EMPHNET
The Eastern Mediterranean
Public Health Network

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

▶ GHD I EMPHNET: working
together for better health

OUR APPROACH

Contextual Adaptation

EMPHNET tailors global response recommendations to each country's specific context, considering resource limitations, cultural factors, national strengths and weaknesses, existing health profiles, and geographical considerations.

Experience and Cooperation

Drawing from its physical presence and strong partnerships with conflict-affected countries, EMPHNET leverages its experience to implement informed and effective interventions in challenging enviornments.

Community Engagement

EMPHNET promotes community involvement to counter resrouce reductions, improve accses to health services, and build trust among communities, especially among vulnerable groups.

Cross-Cutting Contribution

EMPHNET's work in public health emergency management is integrated within its broader focus areas. This includes enhancing health system resilience through epidemiological research, promoting workforce development, contributing to sustainment of essential health services, and fostering communication and networking.

Comprehensive Surveillance

EMPHNET prioritizes early warning systems that incorporate all types of surveillance to ensure a thorough and timely detection of and response to health threats.

WHY EMPHNET IS INVOLVED

A growing number of countries and areas in the region, such as Gaza, Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Lebanon, continue to face health crises.

Climate change is intensifying emergencies in affected countries and creating new risks even in more stable ones, as floods, droughts, and heatwaves displace communities and increase disease threats.

Lessons learned from the COVID-19 response have driven the global health community to strengthen all aspects of health emergency prevention, preparedness, response, and resilience (HEPR).

The global health community is prioritizing stronger health emergency preparedness and response, focusing on inclusive engagement, multi-sectoral coordination, and better support for vulnerable populations, especially in conflict-affected areas. This includes improving surveillance, community involvement, access to essential services, and workforce capacity.

Increased global travel and trade mean that health security threats are no longer confined within borders.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: WHERE AND HOW IS EMPHNET INVOLVED?

Prevention

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CYCLE

Recovery

Preparedness
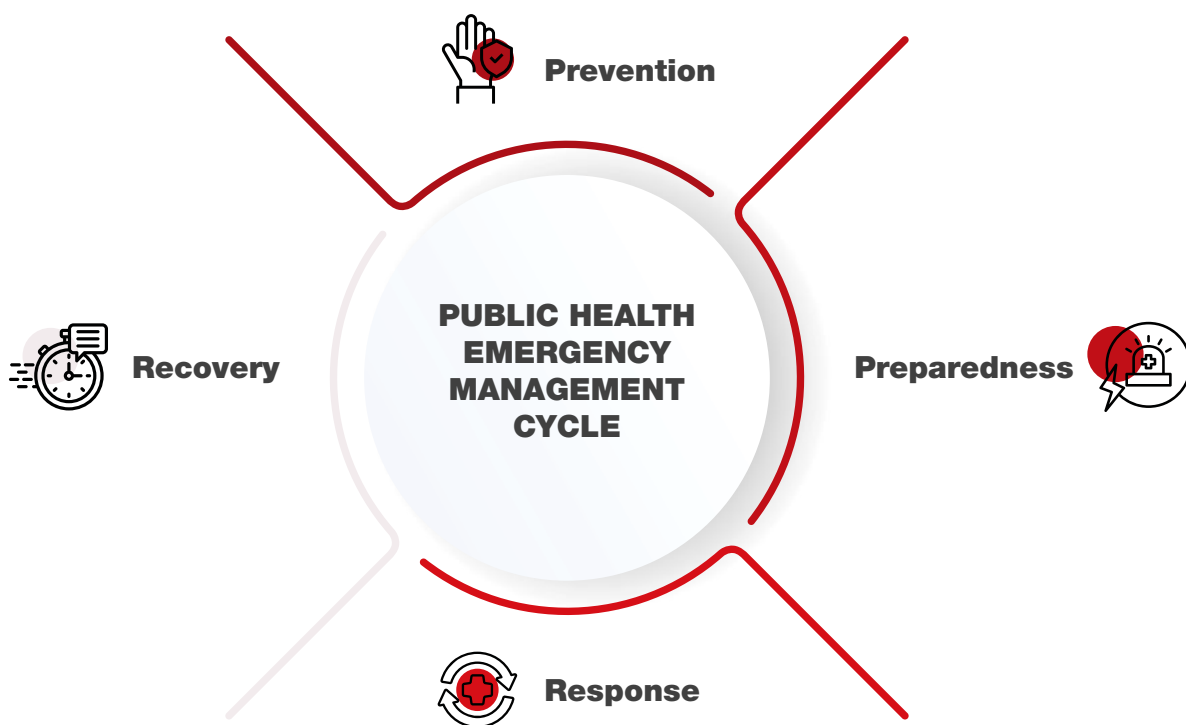
Response

HOW IS EMPHNET INVOLVED?

Tracks diseases and emerging threats

Builds skilled responders

Assesses risks to guide action

Connects stakeholders for faster coordination

Strengthens labs for better health security

Supports EOCs for effective disaster management

EMPOWERING FRONTLINE RESPONDERS

EMPHNET supports both Field Epidemiology Training Programs (FETPs) and Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) to strengthen countries' capacity to detect, investigate, and respond to public health threats. By investing in FETPs, EMPHNET helps build a skilled, sustainable workforce of field epidemiologists who improve surveillance systems and generate evidence for decision-making. Through its support for RRTs, EMPHNET ensures that countries have multidisciplinary teams ready to be deployed rapidly during outbreaks and emergencies.

FETPS AND RRTS: WORKING TOGETHER FOR EFFECTIVE RESPONSE

FETPs
Residents and projects build the evidence base, recommendations, and skilled workforce

RRTs
RRT members operationalize the response on the ground

EMPHNET'S ROLE IN ADVANCING RRTS

Since its launch 2012, EMPHNET's Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) Initiative has played an role in empowering countries to respond swiftly and effectively to public health emergencies.

WHY DOES EMPHNET'S RRT INITIATIVE STAND OUT

Reaching All Levels

Cascade training model applied to build capacity across all levels

Customized to Country Needs

Each RRT curriculum tailored to match the country's context

A Focus on Sustainability

Structured public health rapid response systems supported in **7** countries

ESTABLISHING AND INSTITUTIONALIZING A PUBLIC HEALTH RAPID RESPONSE SYSTEM

EMPHNET is supporting countries to improve how they organize and manage their response to public health emergencies in a structured, consistent way, enabling them to quickly mobilize additional people, resources, and systems when an emergency exceeds routine capacity.

WHAT IS EMPHNET'S SUPPORT TO RRTS?

Conducting Emergency Preparedness and Response Capacity Assessment

Providing RRT Management Training and SOP Development Workshop

Facilitating Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop for the National Rapid Response Team Program

Engaging Stakeholders for the National Rapid Response Team Program

Implementing Rapid Response Teams Advanced Training of Trainers

Delivering National Rapid Response Team Advanced Training

*This approach is strengthening the existing the emergency management systems in **7** countries: **Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia.***

ADAPTING RRT TRAINING TO LOCAL REALITIES: WHERE AND HOW IT HAS BEEN CUSTOMIZED

| Country	Customized RRT Focus
Yemen	WASH-focused RRT to combat cholera outbreaks
Iraq	RRTs with bioincidence and biorisk management components
Sudan	RRTs integrating nutrition and environmental health
Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen	Specialized RRTs for polio and vaccine-preventable diseases
Multiple Countries	All-Hazards RRT curriculum adapted in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Iraq, and Pakistan

FROM TRAINING TO RESPONSE: WHAT ARE THE RRT ACHIEVEMENTS?

77.27%

of EMR countries (including **Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, and Yemen**) where a total of **1,500** RRT members have been collectively trained.

80%
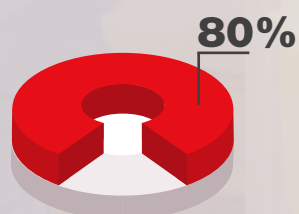
of major public health events were responded to with RRT mobilization.

32%
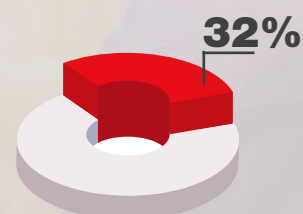
of countries where RRTs were trained now have institutionalized RRT management systems in: **Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia.**

SUPPORTING FETPS:
A WORKFORCE READY TO INVESTIGATE AND GUIDE RESPONSE

EMPHNET's network of FETPs plays a recognized role in strengthening emergency response in many countries of the region. EMPHNET empowers this role by providing technical, logistical, and educational support.

FETP IMPACT ON THE GROUND

Based on published research, FETPs have shown measurable impact:

Enabled active contributions to surveillance, data analysis, training, and outbreak response.

Significantly boosted graduates' skills, professional engagement, and capacity to perform field epidemiology functions.

Played a crucial role in developing preparedness plans and managing the COVID-19 response.

Country-specific evaluations highlight the critical role FETPs play in strengthening national preparedness and supporting public health emergency responses.

FETP CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUTBREAK INVESTIGATIONS

The numbers of outbreak investigations conducted by FETPs reflect not just the presence of trained epidemiologists, but their direct impact on controlling and mitigating public health threats across multiple countries.

15 countries
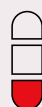
12 basic programs

7 intermediate programs

5 advanced programs

WHAT IS THE EMPHNET SUPPORT TO FETPS?

Expanding FETPs through diverse modalities in multiple countries

Supporting sustainability of existing FETPs

Strengthening Scientific Writing and Communication Skills

Supporting Multi-National and Multi-Sectoral FETP Collaboration

Mobilization During Emergencies

Supporting Training Needs Assessments

STRENGTHENING AND EXPANDING DISEASE SURVEILLANCE

EMPHNET helps countries build robust Early Warning and Response (EWAR) capacities through multi-sector coordination, community engagement, and targeted support for priority areas and vulnerable groups. This work is done to ensure every health threat is detected early, responses are timely and effective, and communities stay protected.

Supporting Integrated Surveillance

Connecting human, animal, and environmental health systems for a **One Health approach**.

Strengthening **event-based** and **community-based surveillance** systems.

Improving **cross-border collaboration** for the surveillance and management of weaponizable pathogens.

Strengthening Surveillance of Priority Threats

Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) Surveillance.

Surveillance during **mass gatherings.**

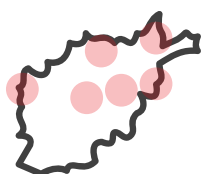Surveillance **during emergencies** by FETPs.

WHERE WE STRENGTHEN SURVEILLANCE ON THE GROUND

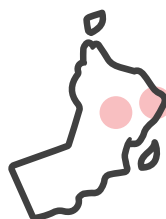## EVENT-BASED SURVEILLANCE (EBS)

Why it Matters: EBS is crucial for early detection and rapid response to health threats outside routine surveillance.

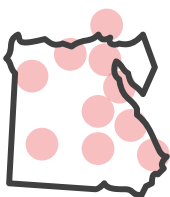### Supporting the integration EBS into national disease surveillance systems

Afghanistan
7 provinces: Kabul (one zone), Herat, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Badakhshan, Balkh, Bamiyan

Egypt
10 governorates: Aswan, Damietta, Ismailia, Luxor, Matruh, Menoufia, New Valley, Red Sea, Sohag, Suez

Lebanon
7 governorates: Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Bekaa, Akkar, North, South, Baalback
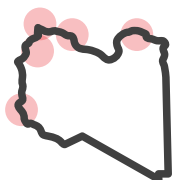
Libya
5 municipalities: Derna, Ghat, Misrata, Hay Alandalous, Soug Aljoma

Morocco
3 regions: Casablanca, Rabat, Tangier

Oman
2 governorates: Al Sharkia, Dakhelia

Sudan
2 states: Khartoum, White Nile

COMMUNITY-BASED SURVEILLANCE (CBS)

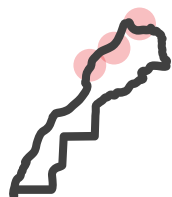**Why it Matters:** CBS turns community awareness into early alerts and thereby ensures local signs of outbreaks don't go unnoticed and response can happen fast.
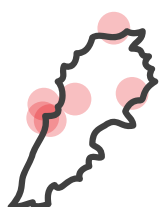
Supporting the Integration CBS into National Disease Surveillance Systems

Yemen
Nationwide coverage

Sudan
18 states

Lebanon
7 governorates: Baalback, Akkar, Tripoli, Mount Lebanon, Beirut, Zahle in border areas
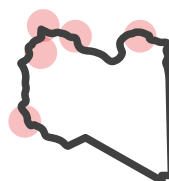
Iraq
3 provinces: Najaf, Muthanna, Anbar

ACUTE FLACCID PARALYSIS (AFP) SURVEILLANCE

Why it Matters: AFP surveillance is vital to catch poliovirus quickly and stop outbreaks before they spread.

Supporting the Expansion of AFP and VPDs Surveillance at District Level

Egypt
Enabling limited-scale, active case search and vaccination coverage surveys.
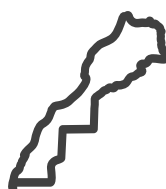
Morocco
Contributing to increasing the Non-Polio AFP rate to the regional standard of **2.1**.

Iraq
Enabling limited-scale, active case search and vaccination coverage surveys.

Yemen
Contributing to enhancing community engagement in surveillance.
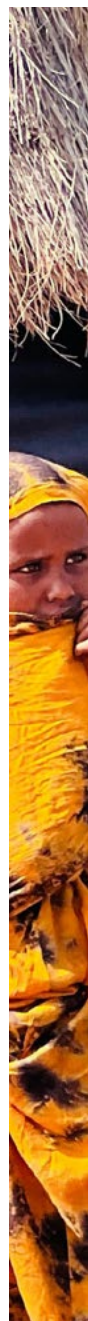
SUPPORTING NATIONAL SURVEILLANCE DURING MASS GATHERINGS: THE ARBA'EEN MODEL IN IRAQ

Why it Matters: Surveillance during mass gatherings is vital because large crowds increase the risk of rapid disease spread.

Developed a mobile-powered, real-time surveillance system that centralized data aggregation from across governorates and informed immediate, data-driven response

Contributed to regional knowledge via a Technical Guide: **"Collaborative Public Health Interventions during Mass Gathering Events in the EMR"**

STRENGTHENING BIORISK MANAGEMENT TO SAFEGUARD HEALTH SECURITY

Strong biorisk management is essential for preventing accidental or intentional release of dangerous pathogens, which can trigger severe public health emergencies. By supporting countries to build safe laboratory practices, policies, and capacities, EMPHNET helps close critical gaps that weaken global health security. This work directly strengthens countries' readiness to detect, contain, and respond to biological threats before they escalate across borders.

HOW EMPHNET SUPPORTED LABORATORY SYSTEMS

Modern Diagnostics

Equipping laboratories and introducing new testing methods.

Biosafety and Biosecurity

Building workforce capacity for safe handling of samples, waste management, and biorisk management.

Country-Level Infrastructure

Enhancing laboratory systems through standard operating procedures (SOPs), inventory management software, and incident reporting protocols.

Regional Collaboration

Advancing joint training, logistics, incident management for high-threat pathogens, and cross-border disease surveillance.

A FOCUS ON BUILDING CAPACITIES IN BORDER HEALTH

EMPHNET is focusing on border health to empower countries to detect, respond to, and mitigate associated public health risks, recognizing that effective border health systems are vital for preventing the cross-border spread of diseases and protecting regional health security. This work builds on insights, assessments, and discussions to strengthen capacities in a context-specific and collaborative manner.

HOW EMPHNET SUPPORTED BORDER HEALTH

Regional Dialogues
- Hosted the 2023 regional symposium **"Reimagining Border Health Strategies"** with **57** professionals from **16** countries.
- Conducted a pre-conference workshop in 2021 on **"Border Health Approaches"** during the 7th EMPHNET Regional Conference, leading to recommendations to strengthen capacities at points of entry.

Guidance Support
- Developed Technical Guidance on Health Mitigation Measures at Points of Entry during COVID-19.
- Supported countries to adapt and implement guidance based on local contexts.

Capacity Building
- Enhanced knowledge and skills of public health officers at airports, seaports, and ground crossings.
- Provided support to systems strengthening to improve detection and response at borders.

BUILDING STRONGER SYSTEMS FOR SWIFT ACTION

EMPHNET supports the development high-level policies, operational plans, accountability frameworks, and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to help countries turn strategy into action. These resources form the backbone of health emergency management, providing clear guidance and ensuring decisions are based on evidence.

KEY DOCUMENTS DEVELOPED AND ADOPTED
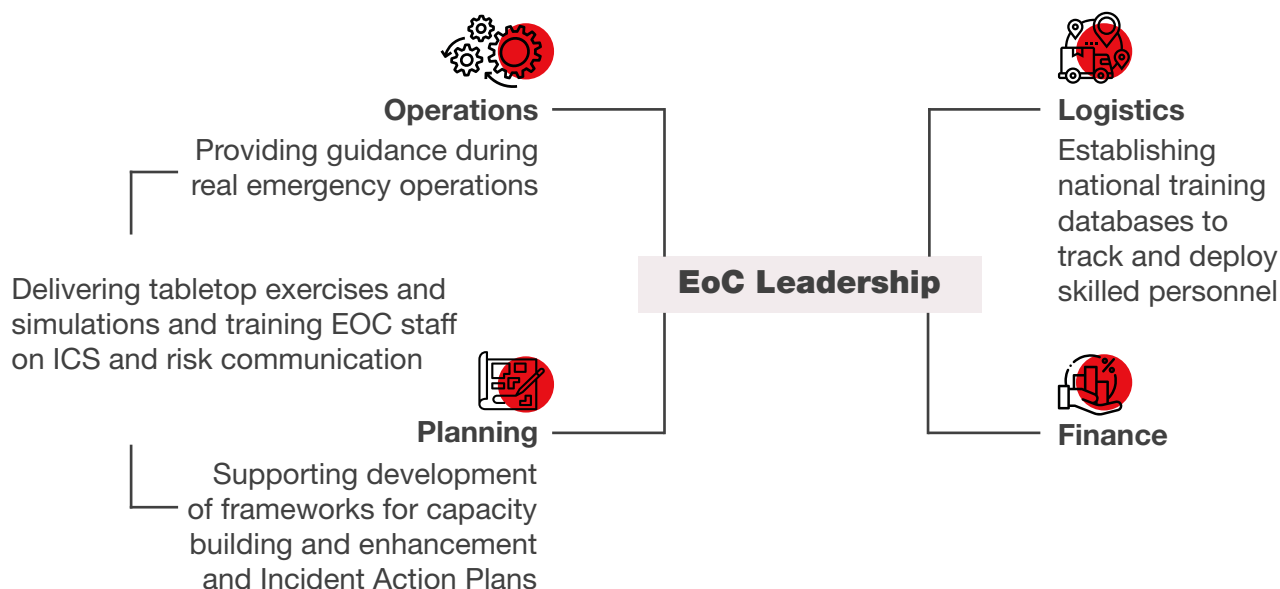
25
essential
documents created
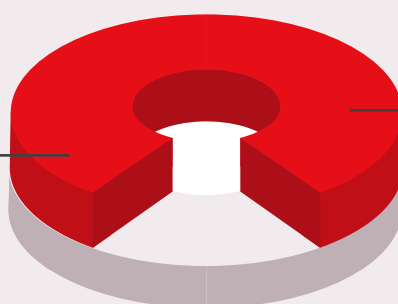
83.3%
of which endorsed
or operational

SUPPORTING EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTERS (EOCS)

EMPHNET collaborated with national entities to strengthen the essential functions of EOCs, particularly building capacities related to the Incident Command System (ICS), enhancing information collection and analysis to support effective planning, and providing general support to EOCs as command hubs where data informs decisions and coordination translates plans into action.

How EMPHNET Supported Key Components of Emergency Command Centers

Operations
Providing guidance during real emergency operations

Delivering tabletop exercises and simulations and training EOC staff on ICS and risk communication

EoC Leadership

Logistics
Establishing national training databases to track and deploy skilled personnel

Planning
Supporting development of frameworks for capacity building and enhancement and Incident Action Plans

Finance

RISK COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (RCCE)

EMPHNET plays a vital role in advancing RCCE by empowering communities to be active partners in emergency preparedness and response. By supporting community-based surveillance, delivering health awareness sessions, and implementing interventions collaboratively, EMPHNET builds trust with communities, ensures accurate information sharing, and co-develops solutions that reflect local needs and realities. RCCE activities are essential to effectively manage and end public health emergencies, helping communities understand risks, make informed decisions, and sustain protective actions.

Examples of EMPHNET's RCCE on the ground include

Training **800+** community health workers (CHWs) under the COVID-19 Partnership for Accelerated COVID-19 Testing (PACT) to raise awareness and support surveillance efforts, with **180,000+** households visited by CHWs during field deployments.

Mobilizing **300+** CHWs to reach **5,000+** women, children, and adults with health messages on vaccination, malnutrition, and breastfeeding counseling.

Involving **150** community health mobilizers to strengthen trust and improve interpersonal communication and awareness.
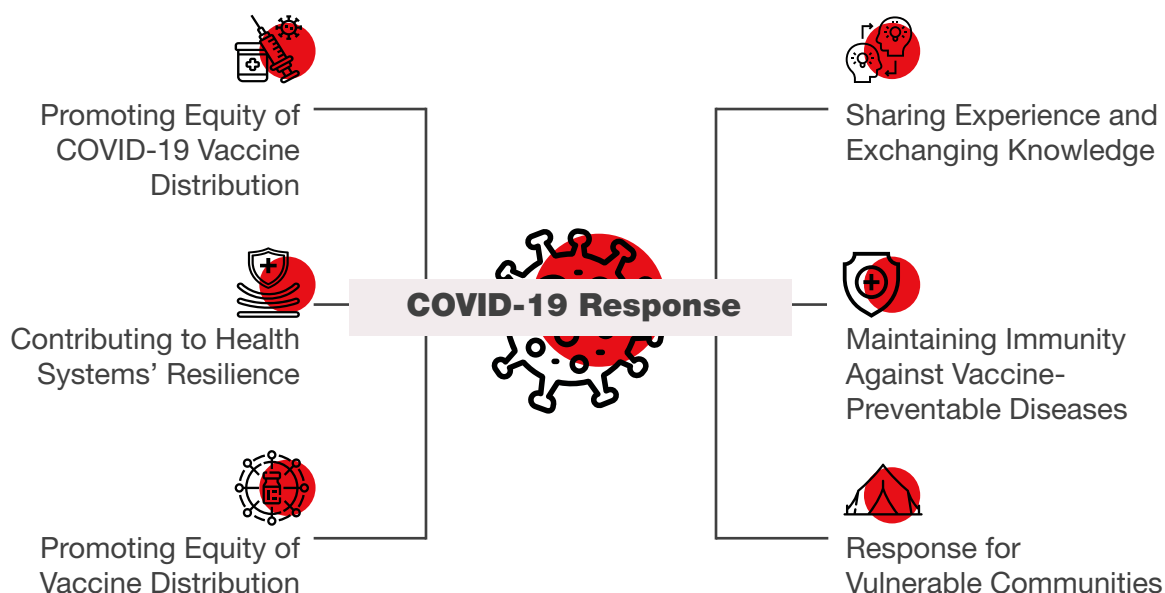
Involving **Lady Health Workers** to lead community advocacy and address misinformation, building trust in vaccination campaigns.

Engaging **900** community health volunteers in Yemen to strengthen AFP and VPD surveillance and improve vaccine awareness.
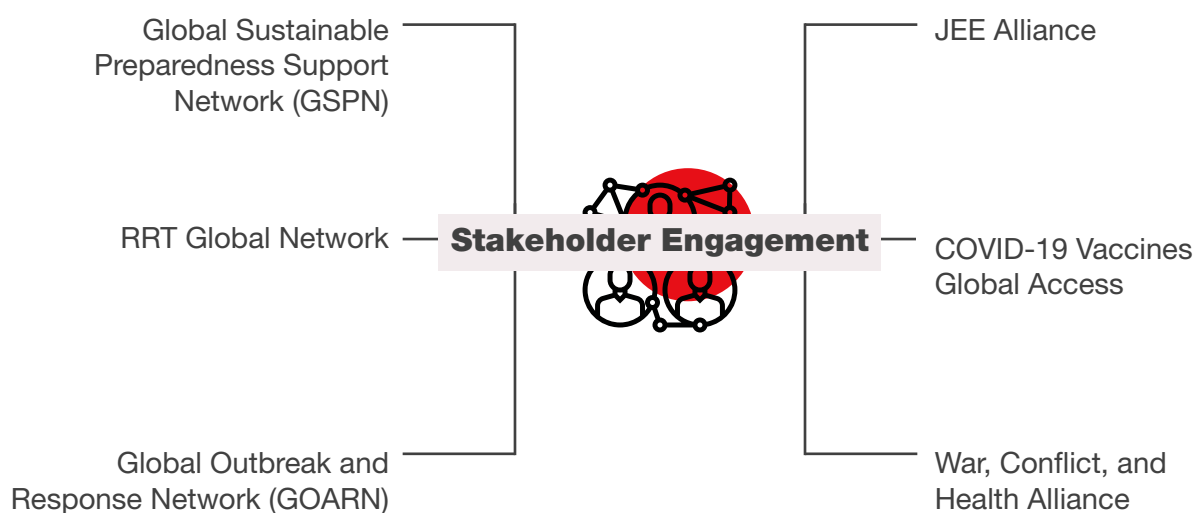
Training **280+** community informants to sustain community-based measles and polio immunity efforts.

RESPONDING TO THE UNPRECEDENTED: EMPHNET'S ROLE DURING COVID-19

Promoting Equity of COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

Contributing to Health Systems' Resilience

Promoting Equity of Vaccine Distribution

COVID-19 Response

Sharing Experience and Exchanging Knowledge

Maintaining Immunity Against Vaccine-Preventable Diseases

Response for Vulnerable Communities

EMPHNET'S GLOBAL COLLABORATIONS: STRATEGIC ALLIANCES AND REGIONAL NETWORKS

Global Sustainable Preparedness Support Network (GSPN)

RRT Global Network

Global Outbreak and Response Network (GOARN)

Stakeholder Engagement

JEE Alliance

COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access

War, Conflict, and Health Alliance

WORKING TOGETHER FOR BETTER HEALTH.

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GHD|EMPHNET: Working Together for Better Health

The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) is a regional network that focuses on strengthening public health systems in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) and beyond. EMPHNET works in partnership with ministries of health, non-government organizations, international agencies, private sector, and relevant institutions from the region and the globe to promote public health and applied epidemiology. To advance the work of EMPHNET, Global Health Development (GHD) was initiated to build coordination mechanisms with partners and collaborators. Together, GHD|EMPHNET is dedicated to serving the region by supporting efforts to promote public health policies, strategic planning, sustainable financing, resource mobilization, public health programs, and other related areas.

▶ Shmeisani, Abdallah Ben Abbas Street, Building No 42,
P.O.Box: 963709, Postal Code: 11196 Amman, Jordan

▶ Tel: +962-6-5519962
Fax: +962-6-5519963

▶ www.emphnet.net
info@emphnet.net