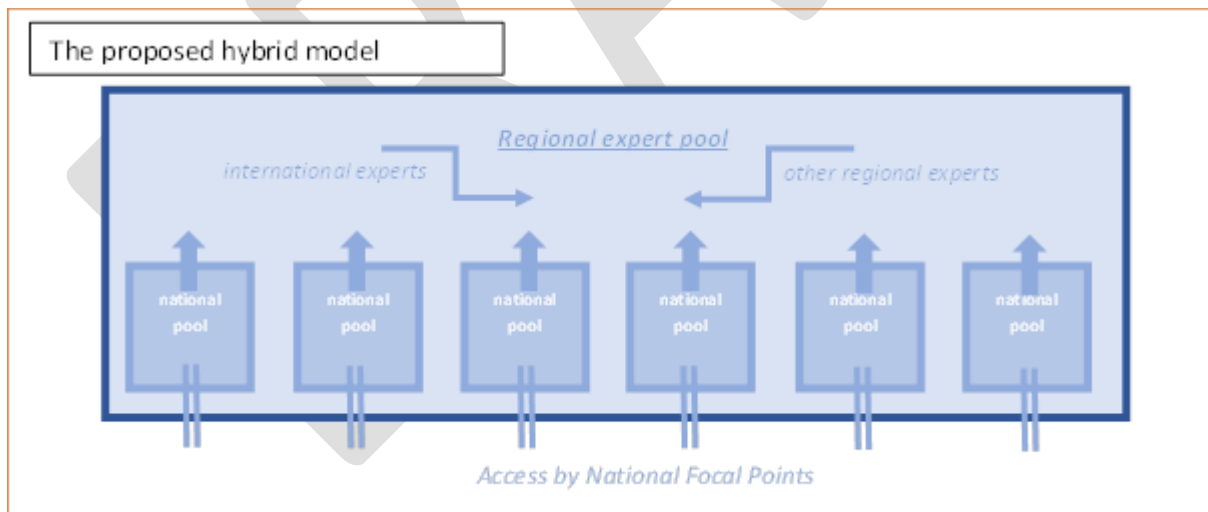




EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

Standard Operating Procedure Establishing a Regional Pool of Rapidly Deployable Experts ("Regional Pool") in the EAC




Graphic: © Timothy Wesonga/SEEG

One Region – One Vision – One Health

Standard Operating Procedure

Establishment of a Regional Pool of Rapidly Deployable Experts ('Regional Pool') in the EAC

	EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY	EAC/HEALTH/OH/	
		Dept.:	Section
	DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH	Issue	
		Revision	
Version	1.0 (as of 21.09.2018)		
Ratified	To Be Determined (TBD)		
Authors	Dr Sybille Rehmet, Julia Gering and participants of the “Workshop on the development of a standard operating procedure (SOP) for establishing a pool of rapidly deployable experts as part of a regional deployment mechanism”, 27-29 June 2018, Arusha, Tanzania		
Responsible committee	Technical Working Group on Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases		
Date of Issue	TBD		
Review Date	TBD		
Impact Assessment Date	TBD (Evaluation)		

Version History	Reviewing Committee	Date
1.0	Participants of the “Workshop on the development of a SOP for establishing a pool of rapidly deployable experts	21.09.2018

Annex 8:

Content

- 1 Introduction 4
 - 1.1 Establishment of a Regional Pool of Rapidly Deployable Experts in the EAC4
 - 1.2 EAC workshop on the development of a standard operating procedure (SOP) for a regional pool 4
 - 1.3 Responsible structure(s) at EAC level 6
 - 1.4 Responsible structure(s) at Partner State level 6
 - 1.5 Purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) 6
 - 1.6 Scope of this SOP 6
 - 1.7 Target audience 6
- 2 First Step: Launch of initial processes at the political level 7
 - 2.1 Tasks and responsibilities 7
- 3 Second Step: Technical establishment and administration 7
 - 3.1 Tasks and responsibilities 7
 - 3.2 Funding strategy for the regional pool 8
 - 3.3 Administrative procedures 9
 - 3.4 Triggers for the regional pool..... 9
 - 3.5 Stockpile..... 10
- 4 Third Step: Development of the database (IT solution) 10
 - 4.1 Tasks and responsibilities 10
- 5 Fourth Step: Identification of experts and inclusion into the regional pool..... 11
 - 5.1 Tasks and responsibilities 11

1 Introduction

1.1 Establishment of a Regional Pool of Rapidly Deployable Experts in the EAC

The region of the East African Community (EAC) is prone to outbreaks of infectious diseases, which can significantly affect public health, the lives and livelihoods of the people in the region and economic stability. The EAC region has learned some important lessons from the Ebola epidemic 2014/2016 in West Africa. One of them is that better preparedness is needed as well as a pool of rapidly deployable experts to address public health emergencies fast and efficiently from the very beginning. Another lesson is that the fight against infectious diseases needs a multi-disciplinary 'One Health' approach to be effective, as adopted by the EAC Sectoral Council of Ministers of Health in April 2014.

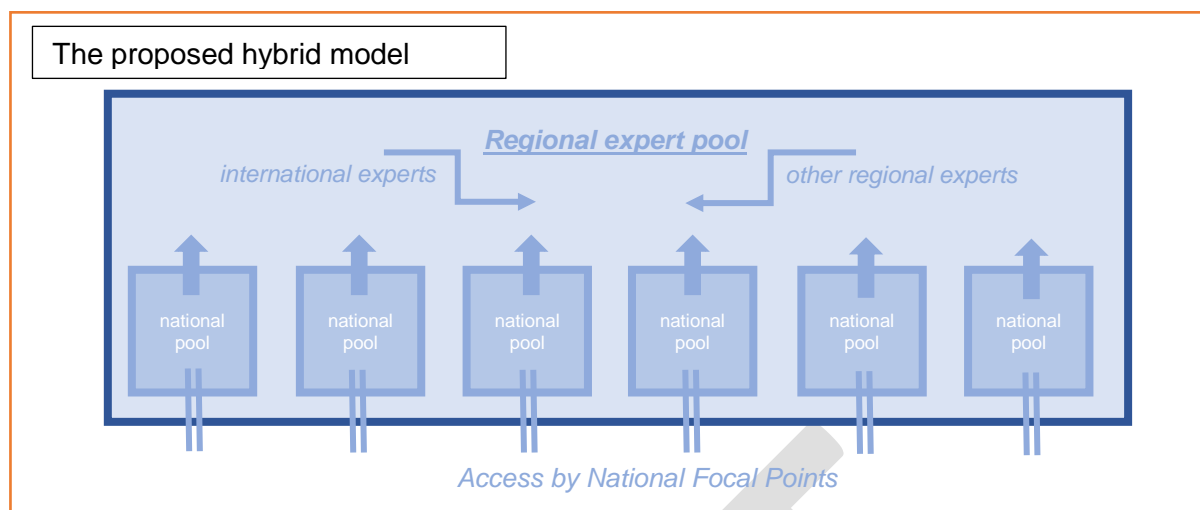
The EAC Secretariat has an advisory and coordinating role for the EAC Partner States when it comes to Pandemic Preparedness. The "EAC Regional Contingency Plan for Epidemics due to Communicable Diseases, Conditions and other Events of Public Health Concern in short "Regional Contingency Plan" is the core document for prevention and response in the region. It claims the establishment of a regional pool (database) of rapidly deployable experts (in short "regional pool") as an important means of timely regional response to outbreaks of infectious diseases of public health concern in East Africa and as a core element of the EAC crisis management structure.

1.2 EAC workshop on the development of a standard operating procedure (SOP) for a regional pool

The EAC convened a "Workshop on the development of a standard operating procedure (SOP) for establishing a pool of rapidly deployable experts as part of a regional deployment mechanism" from 27-29 June 2018 in Arusha, Tanzania. Among other objectives, the workshop aimed at jointly working out the steps that are necessary to establish such a pool.

Both, the representatives from the EAC Secretariat and the Partner States (Burundi, Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda), clearly saw the need for a regional pool as part of the regional crisis management structure of the Regional Contingency Plan. Some Partner States have contact lists of rapidly deployable experts in place, but none is yet using an online data-base. Against this backdrop, participants discussed different scenarios for a regional pool and mutually agreed on establishing a so called "hybrid" or interlinking model that combines (existing) national expert pools with an overarching regional pool. As Partner States do not yet have technical (IT) solutions for national experts pools in place, it was recommended to establish a regional (online) solution, which can also be used for national pools. Thus, the EAC Secretariat and Partner States would both benefit from the regional tool.

Annex 8:



The design of a proposed future regional database should:

- Assess existing national expert databases and offer an IT solution for establishing and aligning national expert pools;
- Explore possible links with expert pools of regional and international organisations and partners (e.g. ECOWAS, AU, WHO (AFRO, GOARN), OIE (regional office), FAO).

With regard to roles and responsibilities participants of the meeting in Arusha proposed the following:

- The EAC Secretariat should take the lead in the overall establishment of the regional pool and should foster consultations and collaboration with the Partner States to ensure participation and ownership.
- Partner States should identify national experts with suitable expertise for the regional pool based on a joint assessment of qualifications, skills and competencies according to predefined criteria/profiles. The final decision on the inclusion of national experts in the regional pool should be taken at the regional level.
- The EAC Secretariat should be responsible for administrative issues and human resources management as well as for the basic training of experts included in the regional pool, pre-deployment training, technical training for specific situations, refreshers and drills and simulation exercises.
- Partner States should provide continuous training and capacity building of national rapid response teams (RRTs) as part of their preparedness plans.
- General logistics should be the responsibility of the EAC Secretariat. Logistics for deployment and during operations should be shared between the hosting countries and the regional level.
- Advocacy including the sustainable resources is the joint responsibility of all stakeholders involved.
- Monitoring and internal evaluation should be in the responsibility of the EAC Secretariat, while the external evaluation should be done through Partner States and participation of international bodies such as WHO, FAO and OIE when applicable.

Once operational, the regional pool of rapidly deployable experts shall strengthen the regional response to Public Health Emergencies (PHEs), provide complementary expertise and support to Partner States. It will foster coordination, collaboration and capacity development for rapid response among the Partner States and between them and the EAC Secretariat.

1.3 Responsible structure(s) at EAC level

Participants of the workshop recommended the establishment of a permanent core team within the EAC crisis management structure to operationalise the regional pool. The core team should identify the relevant EAC Secretariat staff needed to implement the diverse tasks related to the establishment and implementation of the regional pool. The core team should also pursue the buy-in of the relevant structures at EAC level, within the Partner States and of international stakeholders / development partners to foster mutual agreements and commitment.

Participants called upon the EAC Secretariat to support the establishment of the core team and to nominate the member and equip them according to their tasks in case of approval.

1.4 Responsible structure(s) at Partner State level

Participants called upon Partner States to support the creation and implementation of a regional pool, which is linked to the national levels, as national and regional levels would equally benefit from this pool in their preparedness endeavours. Partner States were invited to identify their respective national structures and to agree to and support the nomination of staff, funding and equipment for a regional core team within the EAC crisis management structure.

1.5 Purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

This SOP provides guidance on key issues that need to be considered when establishing and implementing a regional pool of rapidly deployable experts (check list). It describes the processes of and necessary steps for the establishment and implementation of a regional pool of rapidly deployable experts for public health events (PHE) within the framework of relevant strategic plans for public health emergencies in the EAC, especially with the Regional Contingency Plan.

1.6 Scope of this SOP

This document describes the roles and responsibilities that come along with the task and how they can be shared between the EAC Secretariat, Partner States and other relevant actors. It identifies and breaks down steps which are necessary to start and continue the process:

- I. Initial processes at the political level;
- II. First technical and administrative activities;
- III. Creation of a database, and
- IV. Identification of experts and inclusion into the pool.

1.7 Target audience

This procedure is relevant to the respective

- Structures at the EAC Secretariat responsible for preparedness and response to PHEs under consideration of the One Health approach,

Annex 8:

- Structures in the Partner States responsible for preparedness and response to PHEs under consideration of the One Health approach, and
- International and developmental partners.

2 First Step: Launch of initial processes at the political level

The planned regional pool is anchored in the Regional Contingency Plan, and as such part of the regional crisis management structure. The political and financial commitment of the Partner States / EAC is the driving force behind the creation of the regional pool, and the appropriate steps and procedures within the EAC will ensure this engagement.

2.1 Tasks and responsibilities

Task	Responsible		
1	Get the political and financial buy-in by and ownership of the EAC Secretariat, Partner States and international / developmental partners for the establishment of the regional expert pool.	EAC Secretariat	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Achieve a mutual agreement on the interaction of the regional pool with national response mechanisms and national expert pools / databases.	EAC Secretariat, Partner States	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Ownership by and engagement of the EAC Secretariat and all Partner States and relevant stakeholders throughout the process of developing the regional pool is crucial.	EAC Secretariat, Partner States	<input type="checkbox"/>

3 Second Step: Technical establishment and administration

In order to guarantee efficient actions in case of emergencies, especially rapid deployment at short notice, lean and efficient procedures and the necessary structures must be in place. The regional structure with its coordinating function needs to ensure that all parties potentially involved in cross-border and multi-sectorial activities collaborate and provide the necessary prerequisites for smooth operations. Sustainable funding needs to be addressed right at the beginning in order to apply for additional funding from development and international partners with a clear project plan.

3.1 Tasks and responsibilities

Task	Responsible		
4	Convene a preparatory meeting to share the politically approved SOP and initiate the relevant process (roadmap) with all relevant national and regional stakeholders.	EAC Secretariat	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Review the proposed model/IT solution (for	EAC Secretariat, Partner	<input type="checkbox"/>

5	example the Hybrid Model on page 3) for the regional pool, revise model and/or elaborate alternatives.	States	
6	Elaborate and consolidate the approved model/IT solution for and key content of the regional pool and its (possible) linkages to existing national pools. Consider aligning and / or developing national pools, when there is as yet no pool in place.	EAC Secretariat, Partner States and all other relevant stakeholders / decision makers	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Agree on timelines (roadmap), mandates and responsibilities for the next steps	EAC Secretariat, Partner States and relevant stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Identify, nominate and assign staff for core team (incl. terms of reference) that is in charge of establishing the regional pool.	EAC Secretariat and Partner States	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Explore possible synergies with relevant national, regional and international structures working on the same topic, and consider launching cooperations.	Core team	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Develop materials and tools for advocacy and (official) communication about the final working model of the regional pool and further process for establishment.	Core team	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Prepare a written agreement on the establishment and structure of the regional pool (e.g. memorandum of understanding) between EAC and Partner States, as well as with other relevant stakeholders.	Core team, EAC Secretariat and Partner States	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.2 Funding strategy for the regional pool

To identify and secure a sufficient budget to establish the regional pool and cover the costs for maintenance at an early stage is crucial. Therefore, the following opportunities should be verified by the core team in correspondence with relevant decision makers at all levels:

- Investigate funding opportunities within the existing EAC budget and / or allocate funding for maintenance at national levels (e.g. running costs);
- Approach development and international partners for funding the development of the regional pool (with an existing project plan / strategy);
- Advocate for fixed lines in national budgets and / or treasury of EAC Partner States;
- Explore the possibility to create a fund which is rapidly accessible in emergencies
- Agree on sources of funding for deployments / missions (see part V).

Annex 8:

3.3 Administrative procedures

As a key principle, resource efficiency should guide the development of procedures and processes to minimize staff, budget and effort needed. Therefore, the identification of key administrative procedures should focus in a first step on the administrative prerequisites for the inclusion of experts into the database and the definition of the phases before, during and after deployment. Afterwards, the core team should identify the relevant structures (at the EAC Secretariat) to develop new procedures, where needed, and to adapt existing procedures wherever possible. All decisions and steps should be translated into standards and templates accordingly.

Examples for administrative procedures and human resources management issues to be considered include but are not limited to issues of

- remuneration of experts and allowances during deployment including procedures,
- responsibilities and budget,
- templates for the contract and deployment,
- clarification of logistics for rapid deployment and procedures necessary
 - security clearance,
 - visa,
 - transportation/booking and reservation,
 - anchor points/contacts in the Partner States,
 - lines of communication, etc.
- insurance for experts,
- procedures, responsibilities and budget for medical check-up,
- immunisation before deployment
- medical care during and after deployment,
- medical evacuation,
- structures for psychosocial support of experts during and after deployment

3.4 Triggers for the regional pool

The core team has to develop proposals for possible triggers for activation of the regional expert pool in differentiation to national responsibilities and sovereignty of the Partner States as well as other exiting deployment mechanisms. The EAC Secretariat and Partner States have to approve the triggers.

Beforehand, an agreement on decision-making processes for deployment should be reached among all involved stakeholders and / or an algorithm to determine the steps to be taken in case of a positive deployment decision developed.

Possible triggers for the activation of the regional pool may include, but are not limited to:

- Surpassing of national thresholds for communicable diseases;
- Newly emerging and re-emerging diseases;

- Public Health Events of International Concern (PHEIC);
- Rumours, alerts from media monitoring.

Triggers for the deployment of expert (team) from the regional pool may be (not exhaustive):

- Official request of a single or of multiple Partner State(s) for support in a situation where the national capacities are either insufficient (lacking specific expertise) or overwhelmed;
- Public health events affecting more than one country and / or a disease outbreak, which exceeds a pre-defined threshold in agreement with national, regional and international regulations.

3.5 Stockpile

To maintain a regional stockpile and pre-position critical supplies for outbreak response, the development of an emergency procurement SOP is crucial. Therefore, the most suitable premises and location for the stockpile (e.g. close to an international airport with easy access) should be identified. Further, a functional emergency stockpile needs agreed responsibilities, procurement procedures, staffing and funding:

- To define what needs to be provisioned in the stockpile (e.g. PPE, medication computers, technical equipment) and ways and logistics of deployment from stockpile (by air, land or others);
- To equip the stockpile;
- To maintain the stockpile up to date and functioning;
- To release the stockpile in case of deployment; and
- To check the returned equipment after deployment.

4 Third Step: Development of the database (IT solution)

The database, as described in the introductory chapter, shall be an interlinked database for both national and regional expert pools, thus securing the interoperability of the systems within the EAC, the transmissibility of data from national to regional level, and smooth operations and maintenance. It needs to incorporate already existing national solutions, and must be robust and flexible to be easily adapted to new challenges and potential expansions.

4.1 Tasks and responsibilities

Task		Responsible	
12	Develop and agree on requirement for structure of the database / IT solution and the (technical) interlinkage between the regional and national pools to ensure interoperability. Focus on a flexible and robust solution.	Core team in consultation with EAC Secretariat and Partner States	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Identify funding for the development and maintenance of the database.	Core team in consultation with EAC Secretariat and Partner States	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Develop terms of reference and agree on responsibilities for the development of the data-	Core team	<input type="checkbox"/>

Annex 8:

	base.		
15	Identify and contract an ICT specialist with the appropriate qualifications to develop the IT database, to test the database and its interoperability and to write the user manual.	EAC Secretariat	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	Launch the database.	EAC Secretariat and PSs	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	Maintain and update the database and overall IT-system.	EAC Secretariat and PSs	<input type="checkbox"/>

5 Fourth Step: Identification of experts and inclusion into the regional pool

The identification and inclusion of experts into the regional pool is a collaborative effort of the national and regional structures. The Partner States identify experts from their national databases and through calls for expressions of interest in the countries; the evaluation of the applications should be done jointly by PSs and EAC Secretariat according to pre-defined sets of skills and competencies which are reflected in profiles for core expertise needed. The final decision about the suitability of an applicant for the regional pool is taken at regional level.

Part of the establishment and the maintenance of the expert pool is the provision of training for the experts, and the identification, revision and adaption or the development of suitable training materials, guidelines, and other relevant documents.

5.1 Tasks and responsibilities

Task	Responsible		
18	Develop and agree on profiles for experts with different expertise to be included in the regional pool according to core competencies and skills necessary for different scenarios of outbreaks and emergencies to be expected in the EAC	Core team, EAC Secretariat, Partner States	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	Develop generic and specific terms of reference for the different profiles in case of deployment	Core team	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	Identify additional competencies and skills of experts, which can complement the core competencies and skills, and can be found e.g. in research institutions or international institutions	Core team, EAC Secretariat, Partner States	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	Develop procedures for the application, the evaluation and the feedback process for experts for the regional pool	Core team	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	Draft a call for expression of interest for experts for the regional pool to be launched by Partner States	Core team	<input type="checkbox"/>
23	Assess and select experts	Core team / EAC Secretariat	<input type="checkbox"/>

24	Include the assessed and selected experts into the regional database	Core team	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	Ensure regular update of contact information and qualifications	Partner States, core team	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	Develop a training plan for experts in the regional expert pool	Core team	<input type="checkbox"/>
27	Develop, review and revise training materials	Core team	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Approved by	Authorised by
Designation		
Name		
Signature		
Date		