EMPHNET
The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network

GHD | EMPHNET: working together for better health

Conduct FETP (PHEP-PEO) frontline cohorts in Afghanistan (Frontline polio skills training for public health staff)

Project Information

- **Department: Center of Excellence for Applied Epidemiology**
- **Unit: Workforce capacity**

OBJECTIVES

Strengthen the epidemiological capacity of national and subnational EPI and Polio EOC staff to detect, investigate, analyze, and respond to polio, vaccine-preventable diseases, and other public health threats through practical, competency-based FETP training.

REGIONS OF WORK

Afghanistan, with priority to low-performing and high-risk provinces.

BENEFICIARIES

EPI and Polio EOC staff at national and subnational levels, with priority given to staff from low-performing and high-risk provinces.

PROJECT PHASES

This project will have two phases as follows:

Phase 1- Engage the technical advisor and coordinator, adapt and contextualize the PHEP-PEO curriculum and materials, and finalize participant selection and training arrangements.

Phase 2- Continue the third FETP (PHEP-PEO) cohort through workshops, fieldwork, mentorship, and supervision, focusing on practical epidemiological skills and public health response.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

EMPHNET has extensive experience in introducing Field Epidemiology Training Programs (FETP) in the region, having successfully completed several cohorts of intermediate FETPs in Afghanistan. Given the evolving epidemiological landscape in Afghanistan, particularly with the recent detections of multiple wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) cases,

This project builds upon the ongoing Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) – Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Polio Eradication Officer (PHEP-PEO) – and Afghanistan Polio Management Information System (APMIS) initiatives from previous years. **Key updates:** The first cohort of FETP (PHEP-PEO) has been successfully completed, with all workshops and fieldwork finalized. The second cohort, initiated in June 2025, has reached its final workshop and graduation in November 2025. The third cohort started in January 2026 and will continue in August 2026. The project aims to strengthen Afghanistan's capacity to detect, prevent, and respond to public health threats, particularly polio and other vaccine-preventable diseases, by training field epidemiologists, enhancing mentorship, and improving digital polio data management. These interventions directly support the country's polio eradication goals while reinforcing routine surveillance, outbreak response, and broader public health system resilience.

Project Start and End Date	**08/1/2025 – 07/31/2027**
Funded by	**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**
Collaborators	**Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and Emergency Operations Center (EOC)**

Currently . . .

The political transition in mid-August 2021 and the temporary pause of funding to Afghanistan's health system by donors have jeopardized the gains made in the past two decades. Furthermore, the evacuation of numerous healthcare providers, including EPI and polio program staff at the national and sub-national levels, has further hampered healthcare service provision in the country.

Political instability, prolonged conflict, and the resulting humanitarian crisis have exacerbated challenges such as high population movement, under development, poor livelihoods, and weakened health systems. These factors have further constrained vaccination efforts, leaving children vulnerable to debilitating diseases. The departure of immunization frontline workers, whose are left untraced, has negatively affected their performance, and has led to an increase in VPD outbreaks, resulting in a changing epidemiological situation for polio in Afghanistan. The East region of the country has recently reported several cases of WPV1.

What's next . . .

EMPHNET will continue implementing the third cohort

Through this 4-month in-service training program, GHD will make sure to improve the capacity of the MoPH to prevent, detect and respond to public health priority issues and in turn can contribute to the polio eradication.

OUTCOMES By NUMBERS

A total of 59 PHEP-POE from Afghanistan graduated.

2

AFETP curriculum was developed

1

Technical committee was established

GHD|EMPHNET Information: Global Health Development (GHD) and 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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