

CAREC Working Group on Health: Terms of Reference

Introduction

Health has become a priority sector for CAREC under the CAREC 2030 strategy adopted in 2017. A CAREC Health Strategy 2030 and the Regional Investment Framework (2022-2026) is being formulated to guide CAREC health cooperation going forward. Through various consultations, all CAREC countries have acknowledged the need for more comprehensive, coordinated, and proactive approaches to address regional health issues, including the COVID-9 pandemic. The CAREC countries have supported the establishment of a CAREC Working Group on Health (WGH) to fulfill these needs. The establishment of the CAREC WGH was formally confirmed at the virtual regional inception workshop on “Formulation of CAREC Health Strategy 2030,” held on 4 March 2021. Recommended objectives for the CAREC WGH include facilitating the formulation of the CAREC health strategy (accomplished in 2021) and Regional Investment Framework (by 2022), discussing institutional mechanisms for CAREC health cooperation, and serving as a platform for the exchange of knowledge and best practices between member countries.

The terms of reference below outline (i) the scope of work of the CAREC WGH, (ii) CAREC WGH composition, and its governance structure.

The scope of work of the Working Group on Health

The CAREC WGH is expected to:

1. Support development and operationalization/implementation of the CAREC Health Strategy 2030 and Regional Investment Framework, which would require:
 - Ensuring that the CAREC Health Strategy 2030 is relevant and aligned with regional and national policy priorities requires coordinated and collaborative action at the regional level.
 - Facilitating the endorsement of the CAREC Health Strategy 2030 at the national level, coordinating its implementation with national and regional counterparts and partners, and monitoring and reporting on the strategy implementation progress and achieved impact with support from the CAREC Secretariat.
 - Contributing to developing CAREC regional health investment priorities as input to the CAREC Regional Health Investment Framework.
 - Providing a forum for coordinating assistance plans and support of international development partners on regional health issues and working with them to identify and mobilize additional resources for proposed regional investments in health.
 - Contributing to the development of detailed annual work plans supported by the CAREC Secretariat and identifying concrete outputs and respective costs and investment needs.
2. Assure adequate engagement of and coordination with regional actors, namely:
 - Cooperating and coordinating with the relevant operational clusters and sectors under the CAREC Program, such as transport, trade and tourism as necessary.

- Working with the existing CAREC networks and other regional groupings and initiatives on regional cooperation in health, including academic and education networks (university alliance for academic exchange, research funders, medical education, and public health training).
3. Contribute to the development and implementation of a supportive environment for regional health cooperation through:
- Facilitating or forging a memorandum of understanding among CAREC countries dealing with common issues (e.g., health security, laboratory capacity enhancement, migrant health, drug regulation, necessary human resource development, etc.).
 - To formulate input(s) for regional health cooperation across the government working and coordinating with
 - Relevant line ministries and government agencies supporting regional cooperation in health, such as ministries of foreign affairs, as appropriate.
 - Relevant non-health national line ministries and government agencies on multisectoral issues, as appropriate.
 - Sub-national levels of government (e.g., those in border areas), as appropriate
 - Supporting information exchange activities focused on priority regional health issues and needs and promoting knowledge sharing through multiple channels, including online and face-to-face meetings, regular workshops and meetings, and repositories or databases.
 - Suggesting priority focus areas for operational research, reviews, assessments, surveys, and other knowledge products necessary for the CAREC Health Strategy implementation through close regional cooperation.

CAREC WGH Composition

Each country designates at least three working group members, of which one shall be appointed as the WGH focal point charged with the powers and responsibility to represent the country in the WGH and bearing responsibility for day-to-day communications.¹ The names of WGH members will be communicated to the respective National Focal Point (NFP). It is preferable for WGH members (at minimum for the focal point) to serve as long term as possible, but not less than two years, to ensure continuity in inputs and approach. For effective coordination of development partner coordination, other members will include representatives of development partners such as the WHO.

Roles and Responsibilities of the CAREC WGH Member

WGH members serve as representative/s of their countries for the CAREC Health initiatives. On a country level, they work closely and report to the sectoral ministry and contribute to the work led by the Senior Officials, representing the country in the CAREC Program. WGH members bear the responsibilities for:

¹ It is recommended that the focal person for the Technical Assistance (6535) which supported the CAREC Health work is also part of the WGH.

- Participating on behalf of the country in online or physical meetings and conferences organized by the CAREC Secretariat.
- Representing the WGH and the country in the regional events relevant to promoting regional health cooperation and joint initiatives with other CAREC working groups.
- Reviewing the documents prepared for the WGH meetings and formulating and presenting the country's position on various issues and proposals reflected in the documents.
- Sharing and reporting information from WGH meetings with respective national government authorities to acknowledge and approve issues and proposals. This includes regularly coordinating with and reporting to the CAREC National Focal Points.
- Actively contributing to discussions during strategic and annual planning sessions.
- Where necessary, tapping into national experts and organization(s) and other line ministries to provide necessary technical inputs required for WGH activities.
- Supporting the implementation of activities outlined in the CAREC Health Strategy 2030.
- Coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the activities (i.e., meetings and consultations) at the country level with support from the CAREC Secretariat, when necessary.
- Reviewing strategy, action plan, annual report(s), and other documents as appropriate before dissemination.
- Reviewing WGH reports before submission to higher-level officials.

Governance of the Working Group on Health

The WGH is chaired by countries on a rotational basis in alphabetical order, following the CAREC chairmanship rules. Therefore, the chairmanship of the WGH will align with the CAREC Chairmanship of the same year and will also be for a term of one year.

The WGH, with support from the CAREC Secretariat, is accountable to the CAREC Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) by preparing necessary inputs.² The chairperson of the WGH bears responsibility for delivering these inputs.

CAREC Secretariat

The WGH and WGH chairperson are supported by the CAREC Secretariat, based at the ADB Headquarters, and ADB resident missions. Responsibilities of the Secretariat are to:

- Schedule and convene WGH meetings and support communications between ADB members, other development partners, and agencies in the CAREC.
- Prepare agenda and necessary materials and documents for the WGH meetings and deliver to the WGH members at least 14 days before the meeting.

² Annual progress reports are submitted to the Senior Officials before the SOM. This includes reporting progress against the [CAREC 2030 Program Results Framework](#), which CAREC Health Strategy results framework is aligned with.

- Coordinate WGH activities and manage day-to-day operations of the WGH through e-mail and other means of remote communication and serve as the central contact point for information collection and exchange among WGH members.
- Where necessary, bring together key stakeholders, technical experts, and consultants to cooperate on developing and implementing responses to regional health issues.
- Assist in monitoring and reporting on the status and impact of the implementation of the CAREC Health Strategy 2030 and annual work plan as input to relevant meetings.

Mechanisms Supporting WGH Operations and Accountability

The WGH, supported by the CAREC Secretariat, conducts the following activities throughout the year:

- An annual meeting of the WGH with development partners, CSOs, and other relevant organizations involved in health cooperation in the CAREC. The WGH meeting will serve as a forum for strategic discussion and strategic and operational planning.
- WGH business or operational meetings could be convened on an as-needed basis throughout the year, on-site or virtually, to address emerging administrative and operational issues related to the WGH and CAREC health strategy implementation.
- The Secretariat will organize on-site or virtual thematic meetings or workshops on a need basis.
- In-country or virtual coordination meetings and cross-border meetings will be organized when needed.
- The WGH will prepare an annual work plan to guide activity implementation and monitoring. As part of the CAREC Secretariat, relevant CWSS staff will prepare and share progress reports and the minutes/reports of the meetings with governments, development partners, and other relevant CAREC groups. This includes preparing periodic reports for the CAREC Senior Officials on the outcome of WGH meetings and to the CAREC Ministers on the overall progress of subregional health cooperation. WGH members review and approve the reports before dissemination.