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Newsletter Issue 30

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2018**

EMPHNET's Word By: Dr. Mohannad Al-Nsour, Executive Director

The first quarter of 2018 was successfully concluded with the Sixth EMPHNET Regional Conference which took place in Amman, Jordan, between March 26 until March 29, 2018.

During the three days of the conference, public health professionals gathered under the theme of "Innovative Approaches: Adapting to the EMR Context." This theme was formulated to highlight the importance of creating new solutions to combat public health threats facing our region, and to encourage public health professionals to integrate innovation into their practices. Reasonable alternative solutions are needed to address complex situations that are faced in the region. Limited resources, persistence of communicable and non-communicable diseases, escalating conflicts, poverty, and political instabilities in many countries are still threatening health development in the region. This theme echoes our belief that collaboration and investment in new approaches and innovations is central to bringing about desirable change in our region.

About 250 scholars, researchers and residents were in attendance representing governmental, international, UN, and civil society organizations, as well as universities and networks. Representations from the region were from twenty countries, ten of which, have Field Epidemiology Training Programs (FETPs): Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen.

Throughout the conference, public health professionals presented their achievements in the field. They showed an example of the great efforts undertaken to explore solutions that assist in solving public health challenges, which is a key element for strengthening public health in the region. The presenters were successful in conveying recommendations based on scientific inquiry, thus contributing to building knowledge and bringing solutions of public health within the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR).

Both speakers and audience engaged in fruitful discussions about the public health challenges facing our region, and they reinforced the idea that more should be done to initiate new projects and programs, that transfer ideas into action.

This impressive participation from both the public health and FETP communities reflects EMPHNET's growth and the strong partnerships that have been established in the region. EMPHNET will continue to be committed to supporting partners, and to creating collective forces that allow us to achieve, together, better public health for our populations.

In conclusion, I thank the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for hosting the conference, and Her Royal Highness Princess Muna Al Hussein for her patronage of the conference and the Jordan Ministry of Health for their continuous support. I also thank the FETP directors and advisors for contributing to the various activities of the conference. Finally, I thank the EMPHNET staff for working hard as team to organize this very successful event.

The success of this conference and the foreseen growth of its impact is all a result of collaborative efforts. After all, teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision, and our common vision is achieving better public health outcomes for the people in our communities.

EMPHNET Holds Sixth Regional Conference in Amman, Jordan



It was on the evening of March 26, 2018 that the Sixth EMPHNET Regional Conference commenced its sessions in an opening ceremony held under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Muna Al- Hussein. The ceremony included speeches given by Chairperson of the Board of Directors of EMPHNET Dr. Bashir Noormal, TEPHINET Director Dr. Dionisio Herrera, Branch Chief, Workforce and Institute Development Branch from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Dr. Henry (Kip) Bagget, EMPHNET Executive Director, Dr. Mohannad Al-Nsour, and representing Her Royal Highness Princess Muna Al-Hussein was Jordan's Minister of Health His Excellency Prof. Mahmoud Al-Shayyab. The ceremony also included a keynote address given by Prof. Salman Rawaf from Imperial College of London, who spoke about the status of public health in the EMR.

Held under the theme "Innovative Approaches: Adapting to the Current EMR Context", conference sessions provided a space for participants to discuss how innovative approaches can be adapted to improve public health practice in countries throughout the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR). More specifically, the conference's sessions created an opportunity for public health professionals from the region to present their accomplishments to a wide audience. Furthermore, it brought together public health officials, experts, and scientists who are keen on examining and discussing innovative approaches attempted to strengthen public health in the EMR. It also provided an invaluable networking opportunity geared towards improving public health practice.

The conference witnessed three days of roundtable discussions, pre-conference workshops and oral and poster presentations. These sessions and presentations were given by FETP residents, graduates, and other public health professionals from the Eastern Mediterranean Regional and beyond.



EMPHNET Conducts Five Pre-conference Workshops



Rapid Response Teams

This workshop updated the knowledge of participants on emergency management and rapid response to disease outbreaks. It provided a survey of available rapid response procedures and protocols, alongside ample exposure to timely information on disasters and complex emergencies in the region. Participants learned about major emergencies in the EMR, as well as principles of rapid response and emergency management.



Innovative Disease Surveillance

The Innovative Surveillance pre-conference workshop highlighted the emerging field of new technologies and innovative tools. This workshop highlighted innovative surveillance tools that contribute to global efforts made to detect and respond to outbreaks and public health events in a timelier manner. Workshop participants learned about innovative disease surveillance methods and how to use the EpiCore platform to verify outbreaks.



Polio Transition and Country Routine Immunization

This workshop enabled participants to actively discuss the current challenges facing Routine Immunization (RI) in the region. Its sessions focused on countries facing emergency situations while exploring opportunities to scale up performance of RI. It tackled regional progress and challenges faced towards achieving the goals of the Regional Vaccine Action Plan (RVAP). It also offered discussions on immunization in security compromised situations, offering a specific emphasis on lessons learned.

FETP Accreditation

The FETP Accreditation workshop defined FETP accreditation as a process that refers to a set of minimum quality standards that improve the quality of programs and that facilitate the identification of program needs. The workshop offered directors/coordinators and FETP management staff the knowledge they need to ensure that their programs are accredited.



Human and Animal Brucellosis

The Human and Animal Brucellosis pre-conference workshop allowed for discussions on the impact of zoonotic diseases on global health security, while exploring collaborative opportunities for professionals working on human and animal health in issues related to brucellosis surveillance, diagnosis and control in the region. It focused on approaches for detecting and preventing brucellosis in rural areas of the region where borders are more porous and where neighboring countries need to address threats together.



Roundtable Discussions



Towards the Consolidation of an FETP Network

In the first roundtable discussion titled, “Towards the Consolidation of an FETP Network,” an opportunity was given to all FETP family members to share methods and strategies that could help in growing the FETP network and improving the channels of sharing experiences from the field and within public health systems, while the roundtable titled “Polio Eradication Efforts and Transition Planning for Measles Elimination” provided a space to tackle why priority countries in the Region have not been able to reach, with measles campaigns, as many children in high risk and remote areas as has been the case with polio supplementary immunization activities (SIAs), knowing in particular that both campaigns are in general conducted by the same people. This session also offered a review of the Polio SIAs package of assets, innovative tools and procedures that made polio SIAs highly successful and that could not be used for measles campaigns.

In this roundtable, panelists included Director of the GHD/EMPHNET Center of Excellence of Applied Epidemiology Dr. Mohamed Chahed, GHD/EMPHNET’s Executive Director Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour, Chief of the U.S. CDC’s Workforce and Institute Development Branch Dr. Kip Baggett, The current President of the EPIET Alumni Network (EAN) Dr. Amr Baidjoe, the Executive Director of “Connecting Organizations for Regional Disease Surveillance” (CORDS) Dr. Christophe Longuet, and Professor at Ahfad University for Women Dr. Al Fath Al Samani, and last but not least the Director of TEPHINET Dr. Dionisio Herrera.

Confronting *Candida auris*: An Emerging Multidrug-Resistant Global Pathogen

In this session, *Candida auris* was addressed as an emerging global pathogen. The session included a concise overview of the pathogen, pinpointing challenges associated with prevention, detection and control, and it also highlighted the need to raise the awareness of relevant professionals in the Region to help them develop and implement adequate, relevant detection and control strategies.

The panelists of this session included; American Society of Microbiology (ASM) Country Ambassador to UAE Dr. Adnan Alatoom, Resident Advisor of the FELTP in Pakistan Dr. Rana Jawad Asghar, Medical Epidemiologist in the Mycotic Diseases Branch at the CDC. Dr. Snigdha Vallabhaneni, and Founder of Integral Global Consulting Mr. Nabil Ahmed.



Polio Eradication Efforts and Transition Planning for Measles Elimination



The roundtable titled “Polio Eradication Efforts and Transition Planning for Measles Elimination” provided a space to tackle why priority countries in the Region have not been able to reach, with measles campaigns, as many children in high risk and remote areas as has been the case with polio supplementary immunization activities (SIAs), knowing in particular that both campaigns are in general conducted by the same people. This session also offered a review of the Polio SIAs package of assets, innovative tools and procedures that made polio SIAs highly successful and that could not be used for measles campaigns.

This session was steered by the following panelists; Director of the WHO Regional Center for Polio Eradication and Health Emergencies, and Manager of the WHO Polio Eradication Program for the 22 countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region Dr. Christopher Maher, Manager of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Polio Team Dr. Jay Wenger, Dean of the School of Medicine and Associate Professor of Pediatric Infectious Diseases at the Jordan University of Science and Technology Dr. Wail Ahmad Hayajneh, and the Lead for Eastern Mediterranean Region Team in the Polio Eradication Branch in the Global Immunization Division Mr. Derek Ehrhardt.

Mobile Data Collection (MDC) and Other Innovative Tools to Enhance Decision Making

The roundtable sessions titled “Mobile Data Collection (MDC) and other Innovative Tools to Enhance Decision Making” offered participants a chance to share experiences from different countries on various technical and programmatic areas of the use and application of MDC. Panelists in this session shared their perspective and experience from various countries, focusing on how MDC works, challenges faced, lessons learned, and how such technologies can affect decision-making processes.

This discussion was steered by Secretary of the National Research Ethics Committee in Egypt Dr. Amr Youssef Ali, Immunization Specialist UNICEF MENA Regional Office Dr. Chandrasegarar Soloman, Director of Field Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit Dr. Abdulaal Chittheer Al-khumis.



The discussion was also steered by Board Member of Rahma Cancer Care Association, Chief of Health and Nutrition in UNICEF Iraq Dr. SM Moazzem Hossain, and Operational Research Specialist for GHD/EMPHNET. Dr. Mirwais Amiri, MD, MPH.

One Health to Achieve Global Health Security



In the session on “One Health to Achieve Global Health Security,” discussions contributed to more effective planning for rapid investigation and response activities for zoonotic disease events. At the end of the roundtable, panelists provided recommendations for large-scale integration for improving zoonotic diseases management and related best practices among the human, animal health and environmental sectors. In the session titled “Confronting *Candida auris*: An Emerging Multidrug-Resistant Global Pathogen.” *Candida auris* was addressed as an emerging global pathogen. The session included a concise overview of the pathogen, pinpointing challenges associated with prevention, detection and control, and it also highlighted the need to raise the awareness of relevant professionals in the Region to help them develop and implement adequate, relevant detection and control strategies.

In this discussion, panelists included; Professor of Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, at the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) Dr. Ahmad Al-Majal, Research Professor and Director of the King Abdullah Fellowship Program at Emory University, Rollins School of Public Health Dr. Scott JN McNabb, Deputy Director/ Senior Scientific Officer Working in the Federal Agricultural Organization, and the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC). Dr. Zahida Fatima.

Functioning and Sustainable Country Public Health Emergency Response Operation Framework

The session titled “Functioning and Sustainable Country Public Health Emergency Response Operation Framework” highlighted the importance for countries to develop their public health emergency response operation capacities while capitalizing on all available opportunities such as their FETP graduates and residents. The discussion highlighted ways to adopt a comprehensive approach that can result in an integrated and well-functioning operational package which links rapid response teams, the emergency operation center, country FETP and other available relevant human resources with capacity building opportunities.



This session was facilitated by Professor of Community Health at the Community Health Department, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at Sana'a University and Technical Advisor to the YFETP Dr. Abdel Wahed Al Serouri, Director of Public Health Department at the Ministry of Public Health in Qatar Dr. Mohamed Bin Hamad Al Thani, Consultant for Global Health, Communicable Disease Control and Senior Medical Advisor Dr Mark Salter, Epidemiologist with the Global Rapid Response Team (GRRT) at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Dr. Tasha Stehling-Ariza, Public Health Consultant Dr. Elmuez Eltayeb, and former Coordinator for Communicable Diseases Control and Polio Eradication at WHO-EMRO Dr. Ezzeddine Mohsni.

Oral and Poster Presentations



One of the conference's key objectives is to provide a space for FETP residents, graduates, and public health professionals to showcase their achievements.

In this regard, a total of 421 abstracts were submitted to be presented as oral and poster presentations in this edition of EMPHNET's regional conference. After being reviewed by a committee, 147 abstracts were accepted. Out of these, 111 were accepted for oral presentations while 36 were accepted for poster presentations. Presentations were given by Field Epidemiology Training Program residents and graduates as well as other public health professionals coming from Pakistan, Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Palestine, Tunisia, Oman, and Sudan.

The abstracts presented covered the following areas; Respiratory Diseases, Vaccine Preventable Diseases, Surveillance Systems, Outbreak Investigation Foodborne Diseases, Maternal and Child Health, Field Epidemiology Training Programs and Activities, Vector-borne Diseases, Surveillance Systems and Vaccine Preventable Diseases, Innovative Surveillance, Anti-Microbial Diseases, Outbreak Investigation Waterborne Diseases, Zoonotic Diseases, NCDs, and others.

In numbers, for oral presentations the conference saw 36 abstracts accepted from Pakistan, 13 from Iraq, 11 from Egypt, 11 from Egypt, eight from Morocco, seven from Jordan and another seven from Saudi Arabia, four from Lebanon, three from Afghanistan and another three from Bangladesh, and two from both Palestine and Tunisia each, and finally one from Oman. Similarly, in terms of poster presentations the conference saw; 16 from Pakistan, eight from Morocco, three from Iraq, and two from Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen each, and one from Afghanistan and Sudan each.

This was the first of EMPHNET's conference to see participation from Tunisia and Sudan, as they are countries seeing new FETPs established in them this year. Furthermore, this was the first edition of the EMPHNET's conferences to see abstracts accepted by Public Health Professionals that were not FETPs.

EpiShares, the Region's Public Health Social Network is Launched

The conference saw the launch of EpiShares, a networking platform powered by GHD/EMPHNET. This platform was developed with the aim to increase opportunities for the exchange of knowledge amongst public health professionals.



EMPHNET Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Sudan Ministry of Health



On the sidelines of the Sixth EMPHNET Regional Conference, EMPHNET and the Sudan Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) renewed their partnership through signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on March 27, 2018, in Amman, Jordan.

Under this MoU, both partners will work together to strengthen the health system in Sudan. Also, under this agreement, both partners aim to institutionalize cooperation between EMPHNET and the FMoH by providing a general framework for areas for collaboration. The MOU will also facilitate the exchange of experience and the support of joint projects.

EMPHNET Executive Director Dr. Mohannad Al-Nsour signed the MoU on behalf of EMPHNET and Undersecretary of the FMoH Dr. Isameddin Mohammed Abdalla, signed it on behalf of the latter. The signing was attended by senior FMoH and EMPHNET staff.

The FETP Alumni Association



Furthermore, the conference also saw the launch of an Alumni Association aimed at bringing FETP alumni together in a space where they can share experiences. The meeting provided a space for interested FETP graduates to meet and to lift this initiative off the ground.

EMPHNET Explores Collaboration Opportunities with Partners from the Region and Beyond



On the sidelines of the Sixth EMPHNET Regional Conference, several side meetings were held between EMPHNET and delegations from the Ministries of Health in the region, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Biosecurity Engagement Program (BEP), and the Connecting Organizations for Regional Disease Surveillance (CORDS).

During these meetings, opportunities for existing and potential partnerships were explored. EMPHNET expressed its strong commitment to supporting the Ministries of Health in the region, while also reinforcing its strong commitment to further collaboration with its other regional and international partners towards the common goal of promoting better public health in the region.

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The Closing Ceremony



On March 29, the conference came to a close with a ceremony that saw speeches from EMPHNET's Chairman of the Board of Directors Dr. Bashir Noormal, the Senior Advisor for the Field Epidemiology Training Program Branch at CDC Dr. Robert Fontaine, EMPHNET Executive Director Dr. Mohannad Al-Nsour, and General Secretary of the Jordan Ministry of Health His Excellency Dr. Lail Al-Fayez.

In the ceremony awards of recognition were handed to the winners of the best oral and best poster presentation. Dr. Mohammad Ismail, from Pakistan, won the award of Best Oral Presentation for his presentation on Measles Outbreak Investigation in Village Bara, Khyber Agency, Pakistan-February 2017: A case Control Study, while Dr. Kenza Benani, from Morocco, won the award for Best Poster Presentation for her presentation on Epidemiological Profile of Multi-Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis in Morocco, 2007-2016.



Awards of recognition were also handed to Dr. Robert Fontaine for his leadership in public health and field epidemiology, Dr. Fateh Al-Samani for his leadership in public health and field epidemiology, Dr. Abdelwahed Al Srouri for his leadership to public health and field epidemiology, and Dr. Ibrahim Iblan for his contribution to Jordan FETP.

Similarly, Director of Planning and Human Resources from Iraq Dr. Ali Al Tamimi, Head of the Surveillance and Epidemiology Unit in Morocco Dr Ahmad Rugaig, and Manager of EPI Somalia Dr. Othman Abdin, each representing his respective delegation handed awards of recognition to EMPHNET which was represented by its Executive Director Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour. Furthermore, awards of recognition were also handed to EMPHNET by the delegations of Pakistan and Sudan.

The Closing Ceremony in Photos



GHD/EMPHNET Supports Training on Data Entry for Post-Intervention KAP Survey Under the Afghanistan Demand Creation Project (DCP)

The Ministry of Public Health in Afghanistan, with support from GHD/EMPHNET, is implementing activities within the Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC)-Demand Creation Project (DCP) for strengthening routine immunization and polio eradication services in the country. These activities are innovative interventions that aim to address inadequate knowledge about vaccinations in the country and consequently contribute to addressing its low immunization coverage. It targeted twenty districts within the provinces of Nangarhar, Laghman, and Kunar in the East, and Kandahar and Helmand in the South.



The project started with the pre-intervention survey where information on KAP, vaccination history, and households' demographics were collected over a period of three months.

Following this phase, the intervention was made, engaging parents, community health workers, elders, Mullas and teachers. These participants were provided with mobile phone numbers with subscriptions (of receiving voice messages) from the Afghanistan Telecom Regulatory Authority (ATRA) about risks of Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPDs) and benefits of vaccination. The targeted groups were mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, and any other family head members.

A follow-up survey was conducted eight months after the beginning of the intervention period. This survey recruited the same households identified in the pre-intervention survey. Information on KAP and vaccination histories were collected as well as information on whether they received voice messages, messaging from key community leaders, or from the local community health workers.

More recently, a hands-on training was conducted to support the DCP in Afghanistan and to enable the field team (mainly the data entry clerk under the DCP) to conduct accurate data entry for the Post-Intervention KAP Survey which is being conducted, as mentioned above, in 20 randomly selected districts of the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Afghanistan.

Taking place between February 12 – 14, 2018 in Kabul, Afghanistan at the Ministry of Public Health, a total of nine participants attended this training. The training mainly targeted the newly hired data entry clerk under the DCP and our other four project team members in Kabul with specific focus on the use of Epi Info 7 “Form Design” and “Enter” modules.

GHD/EMPHNET Supports Strengthening of Routine Immunization in Iraq

GHD/EMPHNET recently supported three activities geared towards strengthening the performance of routine immunization in the country.

The first of these activities was a workshop conducted to develop an improvement plan for RI supervision and monitoring. This workshop was conducted between January 14-15, 2018, in Baghdad. It was attended by managers of the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI); central, provincial, and district EPI team members; and representatives from the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF.



The workshop resulted in the development of an RI improvement plan for supervision and monitoring. This plan was developed after analyzing the status of supervision in Iraq and identifying gaps and challenges in EPI supervision at all levels. The analysis relied on information that had been previously collected by an assigned technical committee. This improvement plan is expected to institutionalize the best supervision and monitoring practices, tools, and mechanisms.

This activity was followed by a second workshop conducted January 16-18 in Baghdad. Its sessions focused on developing a communication strategy for EPI. Participants included MoH health communication officers, EPI officers, representatives of the WHO, UNICEF, and relevant ministries. They discussed the direction, tools, and methods needed to develop this strategy, especially within the context of the key challenges facing immunization in Iraq. This workshop coincided with the Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop for surveillance officers on Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) and VPDs surveillance conducted between January 16-18 in Baghdad. Over twenty-five surveillance officers from the national and governmental levels participated in this training. One officer was participating from each province, and two officers were representing five selected high priority provinces; namely, Muthanna, Anbar, Salah Al-Din, Karbala and Ninewa.

GHD/EMPHNET Supports Training for Community-Based Surveillance of Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) in Yemen

To enhance public health service delivery and health awareness at the community level, the Ministry of Public Health and Population (MoPHP) in partnership with GHD/EMPHNET implemented a training program titled Community-Based Surveillance of Acute Flaccid Paralysis (CBS-AFP). Through this program, district level surveillance officers support the role of local communities, within the CBS-AFP model, in enhancing surveillance reporting system and utilizing information provided by the community in disease surveillance activities.



The CBS-AFP program targets MoPHP's district surveillance officers responsible for monitoring, data compilation, analysis and reporting of surveillance-related activities and community-level volunteers responsible for data collection, health education, and assistance in local response to public health events. Equipping this group of health professionals and volunteers with the basic knowledge required for monitoring and data collection will have a direct impact on the effective use of information and management of data towards taking the right decisions in relation to public health issues.

Four training workshops were conducted in Aden, Sana'a, Ibb, and Sayun-Hadhramout governorates during the period January 20 – 30, 2018. The workshops targeted MoPHP's district-level staff and volunteers from 51 targeted districts. Each workshop was held for a period of two days in the afore-mentioned governorates.

The workshop's sessions covered topics relevant to diseases targeted by CBS AFP such as measles, tetanus and other recently emerging infectious diseases. The sessions also focused on the National Guidelines for CBS AFP, including the criteria for choosing community volunteers, the responsibilities of the CBS AFP network, and other relevant topics.

GHD/EMPHNET and Partners Explore Enhancing Animal Brucellosis Surveillance in Pakistan to Decrease Transmission to Humans

Between January 28 – February 2, 2018, a team from GHD/EMPHNET and representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Atlanta, the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC), the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), the Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Program (FELTP), the National Institute of Health (NIH), and CDC Pakistan held a stakeholders' meeting in Islamabad to discuss collaborative activities within a project that aims to enhance the surveillance of animal brucellosis in the country.



As part of the meeting's agenda, members from GHD/EMPHNET and CDC Atlanta evaluated the epidemiology of animal as well as human brucellosis in Pakistan, its current brucellosis surveillance system, and the diagnostic laboratory capacity. Based on this evaluation, certain criteria were developed to identify priority provinces and surveillance sentinel sites to be incorporated within the project, planned to be implemented in the coming months. To ensure the successful implementation of this project, stakeholders also discussed means to strengthen the current channels of communication between animal health and human health sectors.

Furthermore, CDC Atlanta and GHD/EMPHNET developed a defined project plan with the Animal Health Program at NARC targeting two different herd management strategies (peri-urban farming and rural domestic animal holders) at two surveillance sites in Islamabad. Within this plan, NARC will select up to five national-level laboratory scientists to participate in a molecular diagnostic training at Princess Haya Biotechnology Center (PHBC) of the Jordan University of Science and Technology. Also, within this project's plan, GHD/EMPHNET will return to Pakistan to train local-level veterinarians on epidemiological aspects, field techniques, and surveillance methods for brucellosis in animals.

As part of the meeting's mission, a field visit was conducted to some of the identified farms in Islamabad in addition to one of the veterinary clinic. A tour was also conducted of the NARC and NIH laboratories to assess brucellosis testing, interests and needs.

GHD/EMPHNET Forms a Team of Trainers on WASH Within Emergency Rapid Response

To embed more environmental health within response capacity during emergencies, the Yemen Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), with support from GHD/EMPHNET, conducted a training of trainers (ToT) workshop on WASH principles within emergency rapid response. The training took place in Sana'a between February 4 and 6, 2018. It saw participation from central and governorate WASH specialists working for the Ministry of Water and the environment, the General Authority for Rural Water Supply Projects, and the Environmental Protection Authority.



The workshop's sessions aimed to enhance the capacity of its participants, enabling them to better assess, develop, plan, implement, and monitor WASH-related responses to public health emergencies in Yemen with considerations to humanitarian principles.

As such, the workshop covered the following topics: WASH and Cholera response; types of pollutants during emergencies; water purification including physical, mechanical, and chemical methods; and Chlorine compound use, and safety guidelines. Its sessions also focused on environment and healthcare waste management, including adverse effects and safe disposal.

The outcomes of the workshop included the successful formation of trainers capable in the area of WASH in emergency rapid response from almost all governorates of Yemen. At a later point, these trainers are expected to train MoPHP professionals in applying and maintaining WASH standards at the health facilities' level.

GHD/EMPHNET Supports Training on Hospital-Based Surveillance of Meningococcal Meningitis for Iraq

GHD/EMPHNET supported a training on the identification and subtyping of *N. meningitidis* using the molecular test of polymerase chain reaction (PCR). The training took place at the Center for Infectious Diseases Research of the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, between February 19-22, 2018. Its targeted participants were five laboratorians from the Central Public Health Laboratory in Baghdad.



For Iraq's laboratory capacity, this training served to meet the need to provide, through PCR testing, up-to-date molecular characteristics of meningococcal disease caused by *N. meningitidis*. With this data, more effective preventive measures can be developed within the national vaccination program.

Because of its high sensitivity and specificity and high throughput capabilities, PCR is now widely used in the diagnosis and surveillance of bacterial pathogens. Moreover, it provides a complementary tool to classic phenotype-based methods.

In the training's lectures, the following topics were covered: the epidemiology of meningitis at global and regional levels; molecular techniques for detection and subtyping of *N. meningitidis*; PCR equipment, primers, probes, controls and calibration; DNA extraction protocols; specimen collection and preservation; real time PCR and *N. meningitidis* detection and subtyping; results interpretation and troubleshooting.

A practical laboratory session was conducted, and the trainees had the opportunity to practice bacterial DNA extraction and Real Time PCR technique for the detection and subtyping of *N. meningitidis*.

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Yemen Field Epidemiology Training Program (Y-FETP) Launches Fourth Cohort



In Yemen, the humanitarian crisis has not stopped the Yemen Field Epidemiology Training Program (Y-FETP) from moving forward and launching its fourth cohort.

In preparation for this launch, the program announced the call for applications and received 87 applications for its fourth cohort. Out of these, 31 met the selection criteria, and they were the eligible candidates to attend a screening course conducted from October 28 to November 8, 2017.

In this workshop, these candidates sat through sessions on basic epidemiology, basic statistics, and outbreak investigation. Moreover, they were introduced to the concepts of surveillance, including analysis, monitoring, and evaluation. After the course, participants took three tests: the screening course test, an English language assessment, and a basic computer skills test. The 20 candidates who passed these tests sat for an interview with the Y-FETP managers. The 12 candidates who got the highest overall score were officially accepted as the residents of the Y-FETP Fourth Cohort.

In December 2017, the fourth cohort residents officially commenced their residency. To prepare these residents for their rotations at the Central Programs within the Ministry of Public Health and Population, the Y-FETP has been conducting training workshops for these residents.

Supported by EMPHNET's office in Yemen, the residents participated in a training workshop on Microsoft Office as well as Basic Internet Skills. Moreover, the residents will participate in another EMPHNET-supported two-month English language training designed to improve their writing and conversation skills.

The Y-FETP also organized a four-week Introductory Training for the new Fourth cohort during December 2017. During the first week of this training, the residents were introduced to descriptive and analytical epidemiology. They were also familiarized with different measures used in biostatistics, and they were trained on how to perform surveillance systems' analyses and outbreak investigations.

During the second week, the residents were introduced to steps for designing research starting from problem identification and literature review to writing objectives and selecting appropriate variables, study type, data collection technique and sampling methods. After each step, each resident applied what he/she had learned on a research problem he/she is interested to study. The residents then presented their work to their colleagues and facilitators and they received feedback. During the training's third week, the residents were introduced to the Epi Info software. They were trained on how to use the software to design questionnaires, and to enter and analyze data.

During the training's last week, each resident presented the completed project that he/she had started during the second week and showed how Epi Info software was used in the project's implementation. The residents were also introduced to the End-Note program and how to use it to manage bibliographies and references when writing their reports and articles. Furthermore, they were oriented about the Y-FETP objectives, rules, reporting requirements, and deliverables.

His Excellency Minister of Public Health and Population Dr. Mohammed Salem Bin Hafeez, met with the residents of the new cohort and encouraged them to make the best use out of the training they have. For their part, the residents expressed their admiration at the great advantages they had from this training and stated how they will apply the new skills they had gained during their residency in various programs and during field work.

Sudan Field Epidemiology Training Program Conducts Mentors' Training Workshop

Launched in late 2017, the Sudan Field Epidemiology Training Program (S-FETP) is a two-year program designed to enhance the capacities of the national health workforce to better serve the public health needs of the country. The S-FETP is composed of four semesters, comprising both didactic instruction and fieldwork projects. It assigns mentors to supervise the fieldwork projects of these residents. For the residents of the first cohort, twenty-two mentors were assigned from the country's various states.



To inform these mentors of their roles and responsibilities, the S-FETP conducted a training workshop for them in Khartoum, Sudan between January 22 and 23, 2018. Team members from GHD/EMPHNET and the S-FETP facilitated the training workshop's sessions.

During these sessions, the facilitators explained the FETP approach and structure to the mentors, while detailing the various tools to be used by them to provide feedback to the residents.

This workshop was concluded with a meeting between the mentors and residents, to explain to the latter's their field assignments and their responsibilities during fieldwork projects.

GHD/EMPHNET Supports Third Workshop for Tunisia Field Epidemiology Training Program

The Tunisia Field Epidemiology Training Program (T-FETP) conducted the third training workshop, titled Surveillance and Control of Epidemic Diseases, for its first cohort. Taking place in Tunis between February 5 and 9, 2018, the workshop focused on enhancing the participants' knowledge and skills in intervention epidemiology, particularly in implementing public health functions in the areas of zoonotic, food as well as water-borne and vector-borne disease surveillance, prevention, and control. These are considered priority diseases in public health and are the main sources of epidemics and outbreaks in Tunisia.



Specific topics covered during the workshop included epidemiology of zoonoses, foodborne diseases, water-borne diseases and vector-borne diseases; methods of surveillance, outbreak investigation and methods of control. The sessions also covered topics pertaining to vectors and animal reservoirs or hosts; intersectoral collaboration, including the One Health approach, to control these scourges; evaluation of measures and control programs for these priority diseases; environmental epidemiology methods; and ecological studies.

This workshop will be followed by eight weeks of field work.

EMPHNET Participates in CORDS 2018 Conference

The 2018 Conference for Connecting Organizations for Regional Disease Surveillance (CORDS) was held under the theme *Advancing Regional Collaboration for Improved Global Health Security*. Taking place in Bangkok, Thailand, between January 29 and 30, the conference saw participation from CORDS' six international networks. EMPHNET alongside other networks participated in the conference to share their respective experiences and explore future collaborations with CORDS.

EMPHNET participated in a session on building sustainable networks where Executive Director Dr. Mohannad Al-Nsour spoke about the role of EMPHNET in responding to public health challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean Region through building national and regional capacities in several priority public health areas, such as outbreak investigation, disease surveillance, rapid response, and International Health Regulations (IHR) implementation. He also highlighted EMPHNET's role in providing technical assistance by supporting Field Epidemiology Training Programs (FETPs) and collaborating with associations, institutions, networks and organizations to achieve mutual goals.