



Global Emergency Response and Recovery Partner Engagement: Expanding Efforts and Strategies to Improve Rapid Response to Public Health Emergencies Globally 2020-2021

Project Information

- ◆ Department: Public Health Programs
- ◆ Unit: Public Health Emergency Management Center

OBJECTIVES

Implementing project activities will contribute to strengthening global health security through improving emergency management in the countries of Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR). In specific project aimed to improve preparedness and early detection of infectious disease outbreaks, improved rapid response and control of public health threats of international concerns. In addition to increased the number of trained partners and ability to rapidly share information during emergencies.

REGIONS OF WORK

GHD|EMPHNET supported Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan and Yemen among other countries in the region.

BENEFICIARIES

The public health professionals and surveillance systems of Ministries of Health (MoH) in Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, and Yemen among other countries from the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

PROJECT PHASES

GHD|EMPHNET undertook a set of activities that seek to strengthen public health capacities and system performance. This project included the following:

Phase I – Preparation: planning and communication with the targeted countries MOH, CDC and WHO to implement the project activities and identify country focal persons, development of training materials, assessment tools and Terms of References.

Phase II – Implementation: Training and capacity building workshops, Training of Trainers (TOT), Field deployment of responders, recruitment of Event-Based Surveillance focal persons, development of and review of emergency response plans, Risk mapping, Situational Assessment, and Capacity Review.

Phase III –Documentation: development and/or documentation of training workshop reports, training material, developed SOPs, field deployment reports, mapping and assessment, review reports and lessons learned.

Project Start and End Date	06/15/2020 – 06/14/2021
Partner Organizations	Ministries of Health (MOH) in EMR countries, World Health Organization and non-governmental organizations and national stakeholders.
Funded by	Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project was established to develop and implement critical activities in the context of public health emergencies. These activities served efforts to improve the performance of public health practice and systems to increase health protection, health equity and health information to advance public health in the context of humanitarian emergencies and disease outbreaks activities that will be undertaken to strengthen public health capacities and system performance included:

- *Support in-country deployment of trained FETPs/RRTs to contribute to country alertness and response to emergencies in Yemen.* GHD conducted refresher training to previously trained Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) residents and graduated and Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) at the subnational level at each country followed by supporting field deployment of 60 member in each country.
- *Strengthen Event Based Surveillance (EBS) system in 3 EMR countries from the region through recruitment and support of in-country EBS focal points.* GHD provided technical and logistical support and work with CDC, WHO EMRO and MoHs to recruit, deploy and mentor Event Based Surveillance (EBS) focal persons at 3 selected countries (Sudan, Libya, and Afghanistan). Through this support, a landscape/needs assessment of surveillance and reporting infrastructure were performed and set of activities to advocate and enhance the Event Based Surveillance (EBS) system were designed and implemented as relevant.
- *Support Tunisia and Libya to update and/or develop and test a joint cross border public health emergency response operational plan.* GHD|EMPHNET planned to conduct workshop with senior officers from relevant national sectors from both countries to provide information on current risks, capacities, and areas of improvements and support participants to identify and draft joint cross border Public Health emergency response operational plan and tools. Further a second workshop was planned to be carried out to train and develop cross-border coordination and communication mechanisms, Standard Operation Procedures, and materials for the simulation Exercise (SimEx) to test emergency response plan.
- *Train-the-trainer (TTT) for cadre of Port Health staff on the principles and practices of developing public health emergency response plans and procedures for rolling out the training to health and non-health Point of Entry POE personnel.* GHD was planning to contextualize and adapt the CDC Global Border Health Team (GBHT) training materials ahead of training Port Health Staff on the principles and practices of developing and implementing public health emergency response plans and procedures.
- *Conduct risk mapping to forecast communicable disease spread.* GHD will contextualize and adapt the CDC/GHBT risk mapping tools as necessary to meet response planning requirements in Morocco to forecast communicable disease spread based on population movement and prioritize the priority POEs which are considered higher risk for public health issues.
- *Assessment of the COVID-19 Surveillance in humanitarian settings in Iraq.* Assessment protocol was developed in Sept 2021 to assess the surveillance system over last three years as relevant to the system scope of work and types of available surveillance and surveillance attributes, including simplicity, flexibility, data quality, acceptability, sensitivity, predictive value positive, representativeness, timeliness, and stability. The data collection was completed in October 2021 and analysis and assessment report development is undergoing. GHD|EMPHNET, CDC and MOH will identify needed intervention to strengthen the COVID-19 surveillance system.



Currently . . .

The information collected from the International Health Regulation (IHR) Joint External Evaluation (JEE) in most of the EMR countries and from other sources such as IHR annual reports and experts' missions, highlights the gap in IHR capacities and lack of readiness to detect and deal with public health emergencies in an adequate way. The recent COVID-19 pandemic regional experience and the continued conflict and political instability in the region, has highlighted important gaps related to countries strategic preparedness and response. There is insufficient understanding of the IHR concept and principles, the MOH role and responsibilities, other key non-MOH health players and sectors, as well as the management of the overall multi-sectoral framework and mechanism required for the adequate handling of Public Health Emergencies (PHE) preparedness and response components.

Humanitarian emergencies often lead to large numbers of displaced people who are heavily impacted. The movement of refugees and displaced population and their living conditions can create higher risks for the rapid transmission of communicable diseases. During humanitarian emergencies surveillance systems maybe underreporting or disrupted, which ultimately affects the timeliness and quality of data received. Enhancing the strengthening public health capacities and system performance public health system with focus on emergency preparedness and response is a priority for emergency-affected countries, refugees-affected countries, and those which are at high risk of being impacted by humanitarian crisis or disease outbreaks.

What is next . . .

Implementing project activities has contributed to strengthening global health security through improving emergency management in the EMR countries. This includes develop efficient and systematic emergency preparedness and rapid response systems, thus; strengthen the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) countries to expand their capacities in combatting public health threats and reducing public health impact of disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

Moving to a more country-focused approach, building a country's epidemic management multi-sectorial teams and coaching them to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate feasible, practical, evidence-based, and staggered action plans to build IHR capacities could be the most effective way. This also included introducing new simple concepts and tools that the countries can easily integrate and apply to improve their plans such as surveillance system assessment, Simulation Exercises, risk assessments, and benchmarking. The capacity building and support to rapid response efforts will contribute to improving preparedness and preventing avoidable epidemics, early detection of threats, mitigate the adverse public health effects of infectious disease outbreaks, humanitarian crises and other Public Health Emergencies of International Concern (PHEICs).

Continued collaboration and coordination among GHD|EMPHNET, CDC, ministries of health and partners will enhance priority rapid response capacities and operations determined by recent outbreak experiences and humanitarian emergencies, country road maps, recommended policies, strategies and 2030 key programs and targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



By the Numbers

17

Planned capacity building & Training workshops

385

Health professionals (health staff, FETPs, RRTs, POE health staff, and others) targeted with capacity building activities

9

Countries in EMR directly targeted with one or more of project activities

6

Planned mapping, assessment and reviews to avail information to strengthen early detection and response to health emergencies

GHD|EMPHNET Information: Global Health Development (GHD) Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) works at achieving its mission by responding to public health needs with deliberate efforts that allow for health promotion and disease prevention.

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