



Senior Officials' Meeting

13 –14 June 2023

CAREC 2030: Human Development

July 2022 to June 2023

Central Asia Regional Econ





**CAREC HEALTH SECTOR
PROGRESS REPORT AND WORK PLAN
JULY 2022 - JUNE 2023**

Reference Document
Senior Officials' Meeting
Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MC	Ministerial Conference
NAPHS	National Action Planning for Health Security
RIF	Regional Investment Framework for Health 2022-2027
SOM	Senior Officials' Meeting
TA	Technical Assistance
TB	Tuberculosis
WGH	Working Group on Health

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I. KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND RESULTS

Since July 2019, the health sector of the CAREC region has made significant strides in supporting health security through increased regional cooperation. Two key accomplishments include the formulation and endorsement by the member countries of the CAREC Health Strategy 2030 and the CAREC Regional Investment Framework for Health 2022-2027 (RIF). These milestones have paved the way for agreements on priority activities and investments in the short and medium term across all the CAREC Health strategic pillars. Other key achievements during the reporting period and progress towards the CAREC Health Results Framework targets are described below.

1. Endorsement of the CAREC Regional Investment Framework for Health 2022-2027

The CAREC countries recently endorsed the CAREC RIF during the bi-annual meeting of the CAREC Working Group on Health (WGH) held on 2 March 2023. The RIF supports the implementation of the CAREC Health Strategy 2030 and aims to close the gap in effectively addressing regional needs, including protecting vulnerable populations in border areas. It serves as a tool for prioritizing investment projects and technical assistance to support regional health security and cooperation, coordinating investments by development partners, and supporting the mobilization of resources, including countries' funding.

The RIF is based on countries' emerging needs and priorities informed through country consultations and by the 2nd CAREC WGH Meeting held on 11-13 October 2022 in Tbilisi, Georgia. It also considers relevant documents such as the results of the National Action Planning for Health Security (NAPHS), the WHO Roadmap for Health and Well-being in Central Asia 2022–2025, and national assessments carried out through a regional technical assistance¹ to ensure a more aligned approach to address the region's health challenges effectively. The CAREC RIF is a country-owned living document that will be regularly updated to ensure alignment with evolving county needs and priorities. The activities proposed in the CAREC RIF range from research and studies to capacity development, piloting, and larger project investments along the CAREC Health Strategy 2030 strategic pillars. The CAREC WGH will provide implementation oversight.

2. CAREC Health events successfully conducted

The second meeting of the CAREC WGH was successfully held on 11-13 October 2022 in Tbilisi, Georgia. It brought together delegates from CAREC countries, technical experts, and representatives from development partners. The meeting provided a platform to discuss enhancing health security by leveraging innovation, digital health, and quality of care. Participants were able to prioritize and agree on joint and country-level actions to further operationalize the implementation of the CAREC Health Strategy through the refinement of the CAREC RIF.

The bi-annual CAREC WGH meeting (third meeting) was held virtually on 2 March 2023, with Georgia as the CAREC chair country. CAREC country delegates, development partner representatives, and ADB officers and consultants joined the meeting. The highlight of the event was the review and endorsement of the CAREC RIF by the CAREC countries. Agreements were

¹The ADB regional technical assistance [Addressing Regional Health Threats in CAREC and the Caucasus](#) was approved in July 2020.

also reached on the CAREC WGH arrangements and the creation of sub-working groups to oversee the implementation of activities on specific topics. The country representatives and CAREC Health Secretariat also shared updates on achievements and ongoing activities related to implementing the CAREC Health Strategy 2030.

3. Other activities implemented and forthcoming regional public goods

A series of regional webinars have been successfully conducted to strengthen health systems resilience and promote regional health cooperation. These included webinars on (i) Vaccine Hesitancy and Behaviour Change Communication, (ii) Strengthening Procurement and Supply Chain Management for possible regional collaboration, (iii) Practical Epidemiology for CAREC and Caucasus countries, (iv) Strengthening Drug Regulatory Capacity; and (v) Data standards and Interoperability as catalysts for digital health innovations and business process documentation.

The regional Technical Assistance (TA) Addressing Regional Health Threats in CAREC and the Caucasus is supporting the implementation of digital health pilots in CAREC countries. Amongst others, support is being extended to Azerbaijan to transform its sentinel surveillance system into a web-based and mobile app that can automatically aggregate, analyze and visualize data from different centres to support timely decisions for preventing, detecting, and monitoring disease outbreaks. Lessons from this pilot will be shared with countries in the region.

A regional repository of health security training and materials and a video on innovative solutions for addressing CAREC and Caucasus health threats are forthcoming. The CAREC health website has been updated and provides an overview of key milestones in the CAREC health work.

The regional TA will support selected activities under the CAREC RIF, such as a feasibility study for cross-border collaborative procurement arrangements and exploring a pilot on regional sharing of market information on selected hard-to-access medical products.

4. Key achievements and progress towards the CAREC Health Results Framework targets

The CAREC Health Results Framework sets out the indicators under each of the strategy's four pillars and crosscutting themes to capture the achievements of CAREC health cooperation. The table below provides the main results and progress from 2022 to mid-2023 under the CAREC Health Results Framework.

Goal	Indicator	2017	2022 to June 2023
Enhanced regional health security	Number of CAREC countries that incorporate joint regional approaches and cross-sector activities in their UHC (universal health coverage) and/or health sector strategies or plans	N/A	CAREC health strategy recommendations have been incorporated into Georgia's National Health Protection Strategy for 2022-2030. Uzbekistan plans to incorporate cross-border recommendations into its new health sector strategy.

Outcome	Indicator	2017	2022 to June 2023
Strengthened regional leadership, coordination, and workforce	Number of joint country activities conducted under the CAREC Health Strategy	N/A	Three WGH meetings were held during the reporting period. Webinars were also conducted on collaborative procurement and supply chains, including collaborative procurement as a regional solution. Further assessments for regional health solutions are ongoing.
	Number of health-related personnel (sex-disaggregated) trained through CAREC support to address issues related to health security	N/A	The CAREC health webinars attracted a total of 230 attendees with 187 individual participants (health-related personnel), 58% of them being women.
Improved surveillance and laboratory infrastructure	Number of CAREC countries using harmonized surveillance data and common analysis criteria	N/A	Azerbaijan and Georgia have started to exchange monthly epidemiological data for seven border districts. Plans are underway to establish a data exchange mechanism for selected Tajikistan and Uzbekistan border districts.
Increased capacity to access supplies and meet surge demands	Regional cooperation mechanism established to strengthen regulatory capacity	0	Webinars were held on regional mechanisms for strengthening drug regulatory capacity to ensure the quality of imported medicines in CAREC countries. Plans are underway to organize collaborative activities such as joint assessment of applications regarding medical products identified as common priority by national regulatory authorities.
	Number of regional procurement mechanisms developed (from information sharing to actual procurement)	0	Webinar was held to provide foundational concepts on collaborative procurement. Plans are underway to conduct a feasibility study for cross-border collaborative procurement arrangements and exploring a pilot on regional sharing of market information on selected hard-to-access medical products.
Enhanced health services for migrant groups, border communities, and vulnerable groups	Research conducted on the needs of CAREC cross-border communities and mobile populations, including women and vulnerable groups	0	A draft concept note has been developed to conduct a survey in selected border areas. Assessment of border health facilities is also being planned.
	Number of regional collaboration initiatives for cross-border support to migrants with chronic infectious diseases (e.g., TB, HIV)	0	Workshops on establishing and sharing migrant Electronic Medical Records and case referrals across borders (including for TB and HIV) are being planned.
Disaggregation of data by gender assured; specific needs of women considered in health planning and design of services and infrastructure	Research conducted on the sex-differentiated effects of the outbreaks and pandemics, especially on female health workers, female patients, and on households with female heads	0	A draft concept note has been developed to conduct a survey in selected border areas.

II. CHALLENGES AND KEY ISSUES

The composition of WGH's membership has been changing, which has presented some challenges for sustaining ongoing engagement. In light of this, an alternative operational approach was considered, involving the establishment of sub-working groups. This would entail enlisting technical professionals who hold more permanent positions within the Ministry of Health to ensure sustained engagement with CAREC.

III. WORK PROGRAM FOR 2023

The table below summarizes the planned activities and expected outputs for the rest of 2023. These activities and outputs are aligned with country priorities and are detailed in the CAREC RIF.

Strategic Pillar	Objective	Output and Activity
1: Leadership and Human Resource Capacity	Strengthen human resources for appropriate and effective health response measures	▪Develop a repository of reputable/certified training programs, institutions and materials on health security.
3: Surge Demand and Access to Supplies	Improve regional supply security by strengthening cross-country collaboration on procurement of essential public health products	▪Facilitate information sharing through the collection, compilation, analysis, and visualization of country-provided data for selected hard-to-access essential medical products as a first step toward collaborative procurement. ▪Conduct feasibility assessment on establishing regional mechanism(s) for aggregating demand, group contracting or pooled procurement of essential public health supplies.
4: Vulnerable Population Groups and Border Health	Improve understanding of border health conditions	▪Plan survey among border communities and mobile populations on their health status, needs, access to health services, and effects of outbreaks and pandemics. ▪Plan assessment of service availability and quality of selected border health facilities.
Crosscutting Theme: Digital Health	Improve technical capacities on digital health foundations	▪Conduct digital health webinars on Cybersecurity.

IV. DELIVERABLES FOR THE 2023 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

The following list provides an overview of deliverables until the end of 2023.

Deliverables	Timing (2023)	SOM/MC action
Repository of reputable/certified training programs, institutions and materials on health security.	Q3	For information
Progress report on developing regional risk management plan for health supply chains, regional sharing of market information on selected hard-to-access medical products, feasibility study for cross-border collaborative procurement arrangements.	Q4	For information
Plan and tools for the survey among border communities and mobile populations on their health status, needs, access to health services, and effects of outbreaks and pandemics.	Q4	For information
Plan and tools for the assessment of service availability and quality of selected border health facilities.	Q4	For information