

# Improving the availability of poisons centre services in Eastern Africa



Highlights from a **Feasibility Study for a Subregional Poison Centre in the Eastern Africa Subregion**, including a toolkit on setting up a poisons information service.



**World Health  
Organization**

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Improving the availability of poisons centre services in Eastern Africa: highlights from a feasibility study for a subregional poison centre in the Eastern Africa Subregion, including a toolkit on setting up a poisons information service.

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This report represents the synthesis, in summarised form, of a literature review and a series of multi-stakeholder consultations conducted through a survey and national and international workshops.

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## Abbreviations

<b>AAPCC</b>	American Association of Poison Control Centers
<b>COMESA</b>	Common Market for East and Central Africa
<b>DALYs</b>	Disability adjusted life years
<b>DaTIS</b>	Drug and Toxicology Information Service, Harare, Zimbabwe
<b>EAC</b>	East African Community
<b>EAPCCT</b>	European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists
<b>IHR (2005)</b>	International Health Regulations, 2005 revision
<b>km<sup>2</sup></b>	Square kilometre
<b>NAPCAT</b>	Network of African Poisons Centres and Applied Toxicologists
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-governmental organizations
<b>NPDS</b>	National Poison Data System
<b>NPIC</b>	National Poisons Information Centre Dublin, Ireland
<b>NZNPC</b>	New Zealand National Poisons Centre
<b>PIMC</b>	Poison Information and Management Centre, Nairobi, Kenya
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SAICM</b>	Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

## Executive summary

### 1. Background

This booklet presents a summarised synthesis of a project carried out to explore the feasibility of a subregional poisons centre in Eastern Africa. The project was initiated at the request of the SAICM Africa Core Group to address the lack of poisons centres in the region, and was funded by the SAICM Quick Start Programme. The project ran from January 2012 to December 2013.

The overall objective of the project was to find a means for improving the provision of poisons centre services in Africa.

The countries included in this study were: Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Prior to the start of the project, three poisons centres had been identified in the subregion: two in Nairobi, Kenya and one in Harare, Zimbabwe.

### 2. Introduction

Poisoning presents a significant public health burden in the subregion. In the countries covered by this study it is estimated that unintentional poisoning accounts for 16 500 deaths and 1 128 500 DALYs. This is an underestimate of the true burden of poisoning since these figures do not include self-poisoning and snakebite. It is estimated that intentional self-poisoning with pesticides causes 7800 deaths per year in the African region, and snakebite causes between 1400 and 10 000 deaths in eastern sub-Saharan Africa.

A poisons centre is a centre of expertise about chemicals and toxins and their harmful effects. As a minimum it is a poisons information service that provides emergency information, but some centres also include a toxicology laboratory and/or a clinical treatment unit. The rapid growth of the chemicals industry in

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