EMPHNET
The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network

GHD I EMPHNET: working together for better health

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, provided technical and logistical support to target EMR countries, including Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco. The support focused 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, EMPHNET estimated the disease burden of respiratory viruses in children under five, strengthened sentinel systems, and generated evidence for vaccine policy decisions. In Egypt, the support expanded laboratory capacities and extended surveillance to additional provinces. For MERS, the Public Health Empowerment Program (PHEP-MERS) in KSA was 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.

Currently . . .

The activity was fully completed by the end of the project period on 31 July 2026. All planned sub-activities were completed in the target EMR countries, including burden-of-disease estimation and sentinel surveillance strengthening in Pakistan, laboratory support and expansion to additional provinces in Egypt, surveillance support in Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco, and the PHEP-MERS program in KSA.

- PHEP-RV cohorts in Pakistan, Lebanon and Egypt completed
- PHEP-MERS in KSA completed
- NEDSS supported
- Pakistan BoD supported in coordination with the NIH
- MERS-CoV survey conducted for 14 countries

What is next . . .

With the sub-activities completed, the strengthened surveillance systems and laboratory capacities are in place to support early detection of, and response to, respiratory disease threats across the EMR. The participating countries are expected to sustain these gains by building on the national capacities developed.

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

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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