



THE WHO AFRICAN REGION CONTINUES TO EXPERIENCE RECURRENT DISEASE OUTBREAKS AND OTHER PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES WITH HIGH MORBIDITY, MORTALITY AND DISABILITY. EVERY YEAR, OVER 100 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES (PHEs) ARE REPORTED TO WHO.

Given the importance of protecting health and saving lives in outbreaks and emergencies, the availability and functionality of a central location in the Region for effective and timely coordination of responses to PHEs is crucial.

In this regard, the SHOC in WHO Regional Office for Africa was established in 2010 to support effective and timely coordination of responses to PHEs and serve as a hub for the coordination of responses to all PHEs that occur in the Region. It is equipped with state-of-the-art technology to support the surge capacity required during emergencies. It brings together high-level experts to manage emergencies, facilitates the availability of real-time data and information for action, and enhances communication and collaboration with Member States and partners, including the rapid response team during field operations.

The WHO Regional Office for Africa has developed Standards Operating Procedures (SOPs) that provide step by step guidance for the operation of the SHOC. It defines three levels of operation: regular monitoring of events, partial activation and full-scale activation for round-the-clock operations. The SHOC has been activated for 100% of the days since its establishment in 2010.



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SHOC

STRATEGIC
HEALTH
OPERATION
CENTRE

COORDINATING RESPONSES,
SAVING LIVES

WHO HEALTH EMERGENCIES PROGRAMME (WHE)

WHO HEALTH EMERGENCIES
PROGRAMME (WHE)



THE KEY FUNCTIONS OF THE AFRO SHOC ARE:

COORDINATION OF RESPONSES TO PHEs

The SHOC uses the Incident Management System (IMS) to better manage and coordinate responses to public health emergencies. When the SHOC is activated, the Incident Management Support Team (IMST) is established within 24 hours, as per the WHO Emergency Response Framework, to serve as a command and control structure; with each person assigned a specific role and following sets of emergency management procedures.

The IMST performs six critical functions during an emergency response:

- ◆ Leadership/Incident management,
- ◆ Partner coordination,
- ◆ Information management and planning,
- ◆ Health and technical expertise,
- ◆ Operations support and logistics,
- ◆ Finance and administration.

The SHOC is staffed with high-level and multidisciplinary experts mobilized from across the Organization to respond faster, make better decisions and manage resources effectively.



REAL TIME COMMUNICATION

Using state-of-the-art technology, the SHOC connects in-real time with the various levels of the organization (Headquarters, Regions and country offices), the rapid response team in the field and key partners to enhance coordination, communication and collaboration. The infrastructure allows the provision of timely technical guidance to the experts during the field operations.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The IMST supports the development of a response plan following an assessment of the resources needs and the identification of the requirement to adequately respond to emergencies.

It ensures seamless flow of resources to the incident site as follows:

- ◆ Identifies and deploys highly trained experts in different disciplines to the incident site to support response operations
- ◆ Rapidly deploys, tracks and reports on the status of materials and supplies, and demobilizes logistical needs as appropriate
- ◆ Mobilizes resources and monitors the implementation of the response plan.
- ◆ The SHOC supports centralized access to real-time information at Regional Office.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The data and information received are recorded, documented, analysed, visualized and displayed for informed decision-making. The tools used include a web-based emergency portal known as vSHOC*, the Event Management System (EMS**), and other analytical tools such as geographic information system (GIS).

COMMUNICATING WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND THE PUBLIC

The SHOC ensures that timely, consistent, targeted, credible and actionable information to monitor trends of acute public health events reaches relevant stakeholders and the public. The SHOC organizes media briefings, interviews, press releases and publishes key information products such as Disease outbreak news, situation reports, infographics, SHOC newsletter etc. All these products are disseminated and published regularly on the website of the WHO Regional Office for Africa.

<http://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/disease-outbreaks/outbreaks-and-other-emergencies-updates>

*vSHOC is a WHO Emergency Portal that supports management of operational information.
**EMS is a WHO web-based application that supports the process of epidemic intelligence detection, verification, risk assessment and monitoring.