



FIELD EPIDEMIOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM

OCTOBER - FEBRUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER - ISSUE 10



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Editor's Letter

We are pleased to present the tenth issue of our Quarterly FETP Newsletter, which covers news of the region's FETPs from October 2021 to February 2022. The news covered in this issue shows the region's FETP residents and graduates' hard work, dedication, and commitment, as well as their valuable contributions to public health in their countries.

In this issue, we dedicate sections to news from different country programs and we shed light on Yemen's FETP Fifth National Conference and the launch of Lebanon FETP. We also welcome and introduce new FETP Directors, while also highlighting the Board of Directors meeting that took place in November after the Seventh EMPHNET Regional Conference.

We hope you find this issue to be a valuable reading experience and a source of knowledge and inspiration for you all. We also wish the FETPs in our region further success and growth. On this occasion, we also would like to wish you all a blessed Ramadan. We hope that the holy month brings good tidings and peace to you and your loved ones.

FETP Newsletter Editorial Team



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Feature Story

The Yemen Field Epidemiology Training Program Holds its Fifth National Conference, Proving that Success is the Product of Hard Work and Resilience

Despite the challenges resulting from the war in Yemen, the Yemen Field Epidemiology Training Program (Yemen FETP) National Conference convened in Sana'a between February 28 and March 3, 2022.

Holding the theme “A Decade of Field Epidemiology Training in Yemen: Connecting Research and Decision Making,” the conference’s diverse agenda offered a forum for field epidemiologists, public health practitioners, researchers, students, and health policy and decision-makers from the country and beyond to share their knowledge, experience, and lessons learned. The conference also offered the ideal



space for fruitful discourse that in turn could lead to local and regional health development.

To accommodate the needs of speakers and participants who were not able to attend in-person, sessions were also open to anyone wishing to participate online. Thus, offering a true example of modern technology breaking down geographical borders.



AN OPENING TO REMEMBER

More than 220 participants from the different governorates of Yemen, its hospitals, universities, and ministry programs attended the conference's opening. The opening ceremony agenda comprised speeches by Yemen FETP Director, Dr. Abdulhakim Al Kohlani; Yemen Health Projects Coordinator, Dr. Aisha Juman; PHC Undersecretary, MoHP, Dr. Mohamed Almansour, amongst others.

In his opening remarks, EMPHNET Executive Director, Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour congratulated Yemen FETP on this milestone, stating that

the efforts made by the program are a source of pride for the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) at large and truly commendable in light of the challenging situations the FETP residents and graduates operate within.

The ceremony was followed by a keynote address titled "Connecting Research and Decision Making: A Future for our Children." The address was given by Professor of Global Health and Sustainable Development at the University College London, Dr. Anthony Costello.



A DIVERSE AGENDA

THE ABSTRACTS

The abstracts presented during the conference further served as a true testimony to the resilience, hard work, and dedication that the Yemen FETP residents continue to display over the years.

In numbers, the conference scientific committee received 128 abstracts that were reviewed

by a panel of judges, subject matter experts, scientists, academicians, and senior-level officials from the global scientific arena. Following this rigorous review, 72 abstracts were selected for oral presentation and 17 for poster presentation. Abstract presenters came from Yemen, Pakistan, Egypt, and Sudan and their presentations covered a wide range of topics.

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

Furthermore, the conference hosted four important preconference workshops. These workshops were titled: “Scientific Manuscript Writing”, “Outbreak investigation”, “Contact Tracing During Outbreaks”, and “Biorisk Management”.



ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Another four roundtable sessions were held during the conference. These roundtable discussions were titled: “Evaluation of The Public Health Empowerment”, “Program: Local and Regional Experiences”, “Vaccine-derived poliovirus: a Threat to the End Game of Polio Eradication”, and “COVID-19: Lessons Learned and Lessons for Future and Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis, and Malaria: Yemen Experience.”

Stemming from its theme, the conference created a communication channel for participants to present and identify difficult and atypical public health situations that challenge some of the countries in the region. The diversity in roundtable topics, pre-conference workshops, and keynote addresses all contributed to making this event a true learning experience and a space for fruitful discussions for participants.



A GRAND FINISH

The Fifth Yemen Field Epidemiology Training Program National Conference concluded its sessions with the graduation of the Fifth Cohort of the Advanced Yemen FETP. In a ceremonial event, ten graduates celebrated their successful completion of the two-year program. The ceremony was attended by the graduates’ families, three deputies from the Ministry of Public Health and Population (MoPHP) in Yemen, and representatives from EMPHNET, World Health Organization (WHO), and UNICEF, amongst other entities. The conference was deemed a real success, as it offered an opportunity for fruitful discourse, networking, and the exchange of knowledge.





Country Program News

This section
highlights the
region's FETPs'
updates

AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan FETP Selects Officers for the Third Cohort

On February 8, 2022, the Afghanistan Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) started the process of selecting officers from the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) from Kabul, and other provinces to be accepted as third cohort residents.

A total of 35 applicants sat for the first round of the entrance exams. These exams were designed to assess applicants' abilities in technical areas, computer skills, and their English language proficiency.

They then sat for the second round of entry exams on February 14. After the assessment of exams, candidates were eligible.



Afghanistan FETP Celebrates the Graduation of its Second Intermediate Cohort

Afghanistan FETP celebrated the graduation of its second Intermediate Cohort. The graduation ceremony was held on December 27, 2021, at the Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) in Kabul.

The cohort includes 24 graduates from Kabul and different provinces, all of whom received their certificates after their successful completion of a one-year training.

The ceremony was attended by the Deputy Minister for Policy and Planning, the Senior Advisor of Administrative Affairs for Government, and several Director Generals at the MoPH. The main purpose of the program is to build the capacity of MoPH health professionals to detect, investigate, and respond to infectious diseases and public health emergencies, and to support the design and implementation of epidemiological projects.



Meet Afghanistan FETP New Director

In December 2021, in the 15th Steering Committee meeting for the Afghanistan FETP, the members assigned and introduced Dr. Ahmed Khalid Arian as the new Director for Afghanistan FETP.

Dr. Arian graduated from Kabul University of Medical Science in 2004 and got his FETP Diploma in 2021. He has a master's degree from Payam-e-Noor University, Kabul in Public Administration.

Dr. Arian is the current Acting General director for the Afghanistan National Public Health Institute (ANPHI) and the Public Health and Management Training Director, ANPHI, Ministry of Public Health. Prior to this role, he was TIQRA and P&O Projects Senior Officer for the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, Disability Program, Kabul Management Office. Dr. Arian also worked in several international and national organizations such as UNESCO, Afghanistan Civil Service Institute (ACSI), and USAID. He has a special interest in Research Methodology.



Keep an Eye Out for the EMPHNET FETP Ambassador Program!

EMPHNET is launching the FETP Ambassador Program that will contribute to increasing visibility for the region's FETP and its achievements. It builds a strong connection across the Eastern Mediterranean Region's network.

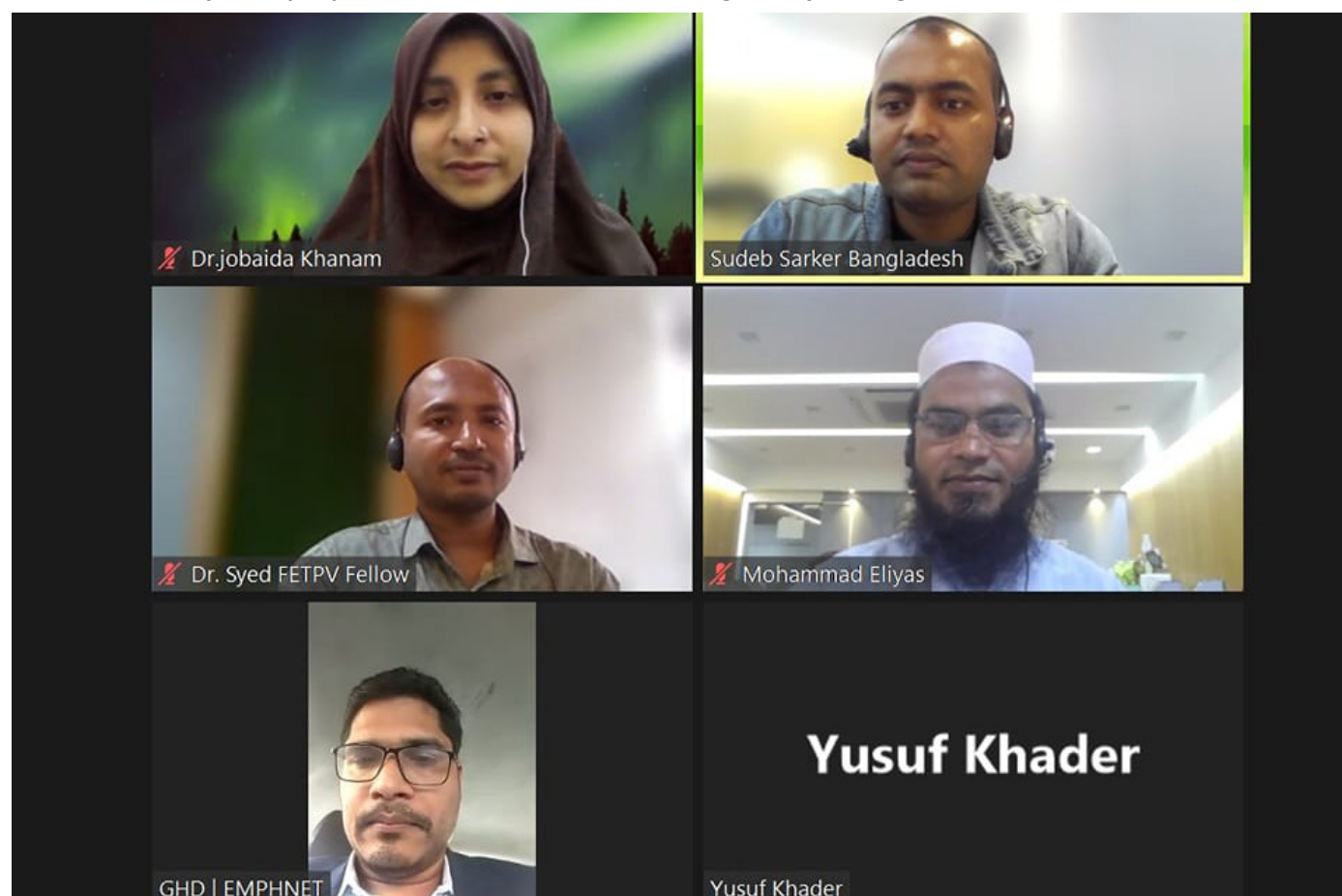
BANGLADESH

Bangladesh FETPV Residents Sit for a Session on Health Research

Health research is essential for strengthening health systems, improving their performance, and increasing their impact on public health practice. Building research capacity in the EMR has been recognized as one of the most powerful, cost-effective, and sustainable means for advancing health and development. Research findings are critical to influencing public health policy at various levels from the local to the subnational, national, and international. Hence, it is important to equip health professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary for research conduct and scientific writing.

Thus, EMPHNET has been supporting the region's FETP residents in building their capacity in designing their studies. As part of its capacity-building efforts, EMPHNET supported the Field Epidemiology Training Program for Veterinarians (FETPV) in Bangladesh by hosting a two-day online session on proposal writing and research methods for animal health research in February.

Led by EMPHNET's Senior Technical Advisor and Director of its Center of Excellence for Applied Epidemiology (CEAE), Prof. Yousef Khader, the session offered its participants the know-how they need to conduct a literature review, form a research question, and then form SMART Objectives for their research. Furthermore, it offered the Bangladesh FETPV residents the knowledge they need to select appropriate study designs for their analytical projects. The second day of the workshop introduced the participants to the methods and skills they need to write research grants proposals. All workshop sessions combined a didactic approach with hands-on training. Towards the end of the workshop, participants were then required to develop methodologies and research designs for their own analytical projects based on the knowledge they had gained.



EGYPT

Egypt FETP Celebrates the Graduation of its Fourth PHEP-BFE Cohort

On February 17, 2022, the Field Epidemiology Training Program of Egypt (Egypt FETP) held a graduation ceremony under the patronage of the Chief of Preventative Affairs and Endemic Diseases Sector, Second Undersecretary at the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) of Egypt, Dr. Amro Qandeel.

It celebrated the graduation of the fourth cohort of the Public Health Empowerment Program – Basic Field Epidemiology (PHEP-BFE) whereby the fourth cohort comprised 22 health professionals who completed the three-month in-service training requirements.

You can see a short video that summarizes the cohort's journey [here](#).



Egypt FETP Residents and Graduates Participate in the National Polio Vaccination Campaign

Egypt's National Polio Vaccination Campaign commenced on December 19, 2021. The campaign aimed to vaccinate all Egyptian and non-Egyptian children living in Egypt who are between the ages of one day and five years. It was implemented across all governorates of Egypt, and targeted more than 16 million children, and is totally free of charge.

Egypt FETP residents and graduates from the advanced program, intermediate program, and the Public Health Empowerment Program (PHEP) participated in the campaign. Despite challenging circumstances, the campaign was successfully completed.



IRAQ

Iraq FETP Holds the First Workshop for the First PHEP-BFE Cohort in Kurdistan

On January 3, 2022, the Field Epidemiology Training Program of Iraq (Iraq FETP) held the first workshop for the first cohort of the Public Health Empowerment Program - Basic Field Epidemiology (PHEP-BFE) in Erbil. The workshop targeted health professionals from the Directorates of Health in Kurdistan, Iraq, and was organized in collaboration with the Epidemiology Department at the Iraq Ministry of Health (MoH).

PHEP-BFE is an in-service training program designed to strengthen the MoH's epidemiologic capacity. It achieves this goal by enhancing the knowledge and skills of health workers in areas relevant to the fundamentals of surveillance, outbreak investigation, and emergency response. The program builds the capacities of the national health workforce, contributes to expanding it, and hence addresses the country's urgent health problems.

In this workshop, residents were trained on the basic skills needed to conduct effective public health surveillance, while case studies and group exercises were used to reinforce the concepts taught.



Iraq FETP Carries Out Second Workshop for the Second Cohort of its Intermediate Level

As part of its one-year training, the second cohort of the intermediate level of Iraq FETP attended their second workshop. The workshop was held between September 30 and October 7, 2021, and was attended by 34 residents from the Iraq MoH's various health departments. The trainees came from Baghdad and other provinces.

The workshop presented concepts related to data analysis, outbreak investigation, and research while combining online training and fieldwork. The intermediate training will continue for a year and will be under the supervision of epidemiologists and graduates from the Iraq FETP advanced program.

JORDAN

Jordan FETP Residents Respond to Two Outbreaks in Northern Jordan

In October 2021, the Field Epidemiology Training Program of Jordan (Jordan FETP) conducted an outbreak investigation. This investigation took place following reports of an increase in the number of suspected cases of food poisoning in the Jubbah area in Jerash governorate North of Jordan related to Shigella. The investigation was carried out in collaboration with the Jerash Health Directorate.

Jordan FETP residents' response efforts included case interviews and collecting water as well as stool samples. In total, 89 cases were identified, with 27 were admitted to the hospital with symptoms such as diarrhea, stomach cramps, and fever.

The source and causes of the Shigella outbreak in Jerash were identified to be a swimming pool in the district, a water tank in a public school, and polluted water from the Alzarqa torrent.

Jordan FETP residents continued their investigation efforts into the Shigella outbreak in the Alwahadneh area in Ajlun Governorate after receiving a report from Al-Iman hospital of several cases with Shigella symptoms.



LEBANON

Lebanon FETP Officially Launches with the Inauguration of its First PHEP Cohort

Under the Patronage of His Excellency Lebanon's Minister of Public Health, Dr. Firas Abiad, the Ministry of Public Health in Lebanon announced the official launch of the Field Epidemiology Training Program of Lebanon (Lebanon FETP), making it the eleventh FETP to be launched in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR).

On February 22, 2022, a ceremonial event was held at Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health to commemorate this milestone. Lebanon FETP also inaugurated its first Cohort for the Public Health Empowerment Program (PHEP) as part of this launch.

Lebanon FETP Director, Dr. Nada Ghosn mentioned the efforts initiated in 2008 to establish Lebanon FETP in her opening remarks. These efforts included: participation in the 57th Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) Conference in 2008, participation in the Mediterranean and Black Sea Field Epidemiology Training Program (MediPIET) since 2013, and close collaborations with Global Health Development, Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (GHD|EMPHNET) since 2018 in areas of planning for and implementing Lebanon FETP.



From her end, GHD|EMPHNET Public Health Specialist, Ms. Ilham Abu Khader also gave a session on the role and significance of FETPs in the region. She gave a brief introduction about PHEP and congratulated Lebanon FETP on reaching this milestone on behalf of the organization.

Lebanon's Minister of Public Health H.E., Dr. Firas Abiad, stated in his address that the launch of the Lebanon FETP coincided with the passing of two years since the first case of COVID-19 in Lebanon. He added that the launch of the program responds to a growing need for a more skilled public health workforce to respond to Lebanon's health needs, as the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of disease epidemiological surveillance in understanding public health threats.

The Public Health Empowerment Program (PHEP) aims to strengthen the technical capacities of the public health workforce to run and manage the local public health surveillance system, conduct outbreak investigations and respond to common diseases in their district. This three-month in-service training equips the participants with the necessary managerial and leadership skills they need to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate public health interventions effectively and efficiently. It comprises three weeks of online or face-to-face sessions and nine weeks of fieldwork divided over two periods. PHEP is only one of three FETP modalities implemented in the EMR. Other modalities include the Advanced two-year FETP and the one-year Intermediate FETP.

The event also included a session on the "Learning Management system" (LMS) developed by GHD|EMPHNET, as it will be the tool used by Lebanon FETP residents for the PHEP training sessions conducted online. The ceremonial event was then followed by a mentorship training attended by six mentors.



MOROCCO

Morocco FETP Organizes Third Workshop for its First Intermediate Cohort

Following two face-to-face and e-learning training sessions on basic epidemiology, the National School of Public Health (ENSP) in Morocco wanted to launch two cohorts of intermediate courses for strategic level managers. This is in order to strengthen their capacities in epidemiological surveillance, health crises risk management, and communication and scientific dissemination of their findings.

Morocco FETP completed the third workshop for the first cohort of intermediate level, with 15 participants coming from the 12 regions across the kingdom. The workshop's main objectives were to provide an opportunity for participants to deliver presentations and share their field assignment findings with their classmates. Morocco FETP staff, and mentors provided hands-on training on protocol development, thus enabling residents to develop a research protocol as a group and strengthen ways of working in the field as team members during a group project.

The workshop also aimed to develop residents communication skills with a variety of audiences and their ability to make written and oral scientific communications, as well as strengthen their understanding by maintaining a balance of theories, tutorials, and group work sessions, and facilitating resident and mentor interaction and discussion.

From another angle, the workshop helped its participants to plan and carry out field projects, supervise, and monitor field activities, and provide technical assistance to residents as they carry out their projects.

ANNOUNCEMENT

EMPHNET is Launching EEL!

EEL is an electronic library that serves field epidemiologists and public health professionals in the region. It provides them with access to resources and tools that will advance their research and practice.

Stay tuned!

PAKISTAN

Pakistan FELTP Director Maj. Gen. Dr. Aamer Ikram Named Incoming Chairperson of TEPHINET Advisory Board

The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) congratulates Pakistan Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Program (Pakistan FELTP) Director, Maj. Gen. Dr. Aamer Ikram for being elected as the incoming Chair of the Advisory Board of TEPHINET.

The Advisory Board of TEPHINET works to evaluate and support the duties and functions of the network with the support of the Secretariat. In coordination with the Secretariat, the Advisory Board also advises on technical aspects of the network's duties. It is informed of the annual budget, and actively carries out the network's purposes and objectives.

The board is composed of at least one representative from each region as well as the director of TEPHINET and representative members from the following organizations namely: World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). The board's chairperson is elected by members of the network and serves for a three-year term.

Maj. Gen. Dr. Aamer Ikram brings a wealth of experience to his new designation, he holds a PhD in Molecular Biology, and he is a Registered Biosafety Professional from the American Biological Safety Association, a Biosafety Professional from the Institute of Safety in Technology and Research (UK), and an IFBA Certified Professional.

Furthermore, he was awarded FRCP by the Royal College of Edinburgh; FRCPath by the Royal College of Pathologists in London; and a Fellowship in Public Health from Royal Colleges UK in 2018.



Dr. Aamer Ikram was also recently elected as a Fellow in the Pakistan Academy of Sciences. He also brings to this position a vast experience in leadership, gained from serving as the President of the Pakistan Biological Safety Association (PBSA); Ex-President of the Medical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases Society (MMIDSP); Higher Education Commission Focal Point of Expertise for Medical Research, and Convener of Microbiology Pakistan Health Research Council, and he is currently the Executive Director of the National Institute of Health Pakistan.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia FETP Celebrates the Graduation of Its Third Frontline Cohort

In October 2021, the Field Epidemiology Training Program of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia FETP) celebrated the graduation of the third cohort of its basic three-month training (Frontline). The ceremony was attended by the Saudi Deputy Minister of Public Health, Director General of Health Affairs in Aljouf, and other key figures.



Meet the new Saudi Arabia FETP Director

On December 7, 2021, the Head of the Training Department of Saudi Arabia FETP, Dr. Abdulaziz Almutairi was appointed as the new director of Saudi Arabia FETP.

Dr. Almutairi holds a bachelor's degree in Oral and Dental Medicine and Surgery from Misr University for Science and Technology. He also holds an FETP Diploma of Higher Education from King Saud University.

Prior to his current role, Dr. Almutairi was a Project Manager for Vision Realization Office in Riyadh. He also was the Director of the Specialized Dentistry Hospital in Hafar Albatin, Eastern Province.



SUDAN

Sudan FETP Conducts Second Fieldwork Assessment Workshop

The Field Epidemiology Training Program of Sudan (Sudan FETP) held its second fieldwork assessment workshop for the second cohort of the Advanced FETP level in mid-January. During the sessions, residents presented their activities. Their presentations covered outbreak investigations, assessment of rainy season plans, and public health interventions.

Furthermore, three residents who participated in an exchange program between Sudan FETP and WHO EMRO presented reports of their experience.



Sudan FETP Holds a Mentorship Workshop for Field Supervisors

Sudan FETP held a mentorship workshop for field supervisors of the second cohort of the Advanced FETP in January 2022. Supervisors from various parts of Sudan attended the workshop.

Public Health Professionals, Dr. Hassan AlBushra and Dr. AlFatih Malik facilitated the sessions. The discussions featured topics on mentorship, including roles of the mentor, tips for giving good feedback, and tips for effective mentorship.

EMPHNET's Technical Advisor, Dr. Shahd Osman also provided an overview of what is expected from residents conducting fieldwork. Field supervisors were also introduced to the Sudan FETP website and Moodle platform.



Sudan FETP Concludes the Fourth Workshop for its Current Cohort

Sudan FETP completed its fourth workshop for its current Intermediate FETP cohort residents on February 28, 2022. Head of the Health Emergencies and Epidemic Control Directorate in Sudan, Dr. Muntasir Osman, as well as other public health experts specialized in field epidemiology attended the workshop.

The workshop sessions provided the residents with a comprehensive overview of Epi info as well as practical hands-on training. The residents also gave presentations about their field activities, and they were assessed by a panel of public health specialists.



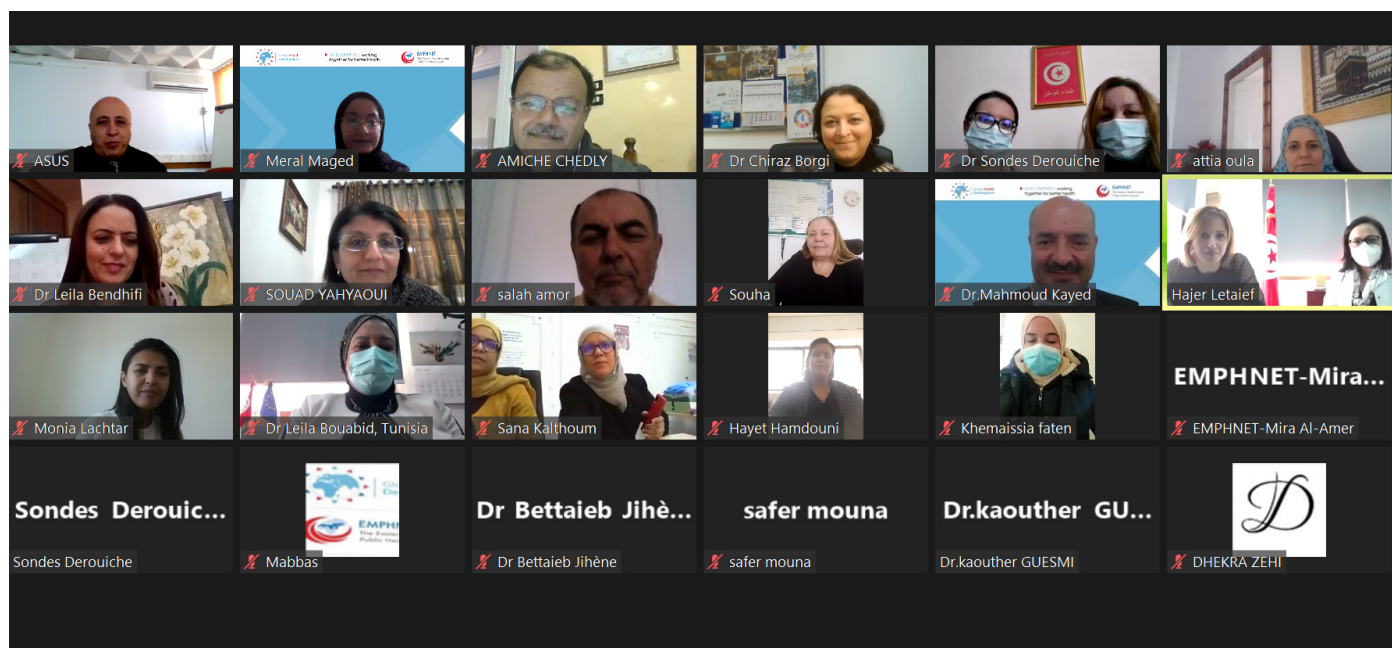
TUNISIA

Tunisia FETP Celebrates the Graduation of its Third Intermediate Cohort

On February 16, 2022, the Field Epidemiology Training Program of Tunisia (Tunisia FETP) celebrated the graduation of eight public health professionals from the third intermediate level cohort.

Due to the challenging health situation created by COVID-19 in Tunisia, this cohort faced numerous challenges; they began their training in January 2020 and completed their five training modules in February 2022.

The Director of Tunisia FETP, Prof. Nissaf Bin Alyaa; Tunisia FETP Scientific Coordinator, Dr. Hajar Latief; the cohort's mentors; and representatives from the GHD|EMPHNET team attended the graduation ceremony. Dr. Latief provided an overview of the cohort, the training modules, and the graduates' work, and Prof. Bin Alyaa wished the graduates good luck and thanked GHD|EMPHNET for their technical support.



YEMEN

Yemen FETP Launches Cohort 14 of PHEP

On January 25, 2022, the Field Epidemiology Training Program of Yemen (Yemen FETP) commenced training for the 14th cohort of PHEP-BFE. The 14th cohort includes residents from two districts namely: Al Baydha and Al Dhalea. The cohort also includes 24 district coordinators. In February, residents of the cohort commenced their fieldwork in the governorates of Al Baydha and Al Dhalea.

PHEP is a three-month program that focuses on detecting and responding to diseases and events of public health importance of international concern. Participants learn and practice fundamental skills used in surveillance at the local health system through educational and in-service training. The educational instructions, as well as the field assignments, are all directly related to the MOPHP's surveillance and outbreak response goals.



Yemen FETP Graduates Cohort 13 of PHEP-BFE

Yemen FETP commenced training for the 13th cohort of the PHEP-BFE in Sana'a in October 2021. Throughout this period, multiple workshops were held for the residents and for mentors. The cohort consists of 24 residents from the districts of two governorates: Amran and Hajjah.

The cohort residents received their graduation certificates on January 3, 2022, after completing their three-month training.



Congratulations to YFETP

In December, H.E the Deputy Minister for Primary Health Care in Yemen honored the fourth cohort resident, Dr. Jarallah Al Tubali who was awarded the Best Poster Award during the Seventh EMPHNET Regional Conference in Amman.



Yemen FETP Holds a Workshop on PHEP Dissemination Evaluation

Yemen FETP organized a Public Health Empowerment Program (PHEP) dissemination evaluation workshop in December 2021. It was held at the Yemen Ministry of Public Health and Population's (MoPHP) headquarters in Sana'a. The workshop was attended by 50 participants from the central level and the governorates.



Yemen FETP Launches Screening for Cohort 6 of the Advanced Program

Yemen FETP launched the Screening Course for its sixth Advanced cohort in October 2021. Residents of this cohort will sit for the advanced two-year program. The workshop commenced on October 23 and lasted until November 3, 2021.



Other News

This section covers regional news and success stories



OTHER NEWS

FETPs from the EMR Discuss Achievements, Challenges, Lessons Learned and Future Plans During Semi-Annual Board of Directors Meeting

Following the conclusion of the Seventh EMPHNET Regional Conference, the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) directors and their support teams convened for the semi-annual FETP Board of Directors meeting held on November 19, 2021.

Hosted at the Landmark Hotel in Amman, the meeting saw representation from Bangladesh, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen's FETPs, as well as Afghanistan FETP which was represented virtually.



The meeting was commenced by the Chairperson of the FETP Board of Directors, Dr. Sahar El Shourbagi who welcomed the participants. Her opening remarks were then followed by a speech given by GHD|EMPHNET Executive Director, Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour who stated the meeting's objectives. In his remarks, Dr. Al Nsour also took the opportunity to commend the region's FETPs for their instrumental contributions to their countries' COVID-19 response efforts, while further reiterating GHD|EMPHNET's commitment to continue supporting the region.

Following Dr. Al Nsour's speech, GHD|EMPHNET Senior Technical Advisor, Dr. Yousef Al-Gaud gave a presentation about the FETPs' achievements in the EMR and their contributions to public health. During his presentation, Dr. Al-Gaud also highlighted GHD|EMPHNET's Initiatives to support FETPs.

He confirmed that the Center of Excellence for Applied Epidemiology (CEAE) at GHD|EMPHNET is committed to enhancing workforce capacity in applied epidemiology and that it achieves this goal by supporting ministries of health in establishing new FETPs in the region. He added that the CEAE will continue to offer educational learning resources set to enrich the FETP curricula and provide long-life learning opportunities.

He added that GHD|EMPHNET offered three online courses covering; risk communication, rapid response, and infection control to support country programs in their COVID-19 response efforts, while also offering other COVID-19 related support activities. He also introduced the different Knowledge Exchange and Networking initiatives introduced by GHD|EMPHNET to enhance the exchange of experiences and lessons learned and to increase visibility for the work of FETPs. These initiatives include the EMPHNET Internship Program ENGAGE, the FETP Exchange Program, the EMPHNET WEBi Series, the biannual EMPHNET Regional Conference, and the EMPHNET E-library (EEL), and EMPHNET's networking platform EpiShares amongst others.

He ended his presentation by stating that GHD|EMPHNET's future plans for the region's FETPs will continue to offer support in the area of operational research, capacity building, and knowledge exchange and networking.

From his end, Workforce Capacity Team Leader at GHD|EMPHNET, Dr. Haitham Bashier presented the anticipated strategic direction for FETPs in the region. He said that strategic areas of focus for GHD|EMPHNET in support of FETPs include; ensuring increased knowledge of the importance of field epidemiology to health security among global and national partners and stakeholders, increased preparedness and involvement of FETPs in outbreak investigations, disaster response, and field epidemiology activities, increased cross-border and regional capacity for surveillance, detection and response, increased coordination, communication, and collaboration among country FETPs and regional FETP networks, and increased established workgroups to develop a governance structure, systems, and mechanisms that result in coordinated common goals and objectives at country and regional levels.

During the meeting, more presentations were also given by the region's FETP Directors, advisors, and support teams. In these presentations, specific achievements and challenges were highlighted by each presenter. From these presentations, it was seen that most challenges experienced by country programs are related to; lack of funding for sustainability, lack of availability of skilled mentors, and finally the need for more support in the area of research and research publication. The meeting ended with plans made to develop a research priorities agenda that will engage all countries to participate towards filling existing gaps. It was also stated that a quarterly meeting will be arranged by GHD|EMPHNET for all FETP directors, advisors, and support teams. This meeting will offer opportunities for participants to discuss needs and improve the harmonization among countries.

GHD|EMPHNET will also be developing mentors' training materials which will be converted into an online course to ensure more availability of skilled mentors for FETPs. Furthermore, GHD|EMPHNET will also be supporting countries in their preparations for accreditation. Other ideas discussed during the meeting included having a monthly bulletin about GHD|EMPHNET initiatives for FETPs, supporting country programs in creating their newsletters, and their research. The meeting was thus deemed an ideal space to discuss the future and the way forward for the region's FETP.





GHD|EMPHNET: Working Together for Better Health

Global Health Development (GHD) is a regional initiative created to support countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) and to strengthen their health systems to respond to public health challenges and threats. GHD was initiated to advance the work of the Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) by building coordinating mechanisms with Ministries of Health, International Organizations and other institutions to improve population health outcomes. As an implementing arm to EMPHNET, GHD aligns its strategies with national policies and directions. Serving as a collaborative platform, GHD|EMPHNET is dedicated to serve the region by supporting national efforts to promote public health policies, strategic planning, sustainable financing, resource mobilization, public health programs, and other related services.

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