

Framework for action on cutaneous leishmaniasis in the Eastern Mediterranean Region 2014–2018



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Foreword

Cutaneous leishmaniasis is highly prevalent among the tropical diseases in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. The disease is endemic in 18 countries of the Region and, although not fatal, it causes immense stigma, affecting the social and economic well-being of people affected. The Region accounts for the highest burden of cutaneous leishmaniasis worldwide, with over 100 000 cases reported each year. However, the actual burden is estimated to be three to five times higher.

The disease is complex to control and treat. Variations in the parasite that causes it, the transmitting vector and the geographical distribution of the disease across the Region make it difficult for a single, ready-to-use method of control and treatment. WHO is committed to providing technical support to countries in the Region for the control of leishmaniasis, as expressed in the resolutions approved in 1993 and 2007. In this context, I am pleased to share with you the *Framework for action on cutaneous leishmaniasis in the Eastern Mediterranean Region 2014–2018*. This first standardized framework for action will make it easier for countries to monitor and evaluate progress in the efficacy of medicines and the control of the disease. It sets clear targets, which are ambitious but necessary to improve the control of the disease and its case management.

Implementation of this new strategy will have a positive impact on people's health in the Region.

Dr Ala Alwan
WHO Regional Director for
the Eastern Mediterranean

Preface

Cutaneous leishmaniasis is one of the main tropical diseases in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. The disease continues to pose a real challenge because it is difficult to control and it requires the intervention of other stakeholders in addition to the health sector. WHO has prepared the *Framework for action on cutaneous leishmaniasis in the Eastern Mediterranean Region 2014–2018* with the aim of supporting the efforts that countries devote to decreasing the impact of the disease.

This framework sets five regional targets on surveillance, case management, prevention, capacity-building and research, aimed at reducing the disease burden. It addresses how to respond to the need for cutaneous leishmaniasis control and formulates an action plan to make operational the principles and major areas of intervention. A set of indicators and forms offers a standardized tool to assist in reporting and data analysis, thus facilitating comparison between countries of the results obtained in different endemic areas and learning from each other.

The framework was developed in consultation with Member States of the Region and experts in the field. It was reviewed by national programme managers.

Introduction

Global and regional commitment to leishmaniasis control

The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has a long-term commitment to support and strengthen leishmaniasis control programmes in the endemic and most affected countries of the Region. This commitment dates back to 1993, when the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean and Member States agreed on the first major actions to be undertaken in the control of leishmaniasis, addressing the two forms of the disease: cutaneous and visceral.

Three resolutions are milestones in the evolution and stages of the commitment endorsed and shared among countries and WHO at the international and regional levels (see Annex 1):

- WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean resolution on leishmaniasis (EM/RC40/R.7), 1993;
- World Health Assembly resolution on control of leishmaniasis (WHA60.13), 2007;
- WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean resolution on neglected tropical diseases (EM/RC54/R.3), 2007, which effectively established the control of leishmaniasis within the context of neglected tropical diseases.

The global health agenda has been building an unprecedented momentum in the fight against neglected tropical diseases, including leishmaniasis. This stands as an opportunity not only to catalyse further coordination among partners but also to revise and enhance the definition of strategies and objectives in the control of leishmaniasis.

Based on evaluation of the regional and global efforts so far among countries and relevant stakeholders, this document proposes a framework for cutaneous leishmaniasis control. It shares the same evaluation of the major challenges faced by the cutaneous leishmaniasis control programmes and proposes harmonized strategies to curb the spread of cutaneous leishmaniasis and reduce the burden

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