedness planning

Strengthening pandemic preparedness planning for respiratory pathogens:
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