

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION STRATEGY (2022–2026) FOR THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR HEALTH SECURITY



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Organization**

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ISBN 978-92-4-006154-5 (electronic version)

ISBN 978-92-4-006155-2 (print version)

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Acknowledgements

The World Health Organization (WHO) Strategy for the National Action Plan for Health Security (2022-2026) was developed by the Health Security Preparedness (HSP) department, in collaboration with all six (6) WHO Regional Offices, including:

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A specific thanks also go to the following individuals for their inputs and revisions: Yolanda Bayugo, Isabel Bergeri, Lucy Boulanger, David Clarke, Melinda Frost, Soshanna Goldin, Kai von Harbou, Qudsia Huda, Chikwe Ihekweazu, Nirmal Kandel, Kira Koch, Rim Kwang, Peter Mala, Daniel Menucci, Stephane de la Rocque de Severac, Benjamin Rouffy-Ly, Gina Samman, Ludy Suryantoro, Liviu Verdrasco, Taylor Warren, Jun Xing and Lina Yu.

The WHO would like express sincere gratitude to all countries, WHO Country Offices and partners who contributed to the development of this strategy. WHO is grateful to the following countries and partners for their valuable input during the Global Consultative Meeting on National Action Plans for Health Security in Geneva Switzerland 5-6 July 2022: Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Argentina, Australia, Caribbean Public Health Agency, Chile, China, Commonwealth Secretariat, East-, Central- and Southern Africa Health Community, Eritrea, Ethiopia, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Fiji, Italy, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kiribati, Laos, Netherlands National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Pakistan, Philippines, Resolve to Save Lives, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, The Global Fund, United Republic of Tanzania, United Kingdom Health Security Agency, United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Vietnam, and WHO-IHR Collaborating Center Chi-23.

The document was prepared and finalized by the Country Assessment and Planning Team (CAP), managed by Rajesh Sreedharan, Team Lead, Frederik Copper, Technical Officer and Denis Charles, Consultant. WHO would like to thank the leadership team, Stella Chungong, Director Health Security Preparedness, and Jaouad Mahjour, Assistant Director-General Emergency Preparedness and International Health Regulations for their support and leadership in the process.

PURPOSE

- 1 This strategy defines the World Health Organization (WHO) vision and framework for supporting Member States to accelerate the development, implementation and monitoring of their National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS) from 2022 to 2026.

STATEMENT

- 2 All Member States have the responsibility to build and maintain effective and functioning capacities and systems to prevent, detect, protect against, control and provide a public health response to public health emergencies and to comply with relevant international treaties or agreements, including the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005). (1)
- 3 The National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS) (2) and equivalent health security strategies and plans are critical for ensuring that national capacities in health emergency prevention, preparedness, response and recovery are planned, built, strengthened and sustained in order to achieve national, regional and global health security and therefore keep the world safe, serve the vulnerable and promote health.
- 4 Under the IHR (2005), Article 5, paragraph 3, states: *“WHO shall assist States Parties, upon request, to develop, strengthen and maintain the capacities referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.”*
- 5 The Review Committee on the Functioning of the International Health Regulations (2005) during the COVID-19 Response, which was convened by the WHO Director-General in 2020,¹ recommended that: *“WHO should continue to provide guidance and technical support to countries on **how to integrate assessments of IHR core capacities, and the subsequent development of national plans for emergency preparedness and response**, with national efforts to strengthen essential public health functions and to rebuild resilient health systems after the COVID-19 pandemic.”*
- 6 The Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly (**in Resolution WHA 74.7**) (3) called on international actors, partners, civil society and private partners to: *“support all countries, upon their request, in **implementing their multisectoral national action plans**, in strengthening their health systems to respond to health emergencies, and in maintaining the safe provision of all other essential public health functions and services during them”.*
- 7 In October 2021, WHO released a position paper titled *Building health systems resilience for universal health coverage and health security during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond*. The position paper called on leaders and policy-makers within health, finance and other sectors to, inter alia, “leverage the current response to strengthen both pandemic preparedness and health systems; invest in essential public health functions including those needed for all-hazards emergency risk management; and increase domestic and global investment in health system foundations and all-hazards emergency risk management.” (4)
- 8 During the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly in May 2022, several strategic initiatives were launched, including a proposal from the Director-General on Strengthening the Global Architecture for Health Emergency Preparedness, Response and Resilience (HEPR), which serves to guide the future direction for health emergency preparedness and response. The HEPR focuses on three key areas for strengthening the global architecture, namely: governance, systems and financing. The NAPHS has a central position in the systems area, where it is stated: *“Emergency coordination with a trained health emergency workforce that is interoperable, scalable; and ready to rapidly deploy; coherent **national action plans for health security to drive preparedness and prevention**; operational readiness through risk assessment and reduction and prioritization of critical functions; and rapid detection of and scalable response to threats through the application of a standardized emergency response framework.”* (5)

¹ Convened by the Director-General at the request of WHO Member States in World Health Assembly Resolution WHA73.1 (2020), in accordance with Article 50 of the IHR. The Committee’s mandate was to review the functioning of the IHR during the COVID-19 response, with reference to IHR provisions as appropriate.

PRINCIPLES

- 9 The WHO NAPHS strategy recognizes that countries have existing accountability and planning mechanisms in place. These may include specific capacity development plans that aim to strengthen IHR, national health security and disaster risk management without explicitly naming or defining these as NAPHS. This strategy promotes the use of existing national action plans for health security and not necessarily the creation of additional plans. It encourages Member States to use existing health security capacity development plans and ensure alignment with the broader national health strategy, planning and budgeting cycles in order to enhance investment case opportunities from domestic and international budgetary allocations for health security.
- 10 In order to integrate IHR capacities within national health systems and primary health care, health security planning is more effective if it is well aligned with, and embedded in, existing National Health Policies, Strategies and Plans (NHPSP)², (6) as well as with other programmatic and multi-hazard or disease-/hazard-specific plans (7) (e.g. respiratory pathogen pandemic preparedness planning, (8) antimicrobial resistance, chemical hazards etc.). This will avoid duplication and will ensure maximum domestic resourcing and operationalization efficiency while harnessing external buy-in to support national health priorities.
- 11 While the NAPHS is essentially a capacity development plan that captures the national health security priorities that are required to strengthen emergency preparedness (including IHR core capacities). National Health Emergency Response Operations Plans (NHEROPs) (9) – complemented by hazard- and disease-specific contingency and readiness plans – define the overall roles, responsibilities, systems, mechanisms and specific tasks or checklists for emergency response operations. Both preparedness and response planning processes complement each other and form a vital element of the national health emergency risk management system.
- 12 The NAPHS uses recommendations from existing national capacity reviews and IHR assessments, including IHR State Party Annual Reporting (SPAR), Joint External Evaluation (JEE), IHR-Performance of Veterinary Services (IHR-PVS) National Bridging Workshops (NBW) and Tripartite operational tools, (10) and translates these findings into concrete activities and prioritized actions.
- 13 Findings and results of the Universal Health Preparedness Review (UHPR) (11) will feed into the NAPHS process to ensure that strategic high-level recommendations are used for the prioritization of NAPHS activities.
- 14 Findings and recommendations of simulation exercises (SimEx), and After-/Intra-Action Reviews (AAR/IAR) will not only identify bottlenecks in national health systems and inform the development of the NAPHS, but will also provide opportunities to monitor impact metrics and evaluate progress by testing the functionalities and timeliness of the health system in simulated or real-life events.
- 15 Threat and vulnerability mapping and national risk assessments, including the Strategic Toolkit for Assessing Risks (STAR) (12) and Vulnerability and Risk Analysis and Mapping (VRAM) allow countries to identify high and imminent risks. These risk assessments will be key to prioritizing actions with timely activities for annual NAPHS operational plans. The WHO NAPHS strategy 2022–2026 embodies a NAPHS Strategic Results Framework (see a prototype in Annex 1) that will enable countries to link NAPHS activities to longer-term outcomes and impacts. The framework takes account of the IHR core capacities, the Health System for Health Security Framework (13) and the WHO Essential Public Health Functions (EPHFs)³ to monitor progress towards the longer-term outcomes, using the three key areas of the HEPR (governance, systems and financing). The results framework will support countries with a standardized monitoring and evaluation mechanism to monitor NAPHS implementation status and progress over time using existing tools of the IHR monitoring and evaluation framework (MEF). This will enhance national accountability and governance and will support the overall implementation of NAPHS.
- 16 To enable sustainable changes in capacities and long-term impacts on health, NAPHS should reflect the principles of health emergency and disaster risk management (Health EDRM), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, among others, and must comply with international standards on human rights and with gender and equity principles.

² NHPSP is the overarching national health sector plan/strategy and is also known in some countries as the Health Sector Strategic Development Plan.

³ EPHFs have been used by WHO since 1998 to define the essential public health capacities and services that all governments should provide. At global and regional levels, initiatives on EPHFs have been implemented by the WHO Regional Offices for the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe and the Western Pacific as well as by the World Bank, the European Commission and other global health actors.

- 17 The Ministry of Health, other national ministries, national stakeholders in different sectors, and WHO's country offices and partners play critical roles in promoting a culture of comprehensive multisectoral/One-Health planning that engages meaningfully with other relevant stakeholders, including community groups, (14) civil society organizations, other agencies and the private sector. (15)
- 18 Health emergencies start and end in the communities that are the first to be exposed and the first to respond to emerging or re-emerging threats. Consequently, while NAPHS are often developed at the national level, subnational stakeholders should play a key role in the design, development and implementation of NAPHS. Effective representation and engagement of stakeholders at subnational levels (such as district health officers, urban representatives (16) and local community representatives) are central to successful implementation within and across programmes at all levels. Both vertical and horizontal engagement are key principles.
- 19 WHO, other United Nations agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, the international donor community and other partners play key roles in facilitating and supporting national priorities through technical support and financial contributions in a coordinated, predictable and sustainable manner. (17)

INCORPORATING LESSONS FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC INTO NAPHS

- 20 The current COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the need to work towards achieving strong and resilient health systems and universal health coverage as an essential foundation for effective preparedness and response to public health emergencies. A health system that has the surge capacity to respond to pandemics and concurrent emergencies associated with natural hazards, conflicts and other disease outbreaks is essential for ensuring a strong emergency response and for limiting the spread of future disease outbreaks. The critical role of maintaining health systems while ensuring health security is key to reducing vulnerabilities, prevention, preparedness, emergency response and recovery.
- 21 The COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated that major public health events can reverse decades of progress and can have serious risks and impacts that go far beyond health. Years of persistent underfunding of the health sector in many countries has led to health systems that are unable to deliver services that meet both the routine and emergency needs of their populations. These systems, which have been further weakened by the increased demands and stresses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and concurrent emergencies, have led to a renewed focus on building capacities for health security that simultaneously contribute to strengthening health systems and universal health coverage.
- 22 This has resulted in intensifying calls for more comprehensive and sufficient multisectoral planning processes on health security embedded within national health systems. National governments worldwide have realized that sufficient investment in capacities for prevention, preparedness, response and recovery is essential to reduce the devastating and disruptive impacts of future epidemics, pandemics and other health emergencies on health and society.
- 23 Through the development and implementation of NAPHS or equivalent health security plans, Member States have the window of opportunity to “build back better”, strengthening IHR core capacities, investing in health systems for health security, and enhancing national emergency preparedness and response capacity in order to keep communities, countries and the world safe, serve the vulnerable and promote health.
- 24 Evidence becomes clearer, as shown particularly in Ebola outbreaks and the current COVID-19 response, that communities must be at the centre of health emergency preparedness, readiness and response. Thus, community engagement and empowerment need to be mainstreamed and integrated into NAPHS planning, implementation and monitoring at all levels and relevant sectors with a whole-of-society approach.

FACILITATING AND SCALING UP NAPHS DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

- 25 WHO, through the establishment of a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on NAPHS, will provide technical advice on implementing this NAPHS strategy (2022–2026). This will include advice and recommendations to improve coordination and advocacy efforts around the NAPHS strategy, as well as direction on the tools and guidance that are required to move the strategy forward.
- 26 The NAPHS results framework aligns NAPHS outputs with strategic results (using, for instance, existing IHR MEF capacities and indicators) and links this with the three categories used in the HEPR and UHPR, namely governance, systems and financing. The results framework will form the foundation of the NAPHS planning methodology and monitoring process which will use a standardized yet flexible methodology that is offered to countries to customize to their national context and to benefit the country planning process.
- 27 The NAPHS results framework will be integrated into a practical, comprehensive tool that will help Member States to plan and implement actions and monitor the progress of activities against their strategic results by linking these activities to their national SPAR or JEE indicators and scores. SimEx and real emergency response experience from AARs and IARs can be further used to validate the progress documented in the NAPHS. This will support national visibility and accountability and will help in tracking NAPHS implementation and progress to enhance and strengthen health security.
- 28 The NAPHS tool will incorporate planning functionalities, including: the specific national activities⁴ grouped under strategic results and IHR MEF indicators, a timeline, the responsible authority, implementation status, resource requirements, (18) resources available (19) (i.e. both domestic and international resources), the funding gap (if applicable), existing complementary capacities, and the technical support needed (if applicable).
- 29 The NAPHS tool will be hosted on a secure online platform, with each country having the discretion to grant access to relevant national and subnational staff, partners and WHO. As a one-stop-shop, the NAPHS online tool will have different functionalities, including:
 - a. a planning tool to support the development of a comprehensive capacity-building plan that is linked to, and based on, existing assessment findings and recommendations (i.e. SPAR/JEE, IHR-PVS NBW, SimEx, AAR/IAR, STAR, etc.); and
 - b. a monitoring and implementation tool to track implementation status and outputs of NAPHS activities against existing SPAR or JEE indicators, making it a living operational plan.
- 30 In addition, if a country wishes to use this option, the planning tool incorporates the WHO benchmarks for IHR capacities (20) that can be used by countries as a reference and starting point in the initial NAPHS development process. Using the benchmarks, a country can generate an initial draft plan (i.e. a non-exhaustive list of activities), for further review, input and validation.
- 31 The platform will also have an appeals mechanism that can be used at the country's discretion for technical and financial support. The platform will link the financial and technical resources available and needed to implement NAPHS activities to illustrate current gaps. This will foster a collaborative environment in which technical partners and international donors can view a country's technical and financial needs that are submitted through the appeals mechanism.
- 32 The NAPHS online platform will also have the functionality to prioritize strategic multi-year NAPHS into 12–24 months operational plans. Through annual reviews of progress made against outcome indicators, countries can adjust their yearly operational plan accordingly. This will help to standardize the NAPHS monitoring format and enable a “living” operational planning process.

⁴ National activities in the NAPHS can be developed from recommendations from available assessments or analysis, and the Benchmarks tool (see: <https://rtsi-benchmarks-production.herokuapp.com/>) can be used as an optional list of suggested actions to be further customized to the country context and background.

- 33 The NAPHS online platform will have a holistic and flexible approach whereby countries will be able to link/integrate other existing national health security processes and tools into their planning process. This can include any process or tool that a country has already conducted or completed, such as the IHR SPAR, JEE, IHR-PVS NBW and Tripartite operational tools, SimEx, IAR/AAR, WHO benchmark for IHR capacities, costing, resource mapping (REMAP), STAR, UHPR, dynamic preparedness metric (21) and others. Links to all-hazards health emergency and disaster risk management and Universal Health Coverage (UHC)-related assessments and initiatives will also be included in this platform. This integration and alignment of existing tools will simplify and streamline the national planning processes into a comprehensive holistic planning approach that is flexible and can be customized to the national context.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT

- 34 WHO is committed to accelerate NAPHS implementation and will continue to support Member States with their NAPHS development, implementation and monitoring. In doing so, WHO's main roles and responsibilities are outlined below.

Roles and responsibilities

- 35 **The WHO Senior Management (at Headquarters and Regional Offices)** will:
- provide oversight of WHO's progress in successfully implementing this strategy;
 - encourage Member States to plan, implement and monitor their health security plans using the NAPHS results framework and online platform;
 - promote NAPHS at national, regional and international levels as a key input to planning and capacity development for emergency preparedness and response planning, and for strengthening overall national health security and IHR capacity;
 - advocate for and support the integration of NAPHS into the broader national planning and budget cycles.
 - encourage Member States to develop 12–24-month operational NAPHS in addition to the strategic 5-year NAPHS;
 - routinely advocate among Member States, technical partners, financial institutions, donors and other national, regional and international stakeholders for their use of the NAPHS online platform for their bilateral and multilateral coordination and support;
 - foster close collaboration and agreement with other UN organizations and stakeholders – e.g. the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) etc. – as well as global civil society organizations and networks to ensure concrete interagency and intersectoral coordination and planning;
 - advocate for and position the NAPHS at the highest political level (i.e. office of the prime minister or president) to ensure credibility and “whole-of-government” and “whole-of-society” commitment, support and resource allocation.
- 36 **The WHO HQ NAPHS Secretariat** will:
- [develop and] update the NAPHS strategy and operationalize the results framework;
 - develop and update normative guidance, manuals, tools and templates to assist the development, implementation and monitoring of NAPHS at the country level, including the development and implementation of the NAPHS online platform;
 - provide technical support and training on NAPHS development, implementation and monitoring;
 - produce more specific normative guidance to countries (i.e. through policy briefs) on how to integrate NAPHS within broader planning and budget cycles;
 - link the NAPHS strategy with existing global processes and initiatives (e.g. UHPR, HEPR, the pandemic treaty, IHR amendments etc.).
 - simplify and streamline the NAPHS process through integration and alignment of existing health security tools and processes and consolidate into the NAPHS online platform;

- g. facilitate the coordination and collaborative efforts whereby countries can request resources to fill their technical and resource gaps and where technical partners and donors can contribute to country needs with their available resources (both technical and financial);
- h. support the transfer of existing and already published NAPHS onto the online platform for countries to start using and monitoring their implementation;
- i. set up and manage the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on NAPHS;
- j. develop research publications/articles as part of global knowledge-sharing and documentation;
- k. advise senior management on matters related to emergency planning of organization-wide importance.

37 WHO Regional Offices will:

- a. drive the technical support to develop, implement and monitor [country] NAPHS and assist the WHO country office and national NAPHS planning officers with the annual review, verification and tracking of the status of NAPHS implementation through the NAPHS online tool;
- b. link and integrate the NAPHS with existing regional strategies – e.g. Asia Pacific strategy for emerging diseases and public health emergencies (APSED), Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS), Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) framework etc.);
- c. support the identification of national resource requirements of NAPHS activities through region-specific costing tools (where they exist) and through resourcing mechanisms that are in place;
- d. assist with technical support, workshops, webinars and training in support of WCOs and national planning officers responsible for the NAPHS;
- e. review country appeals, and follow up and support countries with technical assistance and funding proposals;
- f. inform and brief the regional governing bodies (e.g. through regional committee meetings) on the NAPHS strategy (2022–2026).

38 WHO Country Offices will:

- a. liaise with and empower the national entity that will be overseeing the NAPHS process to ensure national commitment and ownership;
- b. continue to support the national NAPHS planning officers in the planning, development, implementation, monitoring and [annual] review of NAPHS;
- c. link and align the NAPHS with existing national health strategies, national all-hazards health emergency and disaster risk management strategies, and disease- and hazard-specific programmes and plans (including respiratory pathogen pandemic preparedness planning, antimicrobial resistance, chemical hazards etc.);
- d. liaise with other WHO country office colleagues, such as the health system team, for improved accountability and sustainability of the efforts in promoting an integrated and aligned approach to planning;
- e. link and integrate the NAPHS with existing national strategies (e.g. CCS);
- f. engage the Ministry of Finance to align with national budget cycles and financial plans and advocate for domestic financial resources to implement the plan;
- g. help to identify and engage the participation and contribution of other relevant ministries and partners in the NAPHS process (including the prime minister`s office, finance, agriculture, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil societies and community-based organizations) as well as stakeholders at subnational level – such as district health offices and urban policy-makers.

Reporting

- 39** As part of the report on the Preparedness Resolution (WHA 74.7) and WHO Health Emergencies programme annual progress report to the World Health Assembly, WHO will provide regular reports on the status of NAPHS implementation based on the data that are shared voluntarily by Member States on the NAPHS online platform.

RESOURCING OF NAPHS ACTIVITIES

- 40 The NAPHS need to be aligned to the overall national planning and budgetary cycles, including the NHPSP, to enable domestic resources to be identified and allocated to national health security priorities. The objectives will be that the NAPHS priorities are captured within national health sector planning and are budgeted and financed through domestic and external resources. Where gaps (financial and/or technical) exist, the NAPHS can be utilized upon request of the country for support in specific health security areas through an official appeal via a functionality that will be available on the NAPHS online platform.
- 41 WHO country and regional offices will be able to review country appeals before sharing them with technical partners and donors who will be able to assist with technical support and/or financial contributions in areas where gaps persist. This will enable country needs to be matched with available resources and support from the international community, including through REMAP, the Global Strategic Preparedness Network (GSPN) and the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN).
- 42 New opportunities to expand partnerships and funding must be constantly explored and facilitated at the global and regional levels. This includes leveraging existing and new financing mechanisms, such as the Financial Intermediary Fund (FIF) for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response. The NAPHS is uniquely placed to provide the structure for the country's proposal under the newly established FIF and is proposed for use as a well-established process to have 12–24 months operational plans for FIF country proposals. It can also be utilized for other proposals.
- 43 WHO will ensure adequate resources to plan and provide support to implementation and regular monitoring of the NAPHS. This will include supporting inception workshops, publishing global NAPHS implementation status updates and providing technical support and training on NAPHS development, implementation and monitoring. This support should allow strong community engagement and empowerment in NAPHS planning, implementation and monitoring with a whole-of-society approach.

IMPLEMENTATION OF NAPHS BY MEMBER STATES

In-country multisectoral secretariat

- 44 The IHR Review Committee on the Functioning of the IHR recommended that States Parties establish authorities responsible for the overall implementation of the IHR. Such authority should also consider oversight of the NAPHS, potentially through IHR multisectoral committees or other similar multisectoral committees/secretariats that should be empowered to facilitate the implementation/follow-up of NAPHS activities
- 45 This multisectoral committee/secretariat (hereafter referred to as the NAPHS secretariat) will be responsible for the overall NAPHS process through an all-hazards, whole-of society, One Health participatory approach that ensures multisectoral ownership of outputs. The NAPHS secretariat will facilitate in-country stakeholder engagement to ensure that the process remains credible and transparent and that it generates the necessary accountability and momentum to accelerate NAPHS implementation across sectors.
- 46 We expect the NAPHS secretariat to engage with two groups of stakeholders in the development, implementation and monitoring of NAPHS – namely, key decision-makers at the highest national level (office of the Prime Minister/President), and operational technical leads from various relevant sectors. This should include at least one representative from each relevant ministry,⁵ department or agency – as well as development partners, the private sector, community groups, civil society organizations and academia whose leadership and technical expertise is in capacity development and planning – and also WHO country and regional offices.
- 47 It is the responsibility of the NAPHS secretariat to follow up on the implementation of the NAPHS – including the actions and activities for which the various stakeholders are responsible as an outcome of the NAPHS process – and to follow up accordingly. These actions must comply with international standards on human rights and gender and with equity principles.

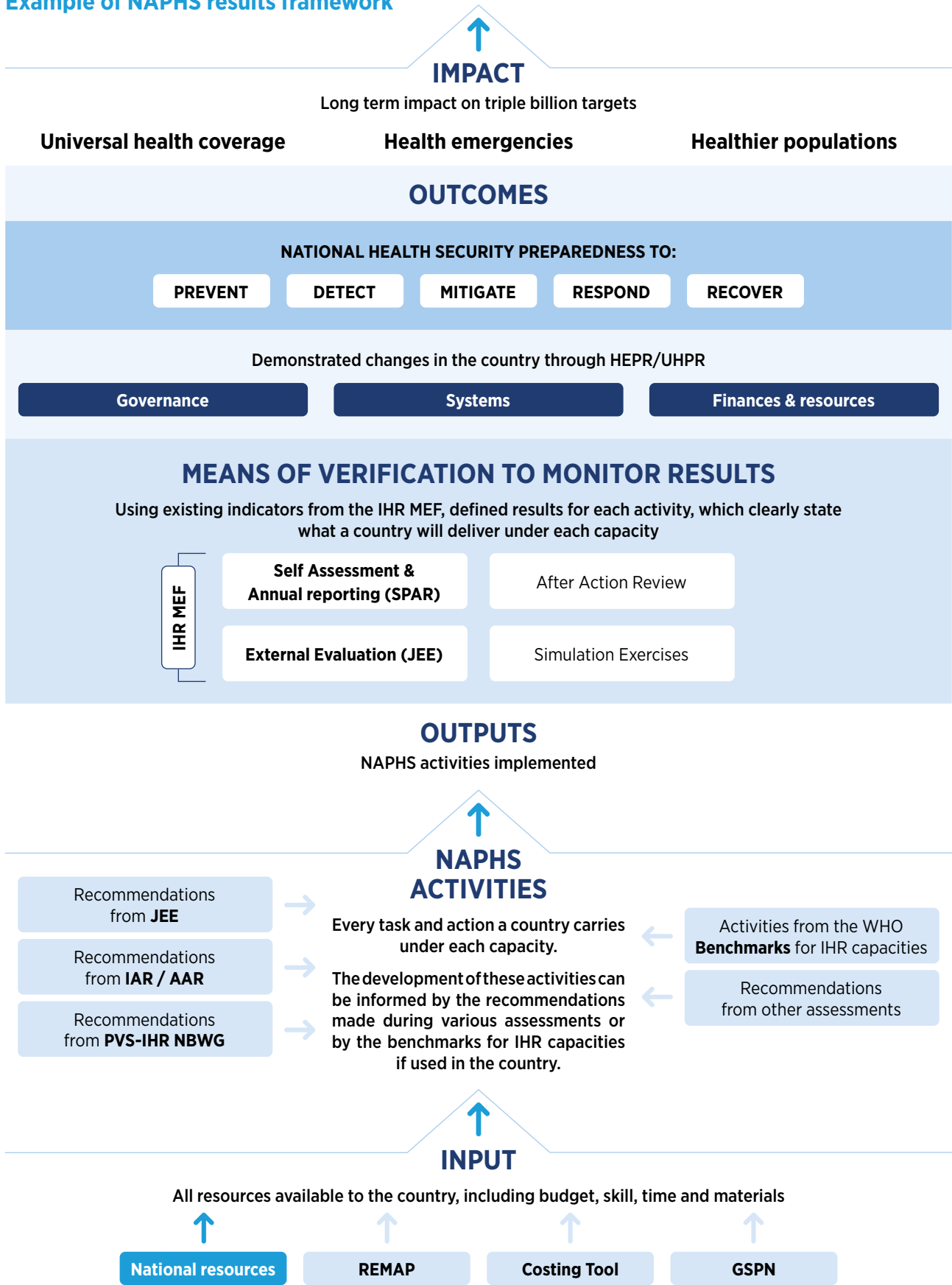
⁵ At least the ministries of health, agriculture, environment and finance need to be represented.

- 48 The NAPHS secretariat will have appropriate management support and sufficient funds allocated in a timely manner to ensure that the implementation of activities can start and that the activities are in line with the published NAPHS.
- 49 Where technical support is needed or there are funding gaps, the NAPHS secretariat can submit an official request or appeal through the NAPHS online platform. WHO shall review the country requests and, if needed, can advocate for, and increase awareness of, the officially launched proposals and can request support.

COMMUNICATION

- 50 The NAPHS strategy 2022–2026 will be rolled out alongside the NAPHS results framework and online platform through a communication plan that will be developed in consultation with Member States and regional offices. The communication plan will ensure that the strategy can be brought to the different regional governing bodies to increase awareness and develop a common understanding of the NAPHS standards, expectations and potential use.

Annex.
Example of NAPHS results framework



Findings, gaps, lessons, recommendations and assessment results (i.e., SPAR, JEE, STAR / VRAM, PVS-IHR NBWG, COVID-19 IAR, HS4HS, vertical programmes, contingency plans.)

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