



GLOBAL TASK FORCE ON  
**CHOLERA CONTROL**

9th meeting of the Epidemiology Working Group  
of the Global Taskforce on Cholera Control (GTCC)

21 - 23 May 2024

## Foreword & contents

The global cholera situation has worsened in recent years, with WHO declaring cholera a grade 3 emergency at the global level in 2023. In this context, improved surveillance is critical to identifying, confirming, and monitoring cholera outbreaks to better guide response measures and mid to long strategies against cholera.

This report offers a high-level summary of the 9th Meeting of the Epidemiology Working Group of the Global Taskforce on Cholera Control (GTFCC), which was held in Cairo, Egypt, on 21-23 May 2024.

This meeting brought together technical experts, GTFCC partners, countries, and regions and was an opportunity to present the progress of the Epidemiology Working Group of the GTFCC and to discuss the way forward to continue to strengthen cholera surveillance to better inform multisectoral strategies to End cholera.

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## 1. Overview of progress of the GTFCC Epidemiology Working Group

Over the period June 2023 - May 2024, the Epidemiology Working Group achieved significant milestones in the publication of technical resources, including:

- **2024 GTFCC recommendations for cholera surveillance**

Revised guidance on cholera surveillance was published together with supporting tools [\[here\]](#). It was developed in coordination with the Laboratory Working Group and includes updated case and outbreak definitions, minimum case-based data to be collected on any suspected cholera case, and guidance to adapt surveillance and testing strategies depending on the cholera situation at the local level. Supporting tools include a template cholera case report form, an example of a cholera line list (Excel format), a template community-based surveillance reporting form, a template cholera case investigation form, an Excel tool for calculating weekly cholera incidence thresholds to detect the deterioration of cholera outbreaks, and template epidemiological reports. Strengthening cholera surveillance in accordance with this guidance is essential for the early detection and rapid response to outbreaks and for monitoring outbreaks to inform multisectoral strategies to control and eliminate cholera.

- **GTFCC method to assess cholera surveillance**

A method for countries to self-assess their cholera surveillance system/strategies against the 2024 GTFCC recommendations for cholera surveillance was published [\[here\]](#). It aims to help countries identify in a systematic manner areas for improvement to strengthen their surveillance for cholera.

- **GTFCC methods to identify Priority Areas for Multisectoral Interventions (PAMIs)**

- **Identification of PAMIs to develop an NCP for cholera control**

This aims to maximize the use of surveillance data for cholera-affected countries to develop or revise a National Cholera Plan (NCP) for cholera control. The corresponding package of resources [\[here\]](#) includes a guidance document, an Excel tool, an user guide of the Excel tool, a data model template to import data into the Excel tool, training datasets, and a template report on PAMI identification.

- **Identification of PAMIs to develop an NCP for cholera elimination**

This aims to assess vulnerability factors for cholera (re)emergence for countries with limited to no cholera outbreaks to develop or revise an NCP for cholera elimination. The corresponding package of resources [\[here\]](#) includes a guidance document, an Excel tool, an user guide of the Excel tool, a data model template to import data into the Excel tool, a training dataset, and a template report on PAMI identification.

- **Information products to orient countries on PAMI identification**

Introductory resources to orient countries identifying PAMIs were published [\[here\]](#) including a FAQ and infographics on the purpose of PAMI identification and on the methods to identify PAMIs.

- **Launch of GTFCC PAMI reviews**

PAMI identification is crucial for countries to target effective strategies against cholera and is a prerequisite for accessing Oral Cholera Vaccine and for the GTFCC endorsement of NCPs. To provide countries with independent technical feedback on their PAMIs, mechanisms and internal SOPs were developed for a roster of members of the Epidemiology Working Group to conduct reviews of PAMI identifications [\[here\]](#). PAMI reviews were completed in two pilot countries which reported having received useful and appreciated feedback.

## 2. Perspectives for regional dynamics to foster the strengthening of cholera surveillance

The technical material developed by the GTFCC Epidemiology Working Group provide robust foundations to strengthen cholera surveillance in-country. Supporting their operationalization in-country is key.

The adoption in-country of the GTFCC method to identify PAMIs to develop an NCP for cholera control released in Q2 2023 is encouraging in this regard. One year after publication, this method was successfully implemented in six GTFCC target countries and PAMI identification is ongoing or planned in 13 additional countries. The WHO Regional Offices, the GTFCC Country Support Platform (CSP), and the broader network of GTFCC partners have played a key role in relaying this GTFCC PAMI method to countries.

On the other hand, presentations from countries and experience sharing between countries at the meeting also outlined the diversity of contexts in which surveillance for cholera is operated and the variety of challenges ahead to operationalize cholera surveillance in accordance with GTFCC recommendations.

It is crucial to establish channels to support in-country adoption and operationalization of GTFCC recommendations. Regional initiatives are expected to play a key role in this effort. Discussions were initiated through regional brainstorming sessions on the way forward and challenges ahead in each region. Notably, initiatives coordinated at a regional level may:

- encourage and support countries to identify PAMIs;
- encourage countries to assess their cholera surveillance using the GTFCC self-assessment method;
- bring together the findings of these assessments in multiple countries to identify common gaps and determine the best strategies to address them;
- foster weekly cholera reporting to the regional & global levels;
- provide feedback on the GTFCC guidance/products for the consideration of the Working Group for continuous improvement as well as relay needs from countries that the Working Group could help address.

### 3. Priorities for the GTFCC Epidemiology Working Group

The Epidemiology Working Group having achieved significant milestones in the development of the technical recommendations. the next priority **over the period June 2024 - June 2025** is to develop material for their uptake and operationalization, including through communication and training.

- **Promote and build capacities for the strengthening of surveillance in accordance with the 2024 GTFCC recommendations**
  - Disseminate, raise awareness, and promote the 2024 GTFCC recommendations for cholera surveillance

**Publish** the 2024 GTFCC recommendations for cholera surveillance, accompanying tools and method for countries to self-assess their cholera surveillance in **multiple languages** (Arabic, French, Portuguese).

**Update GTFCC resources** addressing cholera surveillance to ensure alignment with the 2024 GTFCC recommendations for cholera surveillance (including and not limited to the GTFCC App and the GTFCC Outbreak Manual).

Produce short **video clips** to communicate key concepts and emphasize benefits for countries of undertaking cholera surveillance in accordance with the 2024 GTFCC recommendations.

Publish a commentary or short report in the **scientific literature** on the importance of strengthening cholera surveillance and key concepts and benefits of undertaking cholera surveillance in accordance with the 2024 GTFCC recommendations.

- **Build capacities on the 2024 GTFCC recommendations for cholera surveillance**

Develop **online training courses** on the 2024 GTFCC recommendations for cholera surveillance directed to stakeholders implementing cholera surveillance in-country (e.g., one course for health care workers and one course for health authorities).

Develop summary **information products** on the 2024 GTFCC recommendations for cholera surveillance directed to stakeholders implementing cholera surveillance in-country (e.g., health facility workers, health authorities).

- **Facilitate the implementation of the 2024 GTFCC recommendations for cholera surveillance**

Support a WHO led project on the definition of harmonized **data standards** to guide the future development of (open source) **interoperable electronic surveillance tools** aligned with the recommendations for data collection of the 2024 GTFCC recommendations.

Depending on practical needs expressed by countries, develop a **user-friendly tool/platform for countries to self-assess their cholera surveillance** using the GTFCC assessment method.

- **Build capacities for the identification of PAMIs in accordance with the GTFCC PAMIs methods, guide countries identifying PAMIs, and maximize the use of PAMI identification beyond the country level**
  - **Build capacities for PAMI identification**

**Publish** information products to orient countries on PAMI identification in **multiple languages** (Arabic, French, Portuguese).

Develop **online training courses** on PAMI identification (introductory course on PAMI identification, GTFCC method to identify PAMIs to develop an NCP for cholera control, GTFCC method to identify PAMIs to develop an NCP for cholera elimination, use of GTFCC Excel tools to identify PAMIs to develop an NCP for cholera control or for cholera elimination).

- **Guide countries identifying PAMIs**

Perform (upon country request) **independent technical reviews of PAMI identification** to provide feedback to countries on the use of the GTFCC methods for PAMI identification.

Based on pilots, assess whether the GTFCC methods for PAMI identification require to be adapted for use in **countries facing cholera re-emergence** after a period of interrupted transmission and, if so, develop **technical guidance for PAMI identification** in that particular context.

- **Maximize the use of PAMI identification beyond the country level**

Coordinate with countries to **publish identified PAMIs on the GTFCC website** to inform neighbouring countries of cross-border risks and support the broader GTFCC community in advocacy and project design.

- **Foster harmonized cholera reporting to the regional and global levels**
  - **Set standard recommendations for cholera reporting to the regional and global levels**

Publish updated **standard recommendations for cholera reporting to the regional and global levels** in an aim to simplify previous GTFCC recommendations and foster harmonization whilst accommodating different reporting capacities.

- **Advocate for the continuation of efforts to improve global surveillance**

Continue to advocate on the importance of **sustaining global cholera surveillance and the routine dissemination of information products** on the global cholera situation.

## 4. Conclusion

The current global cholera situation requires a renewed commitment from all stakeholders to invest in and deploy a multifaceted, multisectoral approach to detecting, containing, and preventing cholera. Critical to this is the first line of defence against cholera: surveillance.

The technical material developed by the GTFCC Epidemiology Working Group set out on technical grounds the way forward to strengthen cholera surveillance.

To progress towards achieving the Global Roadmap goals, accelerated efforts are required to support countries in the adoption and operationalization of these technical recommendations while taking into account local contexts and challenges to be overcome. In that perspective, regional initiatives and dynamics are anticipated to play a leading role.

Meanwhile, the lessons learned from this operationalization in-country are anticipated to feed into the GTFCC Working Group work for the continuous improvement of technical standards that are actionable in the field, meet countries' needs and take into account operational challenges in a pragmatic manner.

To that end, annual meetings of the GTFCC Epidemiology Working Group represent a unique forum fostering open and constructive multilateral dialogues to collectively shape the way forward to strengthen surveillance and ultimately better control cholera.