

# QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



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Among several key achievements this quarter, GHD|EMPHNET continues to monitor and focus on project activities throughout the year. In this section, we include a compilation of updates, highlights, and insights of our work with partners.

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Global Health  
Development

► GHD | EMPHNET: working  
together for better health



**EMPHNET**

The Eastern Mediterranean  
Public Health Network

# Feature

## Empowering the Public Health Workforce in the EMR in Field Epidemiology



*As the region's network of FETPs, GHD|EMPHNET continues to empower its member programs, providing technical support, building workforce capacity, supporting emergency management response, and assisting with logistics. GHD|EMPHNET also responded to the need to increase the number of trained field epidemiologists and facilitate continued professional development.*

### Expanding FETPs

GHD|EMPHNET supported the establishment of the **intermediate FETP** in three countries where other modalities already exist: Egypt, Morocco, and Sudan, in addition to new cohorts in Tunisia and Afghanistan. The support extended to Iraq with the delivery of a three-month course on public health management for the residents of the Iraqi Intermediate FETP.

GHD|EMPHNET also launched the **Public Health Empowerment Program-Basic Field Epidemiology (PHEP-BFE)** in two new countries: Morocco and Tunisia. GHD|EMPHNET also responded to countries' needs for specialized training for their public health professionals by developing a PHEP-BFE, specially customized for COVID-19 to address specified training areas like surveillance at points of entry, contact tracing, risk communication, infection control, and outbreak investigation.



### Pioneering Online Learning

Initially, GHD|EMPHNET launched EMPHNET **Learning Management System (LMS)** platform with a focus on COVID-19 response, providing a free, self-paced learning experience in Arabic and English. Today, other free online courses are available. In the very first months of its launch, over 2,700 trainees from across the region registered in the LMS courses. To further promote online training, GHD|EMPHNET also converted the entire material of the intermediate and basic FETP curriculum into an **online format** and developed the PHEP-BFE **blended** (online and face to face) program.





## Promoting Learning through Knowledge Exchange

In the second year of its launch, the **EMPHNET WEBi** Series continued to gain popularity as a platform for knowledge exchange and networking where public health experts from the Eastern Mediterranean and the globe led discussions, before attendees from around the world. Since its launch in 2020, the EMPHNET WEBi Series held 19 webinars for attendees from the region, Africa, Europe, and North America. Another knowledge exchange platform of GHD|EMPHNET, the **ENGAGE Internship Program**, is growing in its support for student learning and professional development experiences outside the academic setting.

## Mobilizing FETPs and Rapid Response Teams to the Field

Moving toward having readily available trained public health responders, GHD|EMPHNET also supported pre-deployment rapid response training, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 350 rapid responders on the sub-national level were trained to enhance response efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, GHD|EMPHNET supported the mobilization of more than 100 RRT members, as well as FETPs trained in rapid response, from Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan, and Yemen.



# The Experts

## Yemen's Field Epidemiology Training Program *A Supporter in the Face of Adversity*



Field epidemiology training programs (FETPs) were created to help public health systems investigate urgent problems and recommend interventions to rapidly resolve them and prevent their recurrence. Because of their critical role in the investigation and response to health emergencies, **FETPs** are recognized in the implementation of the International Health Regulations and the Global Health Security Agenda.

A country like Yemen which has been enduring one of the largest humanitarian crises needs the support of epidemiologists trained by these programs. The country's health system has been debilitated: limited access to and availability of health services are aggravating existing health problems and creating a plethora of new health challenges. Adding to this is the vulnerability of the country to disease outbreaks, the most serious has been the protracted Cholera outbreak of 2016. Under such circumstances, the country's FETP is making commendable contributions in support of the national health system, being the source of accurate information for actionable recommendations.

**“The residents and the graduates have been extremely valuable in supporting the activities of the Ministry of Public Health and Population.”** *Yemen's FETP Management*

Established in 2011, the FETP of Yemen builds the public health national capacity: outbreak investigation and response, disease surveillance, intervention evaluation, and use of data for public health action. The program is run by the Ministry of Public Health and Population with support from the US CDC, the WHO, GHD|EMPHNET, and the global FETP network, TEPHINET.

Yemen's FETP is offered in three modalities: the advanced, the intermediate, the basic (Public Health Empowerment Program)

So far, the program graduated **54** from the advanced modality and **350** from the basic modality

The program's residents are physicians, veterinarians, laboratorians, and nurses

By **2025**, the program intends to have one trained field epidemiologist per **200,000** population





The program accomplished quite a lot since its establishment. It conducted **over 150** outbreak investigations for Cholera, Diphtheria, H1N1, Measles, Dengue, and cVDPV1, along with surveillance systems analyses and surveillance system evaluations, while also participating in scientific committees for different diseases such as Cholera and COVID-19.

Despite many restrictions in place including travel, the program was active in knowledge sharing with their peers nationally, regionally, and internationally. It held **5** National Yemen Field Epidemiology Training Program Conferences, published over **35** papers in peer-reviewed journals, and presented **100** poster abstracts in reputable conferences.

During **COVID-19**, Yemen's FETP has been instrumental in the national response. Residents and graduates participated in country-level

coordination, planning, monitoring, and developing guidelines/standard operating procedures and strengthening surveillance capacities, outbreak investigation, contact tracing, case management, infection prevention, and control, risk communication, and research. They worked under immense challenges, including security concerns and limited communication tools.

***For contributing to the national COVID-19 response, the program won the CDC's Director's Award, presented at the EIS Conference during the FETP International Night.***

For over a decade, Yemen's FETP was able to immensely support the national health system. In the years to come, and as the program continues to grow in numbers, Yemen's FETP can continue to contribute more to protecting the health of the people of Yemen.

## Yemen's Public Health Empowerment Program

Congratulations to the Yemen Field Epidemiology Training Program (YFETP) on graduating its 15th cohort of the Public Health Empowerment Program!

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# In Focus

## A Regional Public Health Library Launched by EMPHNET



*We aim to improve public health practice and research by providing access to information through this library. We aim for EEL to be a comprehensive resource in the EMR, supporting field epidemiologists and public health professionals.*

*Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour, GHD|EMPHNET Executive Director*

On May 11, 2022, and after months of preparation, EMPHNET launched its Electronic Library (EEL), adding another milestone in its journey to spread public health knowledge across the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

EEL is a free digital resource dedicated to empowering field epidemiologists and public health professionals in the region by providing them with access to resources and tools that benefit their research and practices. It also serves as a space for enhancing the region's reservoir of public health education and information, which, in the long run, would contribute to bridging the information-to-action gap in the region.

EEL contains multiple resources, including e-journals, e-books from different publishers,

and a section dedicated to documents published by EMPHNET and its partners. This section includes guidelines, manuals, webinar briefs, reports, abstracts, and other literature that is not published in journals. This unique content, or grey literature, offers a wider scope of content set to enhance users' research and work.

As part of GHD|EMPHNET's aims to ensure that the e-library does in fact offer resources of relevance to the region's public health professionals, EEL was also designed to include a "Request a Resource" form that users can fill to request e-books, e-journals, and articles, among others. This form will also help library administrators to determine the needs of the users and to expand EEL's collections accordingly.

[Visit EEL](#)

The library resources are updated continuously in conjunction with the rapidly changing public health situation. Eventually, this will help in advancing public health practices and research by providing professionals across the region with access to evidence-based information.

Off to a good start, EEL already has 191 active users from 49 countries across the region and beyond, with a collective number of logins exceeding 1564. Within these logins, users accessed a total of 785 resources. At this rate, GHD|EMPHNET can only anticipate an increase in these figures in the months to come, bringing the library closer to realizing its vision of becoming the region’s comprehensive public health resource.

EEL’s team will build partnerships with institutes and libraries to further enhance its resource portfolio and create more opportunities for users and researchers in the region to advance their work.

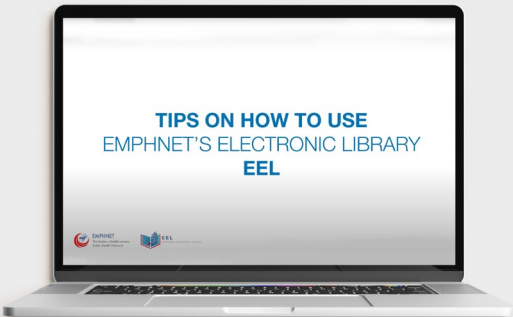


## Introducing EMPHNET’s Electronic Library for the Eastern Mediterranean Region

[Watch Video](#)

## A Tutorial: Tips on How to Use EMPHNET’s Electronic Library (EEL)

[Watch Video](#)







## Projects

### Region's NITAGs Trained on Process of Making Evidence-based Recommendations

The global immunization community regards National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) an important in-country resource that provides technical advice on vaccine and immunization, while also complementing the roles played by Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) at the global level and the Regional Immunization Technical Advisory Group (RITAGs).

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, GHD|EMPHNET is supporting NITAGs in strengthening their role as an important in-country resource that provides technical advice on vaccine and immunization. GHD|EMPHNET helped several countries in developing improvement plans for their NITAGs, and it is currently supporting the implementation of these plans. As part of this implementation, a priority area for improvement is empowering NITAGs in making recommendations based on evidence for which GHD|EMPHNET conducted a training with support from the WHO and UNICEF

The training took place between June 19 and 23, 2022 in Amman, Jordan. The participating NITAGs were Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, and Tunisia. NITAG chairs and National Expanded Program on Immunization Managers were the participants. First, the training provided an overview on immunization, immunology, vaccination, and vaccines. It then focused on sessions on the recommendation-making process.

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## Trainers Workshop in Morocco Focuses on Emergency Preparedness and Response at Points of Entry

GHD|EMPHNET is engaging with regional and international partners to improve public health emergency preparedness and response in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, especially at the borders. GHD|EMPHNET's recent collaboration with Morocco's Ministry of Health focuses on building the capacities of health workers at POEs to enable them to stop infectious diseases from spreading into the country.

Under this collaboration, a train-the-trainer workshop on emergency planning and response processes was held in Rabat between May 22-27, 2022. 20 port health specialists from priority ports of entry were the workshop's participants. The workshop covered phases of emergency response from strategic planning to implementation tactics were covered, and with this it is expected to enable participants to train additional POE health and non-health professionals in Morocco.



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## Tobacco and COVID Health Harms Campaign Launched in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine

**United Against Tobacco and COVID**, a mass media campaign, was launched to disseminate country-tailored and culturally appropriate risk messages to highlight the harms of tobacco, educate and promote tobacco use cessation while aiming to change tobacco-related behaviors in the region. The launching took place in Amman, Jordan, on June 6, 2022.

The campaign is funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and is led by GHD|EMPHNET with technical assistance from Vital Strategies. Partner organizations include Ministries of Health in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine, as well as the Royal Health Awareness Society in Jordan, Institute of Community and Public Health at Birzeit University in Palestine, United Iraqi Medical Society for Relief and Development (UIMS) in Iraq, and Cairo Association against Smoking, Tuberculosis, and lung diseases in Egypt (CASTLE). The campaign is supported by a Technical Advisory Committee composed of WHO-EMRO, CDC-MENA, CDC-Egypt, UNICEF, and SESRIC.



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## One Health Approach Successfully Uses Laboratory-based Surveillance of Brucellosis in Jordan

For over three years, EMPHNET worked with the ministries of health and agriculture and the Royal Medical Services established active, laboratory-based surveillance of human and animal brucellosis using appropriate confirmatory testing in three endemic areas: East Amman, Karak, and Mafrq.

The success of this work was celebrated in a dissemination meeting held in Amman on June 14, 2022, under the patronage of H.E. Minister of Agriculture Khaled Hnaifat. At this meeting, the project’s implementers shared several recommendations. They called for support **(1)** to continue surveillance of brucellosis, **(2)** to maintain communication between the human and animal health sectors, **(3)** to raise community awareness, **(4)** to build the capacities of physicians and veterinarians, **(5)** to continue the application of proper testing protocols, and **(6)** to evaluate the current brucellosis control strategy.



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## Jordan to Support Innovative Approach to Modernize Primary Health Care

The Ministry of Health is planning to implement the Family Health Model (FHM), an innovative approach that brings various health care providers, collectively referred to as the Family Health Team (FHT) to coordinate the highest possible quality of care for patients.

The Ministry has identified some priorities to introduce a more comprehensive, Jordan-specific FHM, with a focus on the FHT. It is collaborating with EMPHNET to develop a roadmap to modernize and strengthen Primary Healthcare to ultimately guide enhancements within the FHT, with a focus on services in maternal and child health, non-communicable diseases, and prevention and control of infectious diseases.

So far, the technical committee responsible for this work developed the first draft of this roadmap.



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# With Partners

GHD|EMPHNET works with regional, national, and international networks to strengthen public health systems in the EMR.



## Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour was Elected Vice Chair of GOARN's Steering Committee

EMPHNET's Executive Director Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour has been recently elected as the Vice Chair of the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network's (GOARN) Steering Committee for the next 2 years. The election was held during the 31st SCOM Meeting held in Geneva in mid-June 2022 where the network's strategy was finalized.

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## Our 2020-2021 Annual Report is Out!

GHD|EMPHNET has published its Annual Report: **Toward Stronger Health Systems in the EMR.** The report presents our heightened support for health systems strengthening (HSS) in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. In 6 chapters, the report provides details on GHD|EMPHNET's specific achievements in supporting the region in HSS: **(1)** workforce development **(2)** immunization service delivery **(3)** disease surveillance **(4)** laboratory functioning **(5)** operational research and **(6)** partnerships mobilization.

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## AGREEMENTS



### Signing MOU with the Health Services Academy in Pakistan

GHD|EMPHNET is growing its long-standing relations with partners in Pakistan. Dr. Magid Al Gunaid, Director of Public Health Programs at GHD|EMPHNET, visited Pakistan and joined our country team in exploring current and future collaborations with national stakeholders. During this visit, an MOU was signed between the Health Services Academy in Pakistan and the International Academy of Public Health.

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### Signing a Program Cooperation Agreement with Iraq's Ministry of Health

The agreement was signed by EMPHNET's Executive Director Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour and the Director General of the General Directorate of Public Health Dr. Riyadh Al-Halfi, representing H.E. the Minister of Health. This cooperation agreement will involve various collaborations between the two parties in various areas.

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### Meeting with the University of Aden for Future Collaboration

The International Academy of Public Health convened an introductory meeting to discuss potential collaboration activities with delegates from the University of Aden in Yemen.

The meeting was planned to strengthen collaborative links between both parties and expand opportunities of education development in the future.

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## MEMBERSHIPS



### Becoming Partners of the International Association of National Public Health Institutes, IANPHI

GHD|EMPHNET and the International Academy of Public Health (IAPH) are now partners of IANPHI joining over 110 members from 95 countries to contribute their expertise and experience from and for the Eastern Mediterranean region and ultimately support global health.

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### Becoming an Official Sustaining Member of the World Federation of Public Health Associations, WFPHA

GHD|EMPHNET is now a member of the WFPHA alongside 130 organizations from around the world; hence, will be participating in WFPHA meetings and actively engaged the International NGOs for COVID-19 Vaccination Equity Group.

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#### 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. Serving as a collaborative platform, GHD|EMPHNET is dedicated to serving the region by supporting efforts to promote public health policies, strategic planning, sustainable financing, resource mobilization, public health programs, and other related services.

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