



## Concept Note

### Strengthening Cross-border Collaboration and Information-sharing Regional Meeting – Southern Africa

12 – 16 September  
Cape Town, South Africa

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#### Background

Population movement influences the spread of communicable diseases and affects the capabilities of public health systems in neighbouring countries, requiring the establishment and maintenance of cross-border collaboration in order to improve co-ordination and communication. With the goal to advance strategies for cross-border information sharing and coordination, eight member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as along with other regional bodies continue to define regional, bi-, and multilateral frameworks and operational guidance for cross-border collaboration. There is sustained value in conducting a multinational meeting to work towards achieving this goal.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this 8-country regional meeting in September 2022 is to facilitate dedicated time for countries to align border health and mobility surveillance strategies to strengthen regional cross-border public health information-sharing and improve coordinated public health surveillance, communication, preparedness, and response across southern Africa.

#### Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this meeting are to:

- define expectations for a protocol or tool for sharing border health and mobility-related surveillance data for priority communicable diseases building on:
  - cross-border collaboration strategies defined during the 20 – 24 June regional meeting
  - a country comparison of case definitions for selected communicable disease(s) and related example surveillance datasets
- enhance operational strategies for cross-border collaboration guided by:
  - a review of consolidated country-provided information on national and regional cross-border movement dynamics to identify regions for enhanced cross-border collaboration
  - development of a template for cross-border meetings to ensure aligned expectations are reflected and achievable
- develop a white paper to highlight best practices for strengthening border health systems across the region

## Expected outcomes

The following outcomes are expected to be achieved:

- A draft protocol or tool for sharing border health and mobility-related surveillance data for priority communicable diseases that can be integrated into existing or under-development regional frameworks
- A report from and recommendations to address cross-border discordance identified through the regional analysis of a priority case definition(s) and structure of related surveillance dataset(s).
- A draft regional template for cross-border meetings that incorporates shared expectations across the participating countries
- A draft white paper highlighting best practices for strengthening regional border health systems

## Methodology

The meeting will comprise of:

- Country presentations
- Working group sessions
- Plenary sessions

### Country presentations

Countries will present their inputs on the following topics:

- Surveillance methods at points of entry
- Mobility data in the national public health system
- Case definition(s) and associated surveillance data structure for priority communicable disease(s) identified through outputs from the 20 – 24 June meeting (to be shared with delegates prior to the September meeting)

### Working group sessions

Working group sessions will be organised to facilitate country- and regional- level contribution to:

- crafting harmonized tool elements for POE and mobility data collection to facilitate more efficient cross-border collaboration
- analyzing the design of case definition(s) and surveillance dataset(s) to identify concordance and discordance and associated recommendations for strategies to sustain cross-border information sharing and collaboration
- developing cross-border meeting guidance documents
- crafting a white paper on best practices for border health system strengthening
- developing an action plan to validate, disseminate, and operationalise the draft procedures and tools.

Each working group session will be followed by plenary sessions to synthesise the group results.

## Participants

Participants would consist of a delegation of five representatives per country from Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, including:

Three representatives from Ministries of Health as determined by the respective countries, such as:

- Director General of Health or Chief Medical Officer
- Point-of-entry (PoE) Focal Point
- National IHR Focal Point
- One Health Focal Point
- Head of Surveillance
- Emergency Operations Centre Incident Managers

One representative from the Ministry responsible for Animal Health.

One government representative from non-health sectors of each country, such as Immigration and Home Affairs departments.

In addition to the five delegates from each country, up to two representatives will be invited from each identified stakeholder in the region, such as:

- Africa CDC
- Southern African Development Community (SADC)
- East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- World Health Organization (WHO)

## Logistics

### Venue and date

The meeting will be convened by U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Health System Trust (HST) in partnership with the Ministries of Health of Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The five-day meeting will take place from 12 to 16 September 2022, in Cape Town, South Africa. In-person participation is preferred. However, information to access the meeting virtually will be provided to those who are unable to join in person.

### Meeting outputs

The meeting organisers – CDC and HST – will consolidate and process the meeting outputs and develop a final report within one month of the meeting having been held. The country delegations will be provided access to the consolidated information.

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