



Newsletter Issue No. 33 January - March 2019

Editor's Letter

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the thirty-third edition of GHD/EMPHNET's quarterly newsletter. This issue highlights the latest developments seen in our organization over the second quarter of the fiscal year of 2018-2019. As of our last issue, we have added new sections to this publication including a section dedicated to a different "Public Health Figure" per issue. In this thirty-third edition we feature Dr. Wagdi Talaat, thus highlighting his impact on Public Health Education.

As always, the milestones achieved by FETPs is a source of pride for us. Therefore, once again we feature the achievements made by the EMR's country programs within our "Country Program News" news section.

We also focus on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and more specifically those directly or indirectly related to health. You can learn more about that in our "Public Health Issue in Focus" section. From another angle, our feature story for this issue showcases our recent activities in Libya, a country we have recently started working in. Finally, our News section highlights our latest activities.

We hope you benefit from and enjoy reading this new edition of our newsletter, and as always, we encourage your feedback. After all, your input will help us make this newsletter present to you the ideal, informative, and valuable reading experience that responds to your needs. More importantly, we strive to continue publishing content that is of benefit to you.

Happy Reading
The Newsletter Editorial Team

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FEATURE STORY

GHD/EMPHNET Collaborates with Libya National Center of Disease Control to Support the Country in Biorisk Management and Emergency Response

GHD/EMPHNET recently began collaborating with Libya's National Center of Disease Control and the Libya Ministry of Health (MoH), a development that presents itself as an important step for GHD/EMPHNET and its ongoing aims to expand its partnerships. The expansion of GHD/EMPHNET's network of partnerships falls in line with its goals to respond to health needs across the EMR. This particular collaboration with partners in Libya enables GHD/EMPHNET to contribute to enhancing the health of the latter's population. This particular partnership focuses on two areas; namely, biorisk management and public health emergency response.

Biorisk Management

In the area of biorisk management, GHD/EMPHNET is conducting a regional biosecurity and biosafety management symposium. The symposium is set to enhance biosecurity capacity at high priority biological facilities in selected countries. GHD/EMPHNET's role within this symposium comes in the form of a collaboration with the Libya National Center for Disease Control and the Tunisia Ministry of Environment and Local Affairs, and other Tunisian partners. The collective effort of all parties involved will result in the implementation of the biosafety and biosecurity best practices. This effort will be executed through a twinning initiative between the Libyan and Tunisian parties. These parties will be working to share experiences, particularly related to the use of Tunisian facilities which are well-developed in terms of biosafety, biosecurity, risk assessment, and mitigation strategies.

As a first step, GHD/EMPHNET is collaborating with the Libya National Center for Disease Control and the Tunisia Ministry of Environment and Local Affairs to implement laboratory biosafety and biosecurity best practices within the country. Also, as part of this inter-country collaboration, a stakeholders' meeting was conducted by GHD/EMPHNET between February 6 and 7, 2019, in Tunis, Tunisia. This meeting identified the needs and opportunities in both Tunisia and Libya regarding a biorisk management system as well as biosafety and biosecurity best practices. Specifically, the meeting focused on an assessment that will be conducted to evaluate initial capacities of central and provincial public – and animal health laboratories. The assessment will cover areas relevant to laboratory capacity, biosecurity and biosafety practices, institutional policy for external referral of infectious materials and specimens to the reference laboratory, as well as training needs. Furthermore, during the stakeholders' meeting, participants discussed various details relevant to the training workshops that will follow the afore-mentioned assessment. These workshops will be conducted for laboratory professionals.

Such a collaboration will grant biological laboratory professionals from the two twinned countries an opportunity to engage in discussions regarding the challenges, strategies, and innovations for strengthened biosecurity in laboratories.

Public Health Emergency Response

From another angle and based on the recommendations put forth by the Joint Extern Evaluation (JEE) mission to Libya, GHD/EMPHNET is working with the country's National Center of Disease Control to develop a national public health emergency response operation framework.

To this effect, a stakeholders' meeting was held in Tunis, Tunisia between February 13 and 14, 2019. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the various components of this framework. Representatives of the Libya Ministry of Health, the National Animal Health Center, University of Tripoli, University of Benghazi, as well as the World Health Organization and UNICEF Libya offices attended the meeting. Furthermore, representatives from the Tunisia Ministry of Health were also present.

As part of the meeting's sessions, participants discussed the recommended national multi-hazard country preparedness and response plan, with a focus on the health component. Discussions focused on the National Public Health Emergency Plan, with its three major blocks: the incident command management system, the public health emergency operations center; and rapid response teams. Participants also discussed the importance of the availability of a national mechanism to build and maintain enough capacities in field epidemiology at the three country administrative levels.

The meeting was also devoted to reviewing the country situation in line with the JEE conducted in July 2018. Within this area, participants specifically discussed the recommended main findings as well as recommendations put forth in relation to public health emergency response operations and workforce development.

Participants also outlined an improvement plan to address priorities put forth by the JEE, whereby a recommendation was also put forth regarding the possible launch of a national Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) in Libya as well as a Public Health Empowerment Program (PHEP) to produce required capacities at the various country administrative levels.

These new collaborations in Libya fall in line with GHD/EMPHNET's belief in the role of fruitful partnerships as means to secure better health for the people of the EMR. GHD/EMPHNET thrives on the sharing of expertise, knowledge, and on building capacities of local communities as means to overcome the varying health challenges affecting the region. This initial effort in Libya serves as a prelude to many similar efforts to come, as GHD/EMPHNET is always keen on expanding its network of partnerships in order to contribute to the building of healthier communities.



FEATURE STORY



Figure of the Issue

Dr. Wagdy Talaat: A Pioneer of Public Health Education

We had a one-on-one talk with Dr. Wagdy Talaat who spoke to us about health professions education. According to him, the term refers to educating health professions in issues related to health. He started his career as a Health Pathologist in the Health Pathology Department of the Suez Canal University, and then he moved to Boston University to get his PHD in Pathology.

He owes his success to being granted the opportunity to study in one of the EMR's top schools in Health Professions Education, the Suez Canal University. According to him, this university had the first innovative problem-based community-oriented student center in the region. It was through this center that he got the chance to get qualified in the field of Health Professions Education from the University of Chicago, where he obtained a Master's in Medical Education. He then moved on to get his Diploma in Health Management and Leadership from the Management Science for Health (MSH) institute in Boston. He states that it is in this institute that he earned all his management and leadership skills.

Twenty years following his graduation, he won this institute's annual award for Best Manager in Health Professions Education. Back in the year 2001, he even co-established the Suez Canal University's first Medical Education Department, which was also the first in the EMR. Later in his career, he joined the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER), where he started as a fellow and then he became a member of its faculty. He also worked with WHO-EMRO as a consultant for Health Empowerment and Development.

Throughout his career, Dr. Talaat also developed three Health Professions Educational programs including a Diploma for Health Professions Education by distance learning and the Arabic Diploma for Health Professions Education by Distance Learning in Collaboration with the WHO that specifically caters to Syrian Health Professionals who receive their education in Arabic. We were privileged to sit with Dr. Talaat to ask him a few questions about Health Professions Education, and this is what he had to say.

Q1: When we talk about Health Professions Education, whodowe target exactly? The term targets all professionals working in the fields of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, and some other related professions too. It is the discipline of qualifying health professionals to teach.

Q2: How would you evaluate the Health Professions Education field in the EMR? Actually, in the past and before the era of introducing the region to Health Professions Education, we thought we were doing well. However, we noticed that we lacked graduates who were able to innovate or contribute useful research studies to the field of health. We were just graduating good doctors who could handle health issues and patients. After some analysis, we figured out that the main reason behind this observation was that the faculties teaching medical students in our institutions were not really qualified in the discipline of teaching itself. They didn't study education in their undergraduate studies. They had the know-how but no teaching skills, because education itself is a science.

In reality, no one taught us how to be leaders in health Professions Education or how to assist our students in the learning process. This is why when we decided to introduce the region to the concept of Health Professions Education, we thought that if we did this by distance learning, this will help those who are interested to be taught while still in their jobs. This helped a lot of health professionals who are either working in education related positions or training related positions in the Ministries of Health to better perform their jobs. We had improved, but we still have a lot to learn.

Q3: How would you compare the practice of health professions education in our region to that practiced in developed countries? The difference between the discipline of Health Professions Education as practiced in our region and as practiced in the developed countries is that in the case of the latter, they realized the importance of this education very early and way before we started to open our eyes to its importance. To us this is still a new science, and that is why the developed countries could do a lot of improvements and modifications to their practice in this area. However, we can say that since we introduced our region to the field, we did achieve some measurable changes. Our mission has always been to establish a core group of health professions educators in every institution in the region who can lead the in the near future.

Q4: Where do you believe our biggest gaps lie in this field? We have gaps caused by lack of governmental support because until now we are working with individual initiatives rather than resorting to collective governmental efforts in order to adopt this kind of change. This is indeed a gap that we need to address in the near future.

Q5: Do we have an advantage over developed countries in regard to health professions education? The developed countries believe that quality is a never-ending process. So, they even have units in every institution that work on what we call CQI (Continued Quality Improvement Units) They will never be satisfied with what is already there. We all know that this applies to all industries. In car manufacturing industries in Japan and the USA, for example, they never stop adding to the quality of their products or services. I believe that we should treat education in the same way. In fact, I consider education as an industry. We have to look at it in this way because we need to really take a serious look at what we do in the field of education. When we achieve this mindset, we can say that we have an advantage.

Q6: How do you think we can get governments in our region to be more involved in the advancements of health professions education? I think that one of the main aspects that would help very much is that of collaborative efforts across the countries of our region. We have around 22 countries in the EMR, just imagine what we could achieve if we just work together in order to induce this paradigm shift especially in our view of education in general and health professions education in particular. Until this day, we work individually. We are fortunate to have some encouragement from big organizations in the region like WHO and EMPHNET but we still need to do more collaborative and collective efforts to achieve more in this this domain.

Q7: Any last pieces of advice on how to improve health learning in this region? In the field of public health, we usually look more at the prevalence of diseases in this region more than we look at the priorities areas we need to work on. There is a need to differentiate between prevalent disease and priority health problems. In the latter, we consider many other indicators that count more in our quest to look at health problems. So, I would advise that we always consider our health priorities in education because this is a scientific methodology that needs to be acquired. Those working in this domain need to learn how to prioritize their health problems in their own countries and in their own region because usually, we tend to import knowledge and skills about health problems from abroad.





Mentors' Workshop Conducted to Support FETP Afghanistan

A mentors' workshop was conducted in Amman, Jordan between January 26 and 31, 2019. Twenty mentors from the central Ministry of Public Health, medical universities, and provincial offices attended this workshop. Additionally, five key members of the FETP Afghanistan steering committee, including the former Deputy Minister and Senior Advisor to His Excellency the Minister of Public Health also participated in this workshop.

The aim of this workshop was to train the potential mentors for FETP Afghanistan. The workshop covered the concept of mentorship in didactic as well as field training sessions. It also focused on mentorship skills in areas of surveillance; data quality; data analysis, interpretation and utilization; outbreak investigation and action; and other projects within the program. These sessions were supported by case studies to strengthen the participants' knowledge and capacity. As the first FETP cohort would be trained specifically on polio and immunization related disciplines, a few topics with respect to the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) and polio were also accommodated in this workshop. The mentors trained in this workshop will move on to facilitate didactic sessions and supervise the residents in the field.

Screening Workshop Conducted to Select FETP Residents in Afghanistan

FETP Afghanistan organized and conducted a five-day screening workshop between February 9 and 13, 2019, with the objective of identifying and selecting the most eligible, relevant, and committed medical doctors and paramedics to be enrolled in its first cohort. Furthermore, the FETP aimed to build the capacity of participants in the areas of public health conceptualization, epidemiology, outbreak investigation, National Diseases Surveillance and Response (NDSR), Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) surveillance, management of surveillance data, problem analysis, and data quality assurance. The workshop comprised both theoretical and practical training sessions. A total of 41 participants attended the workshop. Participants came from 15 provinces, including Kabul. The workshop was facilitated by local experts within the National Diseases Surveillance and Response program (NDSR), EPI and Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) units, as well as the Kabul University of Medical Science (KUMS) and the DG Preventive Medicine staff in Kabul.

Out of the 41 participants, 25 were selected to form the first cohort of FETP Afghanistan. The selection was made following a comprehensive evaluation of the trainees' competencies. The trainees were specifically evaluated for their experience and background, learning and knowledge, English, computer, and communication skills, and their active participation in class. Following this evaluation, the first cohort's residents were selected and there are plans to launch the first FETP Afghanistan intermediate workshop very soon.



Egypt

PROGRAM NEWS

FETP Egypt Celebrates Graduation of Cohort 19

On February 4, 2019, 21 epidemiologists graduated from FETP Egypt after fulfilling all their graduation requirements. The graduation ceremony was attended by senior officials at the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP). The Chief of the Preventive Sector and Endemic Diseases at the Ministry of Health and Population Dr. Alaa Eid, Head of Preventive Sector Technical Office Dr. Mohamad Abd El-Fattah, the General Director of Epidemiology and Surveillance Department Dr. Hanaa Abu Elsood, and FETP Egypt Coordinator Dr. Sahar Sami also attended the ceremony, alongside FETP alumni and public health professionals.

FETP Egypt Announces Recruitment for Cohort 21

An announcement for the recruitment of a new cohort was published through circulars distributed within all sectors, directorates, and districts in January 2019. Inclusion criteria listed on the announcement was based on the MoHP requirements. Interested candidates were asked to fill out an application on FETP Egypt's website. The application comprised open and closed ended questions. One hundred applicants were shortlisted and interviewed in person. The candidates' evaluation was web based. It measured the applicants' skills, qualifications, and experience using the Likert scale. Selected candidates will start the introductory/ screening course in April 2019.



FETP Egypt Cohort 20 Participates in Peer-Review Seminar

On January 27, 2019, a workshop took place in Cairo during which 21 residents defended their study proposals. The workshop helped residents in refining their study methodology and in identifying further steps to be taken in their research projects. At the end of this workshop, the residents took the mid-course exam. The exam assessed residents' problem-solving skills in the field of epidemiology. The questions covered the information delivered through the surveillance, outbreak investigation, basic biostatistics, and research methodology modules.





Egypt

PROGRAM NEWS

Updates from Egypt's Public Health Empowerment Program – Basic Field Epidemiology (PHEP-BFE)

PHEP-BFE's graduates participated in a number of activities following the conclusion of the three-month program. A two-day workshop was held in Cairo between January 13 and 14, 2019, in which PHEP-BFE graduates from the first and second cohorts participated. During this workshop, the graduates presented their achievements regarding the improvement of surveillance reporting as well as their contributions to outbreak investigations, their response to public health events, as well as their contribution to the improvement of surveillance data quality, and reporting timeliness. Leaders from the Ministry of Health and Population and PHEP mentors were also in attendance.

Cohort 20 Participates in Advanced Biostatistics Course

A course on Advanced Biostatistics was held in Cairo between March 17 and 21, 2019. The goal of this training was to enhance the residents' knowledge and skills regarding common statistical methods used in epidemiology and to enable them to understand the concept of statistical inference. This workshop, which is part of Module 6 within the FETP curriculum, was conducted in collaboration with the Public Health Department of Cairo University's Faculty of Medicine. After the conclusion of the course, residents were able to read, interpret, and critically evaluate statistics within different epidemiological studies. Residents also presented their progress regarding the data collection of their study projects in the presence of public health professionals from Ministry of Health and Population, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and representatives of other entities.





Public Health Empowerment Program – Surveillance for Polio Officers Second Cohort Celebrates Graduation

The Iraq Ministry of Health and GHD/EMPHNET conducted the third workshop for the Public Health Empowerment Program – Surveillance for Polio Officers (PHEP-SPO) between March 24 and 26, 2019. Twenty-eight participants took part in this workshop, representing the districts of three liberated provinces from ISIS (Nenawa, Anbar and Salah al-Din). On the third day of the workshop, the graduation ceremony was held under the patronage of the Director General of the Public Health Directorate.



Residents Participate in Jordanian National Micronutrients and Nutrition Survey

The Jordanian National Micronutrients and Nutrition Survey, the second in Jordan’s history, was conducted in households throughout the month of March 2019. The survey was conducted by the Jordan Ministry of Health (MoH) in collaboration with the World Food Program, the Jordan Health Aid Society, UNICEF, while additional support was provided by the American University of Beirut. The survey was designed to collect data on the micronutrient status of children, and it also assessed the anthropometric status of children. Thirteen FETP residents were involved in this national survey. They served as the focal points of the MoH. They also supervised field teams to ensure that the required standards of the survey were met.



Frontline FETP Expected to Empower Public Health System in Early Detection and Rapid Response

The National School of Public Health in Morocco (ENSP), in collaboration with the Directorate of Epidemiology and Control Diseases launched the Frontline Field Epidemiology Training Program. This is a four-month, in-service training program which focuses on detection of and response to diseases and events of public health concern. A team from the National School of Public Health and the Directorate of Epidemiology was assigned for planning, preparing, and adapting FETP-Frontline training material, which were referenced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and EMPHNET and adapted to the national context. Inclusion criteria for participation was applied. Out of 32 Participants originally joining the program, 30 graduated or (93.8%). 87.5% of these Participants were males. Twenty participants were from provincial levels, 4 were from regional levels, 4 from points of entry, and 4 from the military sector. Three workshops were conducted as part of the program.

Participants were asked to conduct field activities after each workshop. Each participant was supervised by an advanced FETP graduate. During their first round of fieldwork, 81.2% noticed low surveillance reporting at provincial levels regarding timeliness and completeness, while 93.8% of the participants took part in outbreak investigations. By the end of training, their knowledge of epidemiology was improved, and all participants sharpened their presentation skills and were able to write scientific reports. The implementation of the FETP-Frontline was successful, and it met its objectives. It is seen as the best solution to reach at least one trained epidemiologist for 200, 000 inhabitants.

FETP Morocco Investigates Outbreak of Hepatitis A in the Province of Mdiq-Fnideq, Morocco 2019

On January 14, 2019, a laboratory in the province of M'diq-Fnideq reported 20 confirmed cases of Hepatitis A. On the same day, the provincial hospital declared the hospitalization of another case. Following this news, an investigation was conducted to identify potential risk factors and to adopt the most suitable control measures to contain the epidemic. The epidemiological survey covered all individuals living in the province of M'diq-Fnideq who were presented with mucocutaneous jaundice with general signs since the beginning of December 2018. A sociodemographic and clinical data collection was carried out through a questionnaire supplemented by statements, phone interviews, and home or school visits. An environmental investigation was conducted in the neighborhood of the affected households. As a result, 42 cases were identified, including 37 confirmed cases, on January 31, 2019. Seven cases were hospitalized including three cases of fulminant hepatitis. The epidemic peak reached 15 cases in the second week of January 2019. By that point, the epidemic had affected every neighborhood in the province. This investigation identified the wells' source of contamination, so the treatment for collective use has been undertaken. The investigation concluded that there is a need for Well Sanitary Control as well as the need to prohibit any collective use of drilling water within the city.



FELTP Pakistan Starts New Frontline FELTP Cohort in Multan, Punjab

A new FELTP frontline cohort began its training in Multan, Punjab as of February 2019. A total of 18 medical doctors from various districts of Southern Punjab are participating in this three-month course. This cohort is run by the FELTP Provincial Disease Surveillance and Response Unit (DSRU) in Punjab in collaboration with National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Federal FELTP team.

Cohort 12 of FELTP Pakistan Starts Training

The 12th cohort of FELTP Pakistan has started its two-year training at the NIH Islamabad on March 18, 2019. A total of 30 fellows from all provinces, Army Medical Corps, and the State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir joined the course.



Saudi Arabia

PROGRAM NEWS

FETP Saudi Arabia Residents Engage in Theoretical Training and Fieldwork

FETP Saudi Arabia has had a busy year as first year residents were engaged in didactic training as well as field work. Since January 1, residents have worked on multiple outbreaks of infectious diseases, including mumps and MERS-CoV. At their attachments, residents have also worked on non-communicable disease issues and surveillance evaluations. Furthermore, second year residents are finalizing projects and university requirements in anticipation of training completion.



Field Epidemiology Training Program
Assistant Agency for Preventive Health, Agency for Public Health
Ministry of Health, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

12:44:40 Tuesday, April 16, 2019

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FETP Saudi Arabia Launches Public Health Digital Library

In January 2019, the Saudi Field Epidemiology Training Program, in collaboration with the Saudi Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched its [public health digital library](#), as one of the FETP Saudi Arabia initiatives to promote public health research for FETP residents and public health professionals at the Ministry of Health. In conjunction with this event, two workshops were conducted to instruct new users on how to access available articles and how to conduct basic search. The first workshop was on February 13, 2019, at the main auditorium of the National Laboratory, and the second one was on February 14, at the Global Center for Mass Gathering Medicine.



Sudan

PROGRAM NEWS

FETP Sudan Supports Red Sea State in Controlling Chikungunya Epidemic

The Director of Sudan Health Emergencies and Epidemic Control – HEEC Dr. Babiker Elmugbool, Director of IVM Mr. Osman Ali, and FETP Sudan Technical Advisor Dr. El-Fatih Malik visited the Red Sea State between January 20 and 22, 2019. The purpose of this visit was to provide technical support for the state and to control the ongoing epidemic of chikungunya. As part of the visit, a technical discussion with specialists and general practitioners working at the main city hospital was carried out. The discussion covered issues related to the diagnosis and management of the chikungunya cases as well as the 21 deaths attributed to chikungunya. The discussions highlighted the need to train junior medical doctors in case management (for chikungunya and haemorrhagic fevers), and it was raised as an urgent issue to be considered at the national level.

FETP Sudan Participates in XII International Epidemiological Association-Eastern Mediterranean Region Scientific Meeting

An abstract titled “Assessment of an e-platform to Monitor Field Epidemiology Residents during Their Field Placements in Sudan” was presented at the XII International Epidemiological Association-Eastern Mediterranean Region Scientific Meeting in Beirut, Lebanon, between February 21 and 23, 2019. Presenters from FETP Sudan were Technical Coordinator Dr. Shahd Osman Technical Coordinator, FETP Sudan e-Learning Coordinator Dr. Leena Alsamani, and FETP Sudan Technical Advisor Dr. El-Fatih Malik, and FETP Sudan Project Manager Dr. Al-Muez Al-Najem. The paper discusses the objectives of an e-portfolio for FETP residents and an evaluation of the FETP Sudan experience in using the platform.



FETP Sudan Develops Strategic Plan for 2019-2023

FETP Sudan jointly with EMPHNET developed its FETP strategic plan for 2019 -2023. The plan aims at building country-wide capacity in forecasting, timely detection, investigation of, and response to epidemics and public health emergencies. It also aims at collaborating with other stakeholders to promote health at the national, regional, and global levels. To achieve this, FETP Sudan will work closely with partners and stakeholders to establish an accredited country-based FETP which is tailored to different tiers of the health system in Sudan and which can respond to the needs of different networks and partners.



GHD/EMPHNET News

Center of Excellence for Applied Epidemiology

GHD/EMPHNET Supports Stakeholders' Workshop for Field Epidemiology Training Program Veterinarian (FETP-V in Bangladesh)

Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (CVASU) conducted an FETP-V stakeholder meeting between January 19 to 20, 2019 in Bangladesh. GHD/EMPHNET aims to assist Bangladesh in the latter's aims to build its capacity to respond to outbreaks of potentially dangerous zoonotic pathogens and surveillance of zoonotic events. Therefore, in collaboration with the National Authorities of Bangladesh, it intends to contribute to the establishment of a Veterinary Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP-V). The meeting was attended by 35 participants. Participants included distinguished partners from: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Department of Livestock Services (DLS) within the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the University of Hong Kong, the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), the International Center for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b), the Central Disease Investigation Laboratory (CDIL), the Livestock Research Institute (LRI), USAID/Bangladesh, Bangladesh Agricultural University, and Sylhet Agricultural University.

EMPHNET Participates in Implementation Meeting for Global Field Epidemiology Roadmap

The Task Force for Global Health held a meeting to begin developing the implementation strategy for the recommendations put forth in the Global Field Epidemiology Roadmap. The meeting took place at the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters between February 13 and 15, 2019. The WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus attended this meeting alongside representatives from organizations, universities, FETP networks, and governmental entities.



The meeting was also attended by representatives from the US CDC, Cooperative Biological Engagement Program, Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security, European CDC, TEPHINET, Australian National University, South Africa Regional Global Disease Detection Center, AFENET, FAO, and Africa CDC. Participants reviewed the recommendations produced by the Global Field Epidemiology Roadmap, which was the outcome of a meeting held last year in Bellagio stakeholders from around the world gathered to develop strong and sustainable field epidemiology capacities worldwide.



GHD/EMPHNET News

Disease Control and Emergency Management

EMPHNET Supports the One Health Approach for Brucellosis Surveillance in Jordan

Brucellosis is the most widespread zoonotic disease worldwide, and it is ranked as one of the seven most neglected diseases according to the World Health Organization (WHO). In Jordan, there is not enough data regarding the epidemiological profile of brucellosis in the country. As such, EMPHNET is planning to implement a new laboratory-based surveillance for brucellosis in humans and animals across three governorates in Jordan: East Amman, Karak and Mafraq. Funded by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), EMPHNET is collaborating with the Jordan Ministry of Health (MoH), the Jordan Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and the US Center for Disease Control (CDC) in a project titled Evaluating the impact of Enhanced Laboratory-Based Surveillance of Animal and Human Brucellosis in Jordan to achieve this goal.

This project commenced in July 2018 and it is still in progress. It adopts the One Health approach by involving both the human and animal health sectors, and it aims to create a better understanding of the disease burden, mechanism of transmission between animals and humans, and its major risk factors.

EMPHNET Supports Training on Anthrax PCR Test at Biosafety Level 3 Laboratory in Jordan

In collaboration with the Jordan Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), EMPHNET conducted a one-day on-the-job training on Anthrax PCR testing and diagnostic techniques. The training targeted professionals working at the Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL) and the Central Veterinary Laboratory (CVL).

It took place at the MoH's Biosafety Level 3 (BSL-3) Laboratory. Through the training sessions, the participants were introduced to the BSL-3 facility and were informed of its rules and regulations. Furthermore, participants took part in a practical session on the PCR testing technique.





GHD/EMPHNET Supports Training Workshops in Iraq to Strengthen Lab-Based Surveillance of Human and Animal Brucellosis

The Iraq Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and GHD/EMPHNET are working to strengthen laboratory-based surveillance of human and animal brucellosis in the country's high-risk areas. This is a collaboration that has started in 2016 in the provinces of Babel and Diala, and it continues today to include other provinces. Targeting additional districts within the provinces of Maysan and Wasit, GHD/EMPHNET, the MoH, and the MoA conducted a series of training workshops on brucellosis. These workshops targeted clinicians, laboratory technicians, and veterinarians. These new districts were incorporated into this series of training sessions because they have recently witnessed outbreaks of brucellosis. They were not previously included in 2017, but they are now considered high-risk areas because of their high animal population and their need for enhanced brucellosis diagnostics.

GHD/ EMPHNET Supports Epi Info Training in Iraq

In collaboration with the Iraq Ministry of Health (MoH), GHD/EMPHNET conducted a training workshop between January 7 and 10, 2019, aimed at increasing the capacity of the health professionals in Iraq and specifically their use of the Epi Info software. The training targeted 12 public health professionals from Baghdad, Karbala, Kirkuk, and Maysan health directorates as well as participants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Iraq CDC) and the Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL) in Baghdad. The training's participants included focal points for a joint project between the Iraq MoH and GHD/EMPHNET.



This project is implemented to conduct a hospital-based surveillance of Meningococcal meningitis in the country. This project is executed in four governorates: Baghdad (Russafa, Karkh), Karbala, Kirkuk, and Maysan.



GHD/EMPHNET News

Environmental Health

GHD/EMPHNET Participates in Regional Meeting on Chemical Events and Poison Centers

The World Health Organization's Center for Environmental Health Action (WHO- CEHA) is aiming to create a regional framework for public health response to chemical events and to establish a regional network of poison centers for International Health Regulations (IHR) implementation. For this purpose, the WHO -CEHA organized a regional meeting between February 16 and 18, 2019, in Amman, Jordan. Representatives of ministries of health from the region, universities, national poison centers, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, and the WHO Jordan Office participated in this meeting. As part of its participation, GHD/EMPHNET took part in the technical discussion by providing expert input. Potential collaborations in the area of chemical event management were also explored.

GHD/EMPHNET Participates in Regional Meeting on Air Pollution

Between February 24 and 26, 2019, the Center for Environmental Health Action of the World Health Organization (WHO-CEHA) organized a regional meeting to explore establishing an early warning system for air pollution episodes and enhancing health messages communication during such episodes. The EMPHNET delegation participated in a technical discussion impacts of air pollution on communicable and non- communicable diseases. The delegation provided expert input and explored potential collaborations in the area of measuring and responding to air pollution in countries of the region.



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GHD/EMPHNET News

Polio and Immunization

GHD/EMPHNET Holds Annual Meeting for Polio Eradication and Routine Immunization Activities in Afghanistan

Between January 27 and 28, 2019, GHD/EMPHNET held a meeting with its Polio and Routine Immunization Country Team from Afghanistan. The meeting served as an annual review of the activities implemented by the team in the past year. It reflected on major achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. Its sessions also focused on planned activities for 2019, with a special focus on performance indicators. Public Health Professionals from Afghanistan and the US CDC Atlanta working on Polio Eradication, Routine Immunization and Vaccine Preventable Surveillance (VPDS) were in attendance.



Sudan Federal Ministry of Health Conducts First Workshop of Cohort Four Public Health Empowerment Program – Surveillance for Polio Officers

The Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) in Sudan and GHD/EMPHNET launched the fourth Public Health Empowerment Program – Surveillance for Polio Officers (PHEP-SPO) cohort. The launch took place during an opening ceremony held on February 24, 2019, in Khartoum, Sudan, for the PHEP-SPO's mentors' training and the program's first workshop. The program's first workshop, titled Public Health Surveillance, commenced following the launching ceremony.



GHD/EMPHNET Supports Iraq MoH in Conducting RI Micro-plans Assessments within Six Targeted Provinces

Between 2017 and 2018, GHD/EMPHNET supported the Iraq Ministry of Health (MoH) in a series of training targeting expanded program on immunization (EPI) staff on the development of high-quality micro-plans for routine immunization (RI) in all main health centers providing vaccination in selected eight health directorates. These centers were located in Baghdad Al-Kerkh, Babylon, Diwaniya, Diyala, Kerbala, Thi-Qar, Muthana, and Wasit. A total number of 939 EPI staff were trained in 456 health centers within 50 districts. By the end of every training, every health center had a quality RI microplans ready for implementation.

To assess the implementation of these RI microplans as well as EPI supportive supervision following this series of training, GHD/EMPHNET supported the Iraq MoH in an assessment targeting seven districts in the aforementioned provinces.

GHD/EMPHNET Participates in GAVI Leadership, Management and Coordination Stakeholders Workshop

GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, is supporting health systems in strengthening immunization through building the institutional capacity of GAVI-eligible countries in terms of Leadership, Management, and Coordination (LMC). The LMC support is one of the strategic enablers of Gavi's 2016-2020 strategy. It aims to strengthen capacities through enhancing management of Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) management and creating a functioning coordination forum such as the Interagency Coordination Committee (ICC) /Health Sector Coordination Committee (HSCC) or any equivalent body and National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) functionality.

As one of the partners, GHD/EMPHNET participated in a high-level Gavi Leadership, Management and Coordination (LMC) stakeholders' workshop on early learning between February 13 and 14, 2019.

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EMPHNET and Jordan Ministry of Health Sign Memorandum of Understanding

EMPHNET renewed its partnership with the Jordan Ministry of Health (MoH), with a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by both sides on March 4, 2019. EMPHNET's Executive Director Dr. Mohannad Al-Nsour signed the agreement on behalf of EMPHNET, while the Jordan Minister of Health H. E. Dr. Ghazi Al Zabin signed the agreement on behalf of the ministry.

The terms of this agreement stipulate that both sides collaborate to launch initiatives that promise better public health outcomes for Jordan. Through this agreement, the MoH will be responsible for providing the latter with information related to health gaps that need to be addressed, while EMPHNET will assist the MoH by providing technical support to address gaps, so that together both entities work to collaboratively tackle different public health challenges.



EMPHNET Participates in National Dialogue on Universal Health Coverage within Jordan

Jordan's Higher Health Council and the World Health Organization Country Office in Jordan held a national dialogue for leaders under the title "Towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Jordan." The dialogue took place between March 18 and 19, at the Dead Sea. Representatives of the Ministry of Health, the health private sector, universities, the Parliament of Jordan, EMPHNET, and non-governmental organizations participated in the discussions. They discussed issues relevant to ensuring financing and enhancing primary healthcare services. They also explored means to improve the health system's response to non-communicable diseases.



EMPHNET Holds Technical Steering Committee Meeting for Establishing harmonized Reproductive Health Registry in Mafrq

EMPHNET held the second meeting for the Technical Steering Committee which is responsible for facilitating and guiding the project for establishing a harmonized Reproductive Health Registry (hRHR) in Al Mafrq Governorate, Jordan. The meeting took place on March 6, 2019, and it comes as one step forward taken towards the establishment of the hRHR in the governorate. It is also one of a series of meetings that will be conducted during the year 2019, reflecting the continuous collaboration with the reproductive health stakeholders and partners from the Ministry of Health (MoH) and other health care sectors to improve reproductive health care services. .



GHD/EMPHNET Participates in Africa CDC's Digital Disease Surveillance Workshop

GHD/EMPHNET participated in the Digital Disease Surveillance in Africa Workshop organized by the Africa CDC. Held in collaboration with the Fogarty International Center and U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Workshop took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, between February 28 and March 1, 2019.

GHD/EMPHNET representatives presented the potential role of the organization in supporting and coordinating the application of such digital surveillance methods in African countries. In addition, GHD/EMPHNET representatives shared the GHD/EMPHNET experience in digital surveillance methods in the region, focusing on relevant opportunities and challenges.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Public Health Issue in Focus:

Sustainable Development Goals and Health

Sustainable Development Goals: What are they?

Adopted in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global plan set to address challenges faced by countries worldwide in the social, health, environmental, economic, financial, human rights, and educational arenas. The SDGs consist of seventeen goals, each goal comprising its respective targets. Each target, in turn, has its own indicators. While each SDG pertains to a specific topic (e.g.: education, health, climate change), they all overlap with each other.

Within the SDGs, the third goal is dedicated to health since it is, logically, an essential component of sustainable development. Goal 3 reads “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.” The targets of this goal are nine. The first two targets pertain to maternal and child health: the first aiming to reduce global maternal mortality ratio “to less than 70 per 100,000 live births,” while the second aims to put an end to preventable deaths of newborns and children under the age of five. A closely related target is number seven, which aims to guarantee universal access to sexual and reproductive health services by 2030.

For communicable diseases, target three aims to end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases, as well as fight hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases. On the other hand, target four aims to enhance prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases in order to reduce their mortality. By 2020, target 6 aims to reduce by half the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents. Furthermore, target five aims to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, while target 3.A aims to strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries.

In issues relevant to threat reduction, targets 3.D aims to strengthen the capacity of countries, especially developing ones, in areas of risk reduction and management of health risks at the national and global levels. Furthermore, target 9 aims to reduce deaths as well as illnesses resulting from hazardous chemicals and the pollution of air, water, and soil. In immunization, Target 3.B aims to support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and noncommunicable diseases, especially for developing countries. Target 8 aims to achieve universal health coverage. Last but not least, are targets relevant to health workforce. Target 3.C. aims to enhance health workforce development in developing countries.

Health in Other Sustainable Development Goals

Among the rest of the SDGs are goals stated to areas other than health. However, within their respective targets, some of these goes directly link to health issues.

For instance, Goal 2 reads “Zero Hunger.” The second target of this goal is: “By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under the age of 5, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.” Proper nutrition is crucial to a healthy lifestyle, and malnutrition is detrimental to one’s health. This is where Goal 2 is relevant to health, and this is where public health professionals can work to promote healthy eating to prevent diseases.

“Quality Education” is Goal 4 of the SDGs. Its seventh target reads: “ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.” While not clearly stated above, “the knowledge...needed to promote sustainable development” can include health education and health awareness provided to communities in order to take charge of their own health. Thus, they can maintain a healthy lifestyle which will lead to sustainable development. “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” is goal number 6. The sixth target of this goal states:

Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences. Giving males and females the needed sexual and reproductive health services protects them against diseases and saves their lives. This target clearly relates to health. Also, target 2 of the same goal refers to eliminating “all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.” Such practices harm the physical and psychological well-being of female victims, and their prevention is necessary to maintain healthy females, both physically and psychologically.

The title of goal six is “Ensure access to water and sanitation for all.” Three of its targets clearly address health issues, as follows:

- Target 1 By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all
- Target 2 By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations
- Target 3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally Water-borne diseases can be reduced and eliminated through the provision of clean and safe water to the public.

Goal 17 focuses on enhancing cooperation amongst countries and across sectors in technology, finance, capacity building, and systemic issues. The goal reads “Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.”