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Date: 26 May 2020

Ms Tamar Gabunia
First Deputy Minister
National Counterpart
Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the
Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social
Affairs
144, Ak. Tsereteli Ave.
0119 Tbilisi
Georgia

Dear Ms Gabunia,

Monitoring essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic – rapid assessment

Health systems are being confronted with rapidly increasing demand generated by the COVID-19 outbreak. The World Health Organization provides technical assistance to its Member States in defining the actions to maintain access to essential quality health services for all.

Within this context, it is important to rapidly determine if countries have implemented plans to ensure continuity of essential health services and how they are being impacted during the pandemic from initial response through to recovery. It will also be critically important to ensure that countries continue to monitor trends in COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 mortality and morbidity and to ensure that they are continuously assessing impact on health services utilization and service coverage. A number of key performance indicators for monitoring selected essential health services and systems have now been included in the draft COVID-19 monitoring and evaluation framework under the health services and system pillar, including immunization and facility births as proxies for measuring impact on health services, as well as a third indicator that assesses whether countries have identified essential health services to be maintained during the pandemic.

In this regard, we would be grateful for your collaboration in two interrelated activities:

1. **Facilitate responses to a short number of questions** relating to your country's essential service package and any notable disruptions. This survey developed by the WHO headquarters is forwarded to all WHO Member States worldwide. It can support decision makers by rapidly establishing a baseline that identifies where the greatest challenges and priority needs are in order to better target resources and investment throughout the course of the pandemic, while also contributing to the assessment of COVID-19 health systems response globally. Given its cross-cutting nature, the survey has been developed in collaboration between WHO headquarters and regional colleagues. Its completion will similarly benefit from a coordinated approach by country office health systems focal points in collaboration with other country office technical focal points and Ministries of Health.

(NB See survey: <https://extranet.who.int/dataform/331481?token=37555447>)

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2. **Advise on the feasibility of collecting and facilitate access to routine health information systems data** from Ministries of Health on a small number of indicators (on a regular disaggregated basis) relating to service utilization, such as OPD attendance and health facility discharges, and coverage of essential tracer services. This will allow monitoring trends in utilization and provision of services in comparison to previous years which will be critical for planning and implementing the recovery through to the post-epidemic phase. The approach aims to avoid any new or additional data collection by countries, and provide timely, interpretable trends to support countries in planning and targeting of resources towards maintenance of essential services.

We believe this data and analysis will be critical to support Member States' efforts to respond to COVID-19 as well as to make the case for investment in the "recovery" phase, strengthening essential services and health systems by informing prioritization of country needs and technical assistance requirements over the coming months.

I would be grateful if you facilitate responses to the enclosed questionnaire **by 15 June 2020**.

If you have any queries or questions regarding the above two matters, please contact EHSmonitoring@who.int

We understand the current constraints on your time and pressure on your office and we highly appreciate your collaboration.

Yours very truly,



Dr Natasha Azzopardi Muscat
Director
Division of Country Health Policies and Systems

Encls:

Questionnaire preview– Rapid assessment of continuity of essential health services during the COVID–19 pandemic

Copy for information to:

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