

Information for action / Information pour action

GUIDE TO SPC'S PUBLIC HEALTH SURVEILLANCE AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL SECTION SERVICES

This document is an extract from the publication "Guide to SPC Services – November 2004 - Revised edition." (see page 23 for more information on this publication). Although, this information is available on our section's website and the PPHSN website (see URLs below), we thought it worthwhile reproducing it in Inform'ACTION for wider dissemination, especially for those who do not have access to the Internet. We would also like to invite every PPHSN allied members to share the same kind of information with the network through the columns of the next issues of Inform'ACTION.



Goal : Healthier Pacific Island communities.

Objectives 2003-2005: The section shares the broad objectives of the Public Health Programme. In addition, the overall objectives of the section are: (1) develop public health surveillance in the Pacific Islands in a sustainable

manner; (2) ensure that all programme activities are in line with the goal of a sustainable development of public health surveillance and applied epidemiology in Pacific Island countries and territories, and with the PPHSN development plans and strategic framework.

Funding and partners: All positions are funded by voluntary contributions from France and NZAID, except the HIV/AIDS/STI Surveillance Specialist position funded under the France/Australia Regional HIV/AIDS Project. The work programme is funded in part by voluntary contributions from France, NZAID and AusAID, and in part by project-specific funding provided by various donors including ADB, Taiwan/ROC, and the US Centers for Disease Control (bioterrorism-related funds).

Most of the activities are undertaken in partnership with PPHSN core and allied members within the framework of the network.

Assistance offered by the PHS&CDC Section

Requests for assistance can be made directly to any of the section's staff. Certain types of assistance (e.g. in-country) may require written requests from relevant government departments. The first priorities of the PPHSN are communicable diseases, especially the outbreak-prone ones. At this stage the target diseases include: dengue, measles/rubella, influenza, leptospirosis, typhoid fever, cholera, SARS and HIV/STIs.

Policy development

Technical assistance on policies and national plans of action with regards to communicable disease surveillance and response is available to PICT governments on request, particularly with reference to the PPHSN strategic framework and development plans.

Technical assistance

Ad hoc technical assistance is available on request to EpiNet teams and ministries and departments of health for communicable disease public health surveillance and epidemiology, especially the review and development of surveillance systems, and outbreak investigation and response. Through the HIV/STI Surveillance Specialist, more specific support is given to HIV/STI surveillance (especially second generation surveillance).

The Public Health Surveillance and Communicable Disease Control (PHS&CDC) Section is part of the Public Health Programme (PHP) within the Social Resources Division. It is based at SPC's Noumea headquarters. The section has 5 full-time positions: Epidemiologist, Communicable Disease Surveillance Specialist, HIV/AIDS/STI Surveillance Specialist, Surveillance Information Officer, and Data Processing Officer. The section is supported by a part-time Project Assistant.

Websites:

- PHS&CDC Section website: <http://www.spc.int/phs/>
- PPHSN website: <http://www.spc.int/phs/PPHSN/>
- Distance Education in Health website, in partnership with University of Guam: <http://www.spc.int/Health/DistanceEducation/>

Contacts:

- Dr Tom Kiedrzyński, Epidemiologist: tomk@spc.int; Tel +687 26 01 43
- Dr Narendra Singh, Communicable Disease Surveillance Specialist: NarendraS@spc.int; Tel +687 26 20 00
- Dr Tim Sladden, HIV/AIDS/STI Surveillance Specialist: TimS@spc.int; Tel +687 26 20 00
- Christelle Lepers, Surveillance Information Officer: christellel@spc.int; Tel +687 26 01 81
- Elise Benyon, Data Processing Officer: eliseb@spc.int; Tel +687 26 01 64
- PPHSN Coordinating Body Focal Point: phs.cdc@spc.int; Tel +687 26 20 00; Fax +687 26 38 18
- SPC Noumea: Tel +687 26 20 00; Fax +687 26 38 18

Mandate: The Public Health Surveillance and Communicable Disease Control (PHS&CDC) Section's mandate is the PHP Strategic Plan. The section is also the Focal Point of the Coordinating Body of the Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network (PPHSN), with the directions of the PPHSN approved by the annual meeting of the PPHSN Coordinating Body.

Training

In partnership with PPHSN members and bodies, the section conducts sub-regional and in-country training workshops in:

- Public health surveillance
- Outbreak investigation and communicable disease epidemiology
- Computer applications for public health surveillance and outbreak investigation

Accreditation by the Fiji School of Medicine is possible. These workshops can also be delivered within the framework of a "Data for Decision-Making" (DDM) training programme or Field Epidemiology Training Programme (FETP).

Participants: Preferably members of the national/territorial EpiNet team (or equivalent), plus any person involved in public health surveillance and response.

Duration: 1 week for each module.

Cost: SPC or other PPHSN partners (including PICTs) cover airfare and per diem costs. A cost-share basis is also possible, e.g. for in-country training with the country covering local costs.

Follow-up: Participants are expected to implement or improve some surveillance activities in-country. A field project is required within the framework of the DDM or FETP.

Training on request

In partnership with PPHSN members and bodies, sub-regional or in-country training workshops can be provided on request, provided funding (by the country/territory or from other sources) is available. The subject areas can be tailored to address specific country needs.

Training attachments

This training takes the form of an attachment within the section at SPC's Noumea headquarters. Trainees work on specific projects, with clear objectives and expected outputs, agreed on between themselves and the section. Usually, an article by the trainee on the achieved work is published as a result of the attachment.

Eligible applicants: Students or health professionals from the region interested in public health surveillance of communicable diseases.

Conditions: Application on request of country/territory or partner agency. Approval is contingent on the workload of the section and on availability of funding.

Number of participants: One, possibly two persons can be trained at a time.

Duration: Preferably 3–4 months, although this is flexible.

Cost: On a cost-sharing basis, depending on availability of funding (with the section possibly covering airfare and per diem costs for food and accommodation).

Follow-up: On their return home, possibility of assistance at distance if needed.

Meetings

In order to plan and monitor PPHSN development, the following meetings are organised by the section (in some cases in cooperation with partners).

- *PPHSN Coordinating Body meetings:* Typically held once a year with all Coordinating Body members.
- *PPHSN regional or sub-regional meetings:* Held

approximately every two years for EpiNet team (or equivalent) members (usually the focal points) and/or other decision makers from ministries and departments of health active in the area of communicable disease surveillance and response.

Networks

PacNet is an email (and fax) listserver for a network of health practitioners interested or working in the Pacific Islands, which allows rapid overall communication (and makes possible "Early Warnings") regarding epidemic threats; *PacNet* consequently makes it possible to raise awareness and preparedness levels in the region. It also gives access to resources, including expertise.

PacNet-restricted is used as a communication tool restricted to selected health professionals from Ministries and Departments of Health (usually decision makers) and PPHSN Coordinating Body members. It is a possible alternative to *PacNet* in the very early stages of outbreaks, when information is often sensitive and confidential (i.e. not yet confirmed and/or an adequate public health response has not yet been brought about).

PacNet-Lab was created for the development of LabNet, the public health laboratory network, and includes laboratory health professionals from the region, as well as the Coordinating Body members. The list is used to share lab-specific information.

Subscription: Health practitioners can subscribe to *PacNet* or *PacNet-Lab*, by sending an email message to: join-pacnet@lyris.spc.int and join-pacnet-lab@lyris.spc.int. Health practitioners need permission of their Health Director and of the SPC Section to subscribe to *PacNet-restricted*.

The *EpiNet-Announcement* list was also created to facilitate the communication with EpiNet team members only.

Grants

Through the PPHSN, the section aims at setting up a sustainable funding mechanism for outbreak-related assistance in the region. In the meantime, depending on funding availability, the section tries to answer to small funding requests from the PICTs in emergency response situations due to communicable disease outbreaks.

Information resources available

Inform'Action, the bulletin of the PPHSN, is published by the section three to four times each year. Articles (typically by health professionals from the region) address public health surveillance and communicable disease control. Hard copies of *Inform'Action* are sent to all ministries and departments of health, including all EpiNet teams (or equivalent), *PacNet* members and to PPHSN allied bodies. Other publications include the *Monograph on Public Health Surveillance in the Pacific* and the issue of the *Pacific Health Dialog* on Telehealth.

All publications are available in electronic format on the PPHSN website, and on request. The websites (see above) are also important information sources (especially, the PPHSN website and the Distance Education in Health website)

