

Strengthen respiratory disease surveillance in EMR countries

Project Information

- ◆ **Department: Public Health Programs**
- ◆ **Unit: Polio and Immunization**

Objectives

The main objective of this activity is to strengthen public health surveillance in EMR countries by enhancing integrated respiratory and pan-respiratory disease surveillance capacities. This includes early detection and monitoring of outbreaks and novel respiratory pathogens with epidemic potential, strengthening sentinel surveillance, and generating actionable data to inform public health interventions, vaccine introduction, and pandemic preparedness. The activity also aims to build sustainable national capacities for respiratory disease surveillance through technical support, laboratory strengthening, and multisectoral engagement, including MERS preparedness in high-risk areas.

REGIONS OF WORK

EMR

BENEFICIARIES

The activity will directly benefit national and regional public health authorities, laboratory personnel, and surveillance officers. Indirectly, the population at large in the target EMR countries will benefit through improved outbreak detection, timely response to respiratory infections, and strengthened health security. High-priority groups, including children under five and participants in mass gatherings (e.g., Hajj and Umrah), will gain from enhanced monitoring, preventive measures, and disease containment efforts.

PROJECT PHASES

The project phases include the procurement and installation of laboratory equipment and consumables, training and mentoring of laboratory staff, and ongoing technical support and quality assurance. GHD, in close coordination with CDC, will define the specific support needed and monitor implementation to ensure the activity achieves its intended objectives.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

EMPHNET, in coordination with CDC and the Ministries of Health, will provide technical and logistical support to target EMR countries, including Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco. The support focuses on enhancing surveillance systems for Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI), integrating sentinel surveillance data to understand COVID-19 and other respiratory pathogens, and scaling up capacity-building activities. In Pakistan, GHD will continue estimating the disease burden of respiratory viruses in children under five, strengthening sentinel systems, and generating evidence for vaccine policy decisions. In Egypt, the support will expand laboratory capacities and extend surveillance to additional provinces. For MERS, the Public Health Empowerment Program (PHEP-MERS) in KSA will be scaled up, targeting Hajj and Umrah regions (Makkah, Madinah, Jeddah, and Taif) through three workshops per cohort, covering core surveillance, advanced preparedness, and applied simulations with graduation ceremonies.

Project Start and End Date	08/1/2025 – 07/31/2026
Funded by	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Collaborators	Ministries of Health

Currently . . .

In Pakistan, burden-of-disease estimation and sentinel surveillance strengthening are ongoing. In Egypt, planning for expansion to new provinces and laboratory support is underway in coordination with the Ministry of Health and CDC. Preparatory discussions for PHEP-MERS expansion in KSA have begun, including finalizing participant selection, curriculum updates, and logistical planning for the two cohorts.

What is next . . .

EMPHNET will continue implementing surveillance strengthening activities, finalize training materials, and conduct workshops and field activities according to the project schedule. This includes completing sentinel surveillance assessments in Pakistan, expanding laboratory support and staff training in Egypt, and delivering the three-workshop PHEP-MERS program in KSA. The activity will be closely monitored for participant engagement, data quality improvements, and the development of sustainable surveillance capacities to detect and respond to respiratory disease threats across the EMR.

EMPHNET Information: 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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