



FIELD EPIDEMIOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM

NEWSLETTER - ISSUE 21 - 2025



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Editor's Letter

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to bring you the new issue of EMPHNET's Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) Newsletter. This issue highlights notable progress and achievements from FETPs across the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) and beyond.

Inside, you will discover stories that reflect the dedication and impact of FETP residents and graduates in advancing public health. From graduation ceremonies and the launch of new cohorts to hands-on workshops led by country programs, this issue captures a wide range of accomplishments.

We invite you to explore these updates and hope you find them both informative and inspiring.



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Feature Stories

A Story of Sustainability: Strong Foundations Made Iraq FETP's Growth a Natural Outcome

In 2010, Iraq embarked on a journey to build a stronger public health workforce by establishing the Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP). Since its establishment, the program has played a vital role in strengthening Iraq's epidemiologic capacity and supporting evidence-based public health action. However, with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, resources were quickly redirected to address urgent healthcare needs such as hospitals, labs, testing kits, drugs, and personal protective equipment. This sudden shift meant that the program had to rethink its approach to adapt and continue its mission.

In light of this challenge, the program's leadership realized that continuing as before would no longer be enough. They understood the need for a new vision that would firmly embed the program within the national health response and that would also align it closely with the evolving needs of the Ministry of Health. By 2021, the program embraced a new direction, redefining its vision and mission to focus on building a healthy and secure society by developing national capacities based on scientific knowledge and practical skills to promote, protect, and restore health, while advancing the institutionalization of the program. This shift was more than just words. The program evolved from a primarily training-focused model to a service-driven model that emphasizes real-time public health impact, building on its strong infrastructure and financial stability. *"Changing the vision is the first step toward turning challenges into opportunities and reality into achievement,"* said Dr. Yasir Younis Majeed, Iraq FETP Director

This transformation and progress toward sustainability were driven by multiple strategic initiatives. One key step was the establishment of Event-Based Surveillance (EBS) system, an



advanced surveillance system that enables timely reporting of health events through an electronic platform. This rapid reporting not only allows for swift responses but also provides a dynamic and practical setting for ongoing training.

At the same time, the program was growing in new directions. As public health needs became more urgent, it became clear that responding quickly to outbreaks was just as important as detecting them. This realization led to the integration of Rapid Response Teams (RRT) within the program's broader structure, working alongside existing surveillance units. Through this coordinated approach, the connection between surveillance and response grew stronger, enhancing the health system's ability to act quickly and effectively. At the same time, it reinforced the program's dual purpose of delivering essential public health services while continuing to serve as a platform for hands-on training.

The FETP also found a new pathway to strengthen its presence and sustainability in Iraq through its involvement in mass gatherings. These large-scale events provided a practical

platform for trainees to engage in planning, surveillance, and response activities. Over time, this role became institutionalized, and in 2024, mass gatherings were officially recognized by the Ministry of Health as a public health program with dedicated funding, further embedding the FETP into Iraq's health system.

In 2021, the Iraq FETP additionally strengthened its foundation by becoming a dedicated department within the Ministry of Health. It expanded its reach by establishing departments in every province and smaller units in health districts, with approximately 150 administrative centers, which made it easier to share information and deliver services across the country. Alongside this, the Ministry of Health established an annual budget to cover the program's activities, securing its financial future. Over four years, these efforts solidified the program's place within the health system, ensuring its sustainability and lasting impact.

Based on this revised model, the Iraq FETP not only enhanced learning outcomes for trainees but also delivered tangible value to the Ministry of Health and other sectors by addressing critical gaps in surveillance, outbreak response,

and evidence-based decision-making.

FETP teams provided rapid field support during outbreaks, produced high-quality data to inform policy, strengthened multisectoral coordination, and earned formal recognition as a trusted source of technical expertise. Resulting from this progress, the program achieved TEPHINET accreditation for both the Advanced and Intermediate tiers in its first attempt in November 2024. *"From a simple vision to a global achievement, the Iraq FETP has proven that determination creates leadership,"* emphasized, Dr. Yasir.

As the Iraq FETP moves forward, its future looks bright. What started as a training program is now a trusted part of the national health system. Health directorates are now actively seeking FETP support more than ever, showing how valuable the program has become. Building on this progress, the program aims to expand its field service units, improve digital tools for data use, and offer clearer career paths for its graduates. With continued support, the Iraq FETP will keep turning training into action and serve as a strong example for public health programs across the region.

EMPHNET's FETP Exchange Program Offers Cross-Border Learning in Action

Launched to foster learning beyond borders, EMPHNET's FETP Exchange Program provides residents with the opportunity to connect, observe, and grow through real-world experiences across the region. This year, EMPHNET supported three exchange missions in which residents from Yemen traveled to Jordan, residents from Egypt traveled to Iraq, and residents from Iraq traveled to Egypt. In each new public health setting, residents engaged with peers, explored best practices, and gained practical insights that they could apply back home.

Throughout these visits, residents immersed themselves in another country's public health



landscape, observing daily operations, participating in discussions, and exchanging experiences with local professionals. Each visit offered a window into how a different country approaches public health challenges, from managing outbreaks to coordinating national surveillance efforts. Residents also reflected on similarities between their host country and their own health systems as well as differences that sparked new ideas. This hands-on experience deepened their technical understanding and inspired broader thinking about collaboration, adaptation, and the future of field epidemiology in their home countries.

As part of their journey to Jordan, Yemen FETP residents began their journey by visiting several key directorates and departments within the Jordanian Ministry of Health, including the Environmental Health Department and the Mafrqa Health Directorate. Through meetings with heads of key departments, they gained a deeper understanding of Jordan's technical frameworks, including surveillance systems and laboratory procedures. Their visit also offered opportunities for engagement with various departments at EMPHNET HQ. Such engagements offered valuable insight into the organization's role in promoting better health across the region.

During the exchange mission in Iraq, Egypt FETP residents explored the country's public health system and its operational framework. They were introduced to the areas of work the Iraq FETP is engaged in, the Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) program, and the EBS system and central laboratories, allowing them to compare these systems with those in Egypt. The residents gained hands-on experience across multiple public health settings, while observing how policies and programs are implemented on the ground. They engaged with staff at the Directorate of Health Affairs, and the National Immunization Program, examining the immunization schedule and strategies for controlling Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (VPDs). At a peripheral-level hospital, they also witnessed surveillance operations and infection

prevention practices in action, providing practical insights and lessons that could inform their own work in Egypt.

Meanwhile, Iraq FETP residents embarked on an insightful journey to Egypt to gain hands-on experience in public health practice. Their visit began at the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population (MoPHP), where they explored the organizational structure and observed how EBS and RRTs operate on the ground. At EMPHNET's Egypt office, they learned how the organization contributes to capacity building and supports national surveillance activities. The residents then visited the Abbassia Fever Hospital, witnessing firsthand how hospital-based surveillance is integrated into the national health system. Their journey continued to the East Nasr City Health Office and Al-Amal Primary Health Care Center, where they gained practical experience in EBS data collection and reporting at the primary healthcare level. Throughout the exchange, the residents absorbed valuable lessons and insights that they brought back to in the country program in Iraq.

Building on the success of these exchange missions, there is great potential to further enhance future experiences, and to involve more residents from other countries in the region in exchange missions. EMPHNET's approach for providing participants with background knowledge and pre-visit preparation has proven essential in helping them make the most of every learning opportunity. Most importantly, the professional relationships formed during the exchanges create a lasting foundation for continued collaboration and meaningful knowledge sharing between FETPs across the region.

In conclusion, these exchanges didn't only enhance the residents' technical skills but they also reinforced the growing partnerships between FETPs. Supported by EMPHNET, such initiatives are paving the way for stronger regional networks and collaborative efforts to advance public health across borders.



Country Program News

This section
highlights the
region's FETPs'
updates

AFGHANISTAN

The PHEP-PEO Cohort Completes its Training Journey

The second cohort of the Public Health Empowerment Program – Polio and EPI Officers (PHEP-PEO) under the Afghanistan FETP, has successfully completed its five-month in-service training. The cohort, consisting of 27 public health professionals, concluded a structured learning journey that included three workshops and extensive fieldwork. A graduation ceremony was held to celebrate this achievement, attended by officials from the Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), the Afghanistan Public Health Institute, EMPHNET, and other partners.

During their fieldwork, residents visited health facilities to conduct routine EPI data triangulation and perform assessments within immunization units. Their analysis revealed discrepancies between data entered in the system and data recorded in tally sheets, registers, monthly reports, and the DHIS2 dashboard. Despite these gaps, the residents also documented improvements in routine immunization performance compared to previous years. As part of their practical experience, they additionally supported the investigation of a suspected pertussis outbreak in central Takhar Province.

Furthermore, the cohort participated in a dedicated training session on the Afghanistan Polio Management Information System (APMIS), where they gained hands-on experience through presentations and practical exercises. These sessions are designed to expose residents to new tools, strengthen their technical competencies, and foster knowledge exchange among participants.



Participating in Emergency Response Efforts

Outbreak investigation is a core component of FETP, forming both a foundational competency and a critical aspect of emergency response. In September 2025, powerful earthquakes struck the eastern regions of Afghanistan, particularly Kunar Province, claiming thousands of lives, and injuring and displacing thousands more. Afghanistan FETP graduates and residents played an active role in the response efforts, contributing through various functions across the health sector, including surveillance and emergency field operations.



Holding 25th Steering Committee Meeting

The 25th Steering Committee Meeting of the Afghanistan FETP was held in October chaired by Dr. Mohammad Hassan Ghiasi, Deputy Minister for Policy and Health Development. The meeting brought together representatives from relevant departments and directorates of the MoPH. Discussions focused on progress in technical activities and workshops, as well as upcoming program priorities. The meeting concluded with a shared agreement on the next steps and the way forward.



Afghanistan FETP Gains Accreditation for its Intermediate Program

The intermediate program of the Afghanistan FETP has received international accreditation from the Training Programs in Epidemiology and Public Health Interventions Network (TEPHINET). This remarkable achievement represents a significant milestone in the history of FETPs across the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR), marking Afghanistan as the fifth country in the region to gain this recognition, following Pakistan, Morocco, Iraq, and Egypt FETPs. This accreditation also highlights the program's strength and sustainability, making it a true role model for the region and beyond.

EMPHNET's Executive Director, Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour, acknowledged Afghanistan FETP's achievement as a source of pride for the region. *"This remarkable milestone reflects the tireless dedication of the Program Director, team, residents, and graduates,"* he said. *"We congratulate Afghanistan FETP and the Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health and look forward to even greater successes ahead. This is a victory not just for Afghanistan, but a shining example of the impact of field epidemiology training programs across the Eastern Mediterranean Region and the world."*

EMPHNET views FETPs in the region as a source of pride, recognizing the pivotal role they play in strengthening health workforce capacity and responding to health challenges affecting the EMR.

BANGLADESH

Evaluation Completed for Bangladesh FETP Intermediate Program

As part of its aims to expand the program's impact and to strategically plan for the future, the Bangladesh FETP conducted an evaluation of its intermediate tier.

The evaluation followed a non-experimental, mixed-methods approach to assess the implementation and impact of the Intermediate FETP on the country's health system. Using the US CDC Outcome Evaluation Toolkit, the evaluation combined document reviews, quantitative surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), curriculum review, and six success case studies.



Descriptive and inferential methods examined skills development, application, and program effectiveness, while thematic analysis contextualized quantitative results, highlighting factors that influenced program success, challenges, and opportunities for sustainability.

This comprehensive approach generated robust evidence on program contributions to surveillance and outbreak response, as well as institutional strengths and gaps. The report of this evaluation is being compiled in a report that will soon be widely disseminated.

Celebrating the Graduation of the Fourth Intermediate FETP

In September 2025, the Bangladesh FETP celebrated a significant milestone with the graduation of its fourth Intermediate cohort. Eight residents successfully completed their one-year training, marking a major achievement in their professional development and contribution to public health in Bangladesh. This graduation not only recognizes the accomplishments of the residents but it also highlights the ongoing commitment of the Bangladesh FETP to strengthen the country's public health workforce and improve health outcomes nationwide.



Organizing Steering Committee Meeting

In September 2025, the Bangladesh Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) held a steering committee meeting at the Bangladesh Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. During the meeting, committee members reviewed all three tiers of the program and assessed its overall implementation.

The discussions also focused on the progress of the program's transition toward institutionalization, as well as steps to achieve formal accreditation from the Bangladesh National Accreditation Council and the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BMDC).



EGYPT

Egypt FETP Graduates Develop National Guidelines for Event-Based Surveillance

In November 2025, the Egypt MoPHP formally launched its National Guidelines for EBS during the Global Congress on Population, Health and Human Development, held under the patronage of Minister of Health and Population, Dr. Khaled AbdelGhafar. The Preventive Medicine and Public Health Sector announced the release as a milestone for the country's health security system.

Developed by graduates of the Egypt FETP, the guidelines represent a significant advancement in national capacity building. These graduates brought their field experience, analytical skills, and deep understanding of Egypt's public health priorities to develop guidelines that are both practical and nationally relevant. These new EBS guidelines are expected to enhance early detection and response to health threats, supporting a safer and more resilient future for Egypt.



Strengthening Research Capacities

In October, residents of the 22nd Advanced Cohort significantly enhanced their research capacities through intensive training led by professors from Cairo and Ain Shams Universities. They boosted their skills in study design, sampling methods, sample size calculation, identifying bias and confounding, and applying qualitative research techniques. By the end of the training, residents had developed research proposals that are now ready for data collection. The cohort's progress marks an important step toward generating evidence that supports improved public health outcomes in Egypt.



Pioneering Egypt's First FETP Vector Control Track: Building National Capacity Against Vector-Borne Diseases

In July, Egypt FETP launched the first Vector Control Track - Basic Level, the first program of its kind in the EMR. The cohort brought together 32 agricultural engineers from 17 governorates, all working to strengthen Egypt's capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to vector-borne diseases.

The cohort began by building foundational knowledge in vector surveillance and in evaluating existing surveillance systems. They were then deployed across 20 governorates, where they conducted on-the-ground assessments and collected data to better understand local vector challenges.

Residents also completed an outbreak investigation workshop that covered the full investigation process, laboratory coordination, environmental assessments, risk communication, and field safety. The training concluded with a Rift Valley Fever simulation, allowing them to apply their skills in a realistic scenario.

As part of their field assignments, residents gathered data on mosquito and rodent densities and evaluated the performance and timeliness of current surveillance systems. Their findings were presented through detailed reports and maps that highlighted gaps and offered practical improvements.

In December, the program celebrated the graduation of this pioneering cohort, marking an important milestone for vector-borne disease control in Egypt and the region.



IRAQ

Graduation of Iraq FETP Frontline Cohorts

The Iraq FETP celebrated the graduation of its Frontline Cohorts 12, 13, and 14 through a series of ceremonies held across multiple governorates, marking the successful completion of an intensive training journey for 49 residents supported by 16 supervisors. As part of the graduation events, residents presented the results of their field investigations, showcasing the practical skills they gained in surveillance, data collection, and public health response. These presentations reflected the hands-on learning approach that defines the Frontline FETP and strengthens public health capacity at the local level.



Conducting Field Visits to Strengthen Public Health Services

Iraq FETP residents from different cohorts participated in field visits to primary health care centers in Baghdad and Basrah Provinces. In Baghdad, they assessed the quality of health services provided to citizens, identified gaps in service delivery, and explored practical ways to improve performance across public health centers. In Basrah, they reviewed the implementation of recommendations addressing the water crisis, particularly salinity-related risks, evaluating health and environmental impacts, and suggesting measures to strengthen response and intersectoral coordination. These visits highlight the program's commitment to evidence-based monitoring and continuous quality improvement at the primary care and community health levels.



Strengthening Skills in Biostatistics and Study Design

The fifth Intermediate cohort of the Iraq FETP is progressing in their training journey, attending a Biostatistics and Study Design Workshop in October in Baghdad. 14 residents from various Iraqi provinces participated under the guidance of two facilitators.

The workshop focused on strengthening residents' knowledge of study design, sampling methods, stratified analysis, and survey development. Each resident presented a 10-minute assignment, followed by discussion and mentor feedback. Sessions also included pre- and post-tests, as well as virtual group project mentoring via Zoom.

JORDAN

Celebrating Jordan's FETP Graduates

In April, the Jordan FETP launched a new PHEP-Basic Field Epidemiology (PHEP-BFE) cohort, featuring a mentorship workshop, three hands-on training sessions, and fieldwork assignments. Residents successfully completed the three-month training, gaining practical, real-world experience in field epidemiology.

To mark this achievement, the Jordan MoH, in collaboration with EMPHNET, celebrated the graduation of this cohort along with two Advanced FETP cohorts, bringing together 40 graduates at the Ministry's headquarters in Amman. The ceremony was attended by senior officials, representatives from national, regional, and international organizations, and members of the media.

The two Advanced cohorts, completing a two-year program, received comprehensive training in epidemiology, biostatistics, surveillance, communication, health economics, public health laboratory practices, biosafety, computer skills, research writing, and scientific article preparation. During their training, residents contributed to various programs within the MoH, including the directorates of communicable and non-communicable diseases.



LEBANON

PHEP-RSV Residents Conclude Their Training Journey

Two cohorts of the Lebanon Public Health Empowerment Program– Respiratory Syncytial Virus (PHEP-RSV) cohorts successfully completed their comprehensive training program. The program focused on enhancing capacities to detect, investigate, and respond to vaccine-preventable diseases, with a special focus on RSV.

Throughout the program, residents participated in workshops, conducted fieldwork, and applied practical exercises to strengthen RSV-specific surveillance, outbreak investigation and Management, case data collection, and public health response. The program concluded with a final workshop where residents presented their field findings and received feedback from facilitators, marking the successful completion of their professional development journey.



MOROCCO

Plans to Advance Mental Health Expertise Across the Region

The Morocco FETP is currently planning to launch an Advanced regional mental health cohort, underscoring the growing recognition of mental health as an essential component of overall health and well-being, as emphasized by WHO. This initiative comes at a critical time for the EMR, which continues to face a substantial burden of mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), substance use disorders, and psychosis, exacerbated by ongoing conflict, displacement, socioeconomic challenges, and limited access to specialized services. The cohort will be implemented with support from EMPHNET and Africa CDC.



PAKISTAN

The 24th Cohort of Pakistan FETP Successfully Completes Training

The Pakistan FETP celebrated the graduation of the 24th cohort of the Frontline FETP for healthcare professionals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The cohort, which completed a three-month training program from June to September 2025, comprised 30 residents, most of whom were medical doctors and medical entomologists.

The program provided hands-on training in disease surveillance, outbreak detection and investigation, data collection, public health response, community health awareness, and risk communication, all within a One Health framework. Graduates will now serve in their respective districts, strengthening disease detection, investigation, and control, and contributing to more robust surveillance and outbreak response systems across the province and the country.



16th Advanced FETP Cohort's Residents Move Forward in Their Learning Journey

The National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad, in collaboration with CDC and the Global Fund, conducted the third workshop for the 16th Advanced FETP cohort for healthcare professionals. Residents were trained in disease surveillance, outbreak investigation, data collection, public health response, community health awareness, and risk communication and community engagement. During the workshop, residents also applied their field epidemiology skills to monitor disease trends, promptly identify unusual case clusters, and respond to potential outbreaks, particularly in flood-affected areas across provinces.



FETP Residents and Graduates Support Strengthening of IPC and HAI Systems Across Pakistan

Residents and graduates of Pakistan FETP played a key role in supporting the NIH in advancing Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) and Healthcare-Associated Infection (HAI) surveillance across 100 tertiary hospitals under the Global Fund's C19RM support.

In September–October 2025, NIH conducted five-day Master Trainings of Trainers in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, training over 180 healthcare professionals. FETP residents and graduates acted as technical facilitators, supporting modules on HAI surveillance, data interpretation, and outbreak response.

Additionally, they contributed to a two-day national workshop in Islamabad to review and update the IPC and HAI Strategic Plans 2025–2030 and to support the rollout of Pakistan's first HAI Surveillance Digital Tool, linking field epidemiology expertise with national-level IPC implementation.

These initiatives highlight Pakistan's commitment, with FETP involvement, to building safer and more resilient healthcare environments through evidence-based IPC and HAI systems.



QATAR

Milestone Achievement: Qatar FETP Graduates Its First Intermediate Cohort

In June, the Qatar FETP marked a milestone with the graduation of its first Intermediate Cohort. 16 residents were honored in a ceremonial event recognizing their contributions during a one-year training journey. Led by the MoPH in collaboration with EMPHNET, the program followed a blended, competency-based model combining fieldwork with virtual and in-person workshops in key public health areas such as surveillance, outbreak investigation, and emergency response.



Mark
Your **Calendars!**

**The Ninth EMPHNET
Regional Conference**

is happening
in October **2026**

More details will follow



SAUDI ARABIA

PHEP-MERS Cohort: From Launch to Completion

The Public Health Empowerment Program – Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (PHEP-MERS) was launched in Saudi Arabia to enhance national capacities in epidemiological tracking, contact tracing, health communication, IPC, and community engagement, with a special focus on addressing MERS-CoV, a continuing public health priority in the Kingdom. Through dedicated workshops and fieldwork, this cohort of 19 residents strengthened their skills in detecting, investigating, and responding to public health threats, including VPDs.



By building both national and sub-national capacity, the program equipped health professionals to safeguard communities, particularly during large gatherings such as Hajj and Umrah, where outbreak prevention is critical.

The program culminated in a graduation ceremony in September, attended by Dr. Magid Al-Gunaid, Deputy Executive Director at EMPHNET, and prominent Saudi public health leaders, including Dr. Muhannad Aloraini, Founder and Director of the Public Health Academy; Mr. Mohammad Alshaqawi, Chief Shared Service Officer at the Public Health Authority; Dr. Abdulaziz Almutairi, Saudi FETP Director; and Dr. Thamer Bakhamees, Head of Training Programs at the Public Health Academy, Public Health Authority.

New PHEP-BFE Cohort Kicks Off in Saudi Arabia

In October, a new PHEP-BFE cohort was launched in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, comprising 20 residents. During their first workshop, participants were introduced to core concepts of epidemiology and public health surveillance, fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and skill development among public health professionals across the Kingdom.

In the second workshop, residents presented findings from their initial field assignments, including weekly surveillance reports and surveillance data quality audits focused on priority health problems in various regions.

This effort supports the development of a skilled frontline public health workforce capable of early detection, effective reporting, and timely response to public health threats.



SUDAN

Empowering Frontline Response Amid Conflict in Sudan

Despite the challenging conditions in Sudan, the third cohort of the Public Health Empowerment Program – Expanded Program on Immunization/Surveillance for Polio Officers (PHEP-EPI/SPO) successfully completed their training journey. The 36 residents, drawn from Sudan's Central Zone and representing Blue Nile, White Nile, Gezira, and Sinnar States, strengthened their competencies in epidemiology, biostatistics, and surveillance of VPDs.

Their training also covered outbreak investigation and response, as well as practical engagement in community-based surveillance. In addition, residents applied their learning through activities such as reviewing routine immunization data, conducting active case finding, performing supportive supervision, and contributing to community mobilization efforts. The training materials were adapted to the prevailing conflict and emergency context, ensuring relevance to the realities faced on the ground.



YEMEN

Graduation of the Third Intermediate Cohorts Across Sanaa and Aden

The Yemen FETP in Aden celebrated the graduation of its third Intermediate cohort in a ceremony held under the patronage of H.E. Dr. Qassem Mohammad Bahaibah, Yemen's Minister of Public Health and Population. This year, 15 graduates completed nine months of in-service training, strengthening their skills in surveillance, outbreak investigation, emergency response, leadership, and field epidemiology, contributing to a more capable frontline public health workforce for Yemen.

Meanwhile in Sanaa, the Yemen FETP also marked the graduation of its third Intermediate cohort, whose residents successfully completed an intensive one-year training in applied field epidemiology. To commemorate this milestone, a two-day conference was organized, offering graduates an opportunity to present the research projects developed throughout their training.

The conference featured a wide range of public health topics, highlighting the diverse areas of study and expertise gained during the program. Graduates shared their findings, exchanged insights, and explored practical approaches to addressing Yemen's most pressing public health challenges.



Other News

This section covers regional news and success stories



OTHER NEWS

Why Now Is the Time to Prioritize the Sustainability of FETPs?

Field Epidemiology Training Programs are essential for disease detection, outbreak response, and public health surveillance systems. In a region where crises are becoming more complex and frequent, sustaining and strengthening these programs is no longer a long-term goal, but an immediate necessity. In the EMR, FETPs have long demonstrated their value. Yet, they continue to face serious sustainability threats, including overreliance on external funding, limited integration within national health systems, and persistent challenges in human resource retention and career development.



Recognizing this urgent need, EMPHNET brought together directors of National Public Health Institutes (NPHI), FETP directors, key stakeholders, and decision-makers from across the region for a workshop focused on directly addressing these challenges and driving the conversation forward toward concrete action. What made this gathering particularly timely was its role in building on both past assessments and current realities.

Earlier in 2024, EMPHNET carried out a self-assessment to evaluate how countries in the region are progressing toward sustainable FETPs. The assessment revealed that although many countries have developed plans, actual implementation remains limited. For example, Some countries still struggle to fully integrate FETPs within their ministries of Health or NPHIs. Others lack formal strategic planning processes or documented annual work plans. Funding remains a significant challenge, underscoring the urgent need to diversify financial sources to ensure program sustainability. Additionally, the absence of clear career pathways for FETP mentors and graduates was identified as a major barrier.

This assessment laid the groundwork for the regional workshop held in 2025. The primary goal of the workshop was to guide participating countries including Afghanistan, Tunisia, Yemen, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Sudan, Palestine, Iraq, Jordan, and Qatar towards developing comprehensive national sustainability plans tailored to their unique contexts. The workshop provided a platform for sharing country-specific experiences and challenges, and outlining the necessary steps for creating effective and resilient sustainability strategies.

The workshop concluded with a strong consensus that ensuring the sustainability of FETPs requires a comprehensive and multidimensional approach. Among the key recommendations was the systematic integration of FETPs into national health plans to secure their future viability. For this recommendation to be realized, governments are urged to allocate dedicated funding and position FETP training as a core pillar of public health workforce development. From another angle, strengthening partnerships with academic institutions can help ensure that training curricula remain relevant and up to date, while robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will drive continuous program improvement. Ultimately, fostering local ownership through supportive legal frameworks and strong government leadership is essential to maintain the stability and lasting impact of these vital programs.

EMPHNET Convenes the FETP Board of Directors' Biannual Meeting

The biannual meeting of the EMPHNET FETP Board of Directors was held in May at EMPHNET's headquarters in Amman, Jordan. This hybrid-format meeting marked the first gathering for the fiscal year 2024–2025 and served to review progress made over the past year, address ongoing challenges, and discuss recent developments related to FETPs in the region and other priority countries.

Chaired by Prof. Nissaf Bou Afif, Chairperson of the EMPHNET FETP Board of Directors, the meeting brought together FETP Directors and EMPHNET's team to discuss key topics, including programs' updates, the sustainability and institutionalization of FETPs, accreditation efforts, and preparations for the Ninth EMPHNET Regional Conference. The agenda also highlighted the importance of enhancing the quality of training, strengthening partnerships and regional collaboration, and advancing the development of structured career paths for FETP graduates within national public health systems. The meeting concluded with a set of actionable recommendations that will inform upcoming plans and reinforce EMPHNET's continued commitment to supporting FETPs across its growing network.



FETP Residents Benefiting from Learning Opportunities Supported by EMPHNET

At EMPHNET, we are committed to supporting FETP residents and graduates by facilitating their participation in regional and international events, and encouraging their contributions to scientific publications. These opportunities help build their expertise, expand professional networks, and strengthen their impact on public health.

In May 2025, three Saudi FETP residents presented their research at the Third International Conference on Primary Care and Public Healthcare in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Dr. Asma Khamis Al Hakmani delivered a poster



presentation on a foodborne disease outbreak in a girls' school in Saudi Arabia. Dr. Fatma Ali Al Rashdi gave an oral presentation on lipid control among patients with type 2 diabetes in Muscat, while Dr. Malik Saif Al Jabri presented an oral paper on the prevalence and determinants of low back pain among nurses at Suhar Hospital in Oman. This conference provided a valuable platform to engage with international public health professionals, gain exposure to emerging research, and enhance scientific communication skills.

Additionally, EMPHNET supported the enrollment of five residents and advisors from FETPs in Egypt, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan in the Advanced Course on AI-Enhanced Negotiation in Health Emergencies, developed by the University of Geneva. This course equipped participants with practical tools to navigate complex negotiations during health crises by leveraging AI-powered support for scenario planning, risk assessment, and decision-making. Through this experience, residents explored the potential of artificial intelligence to enhance strategic thinking, improve communication, and strengthen coordination in emergency settings.

Furthermore, in September, four residents from Pakistan FETP were supported to present their research abstracts at the Second SAFETYNET Scientific Conference in Malaysia. Throughout the event, they engaged in interactive learning sessions covering topics such as collaborative intelligence for pandemic prevention, scientific writing, social determinants of health, digital innovations in field epidemiology, causal inference, gender-focused data collection, mass-gathering surveillance, and climate-related health risks.

These opportunities demonstrate EMPHNET's dedication to empowering FETP professionals with advanced skills to meet evolving public health challenges, and reflect our ongoing commitment to providing meaningful and impactful learning experiences for FETP residents.

Advancing Practical Learning Through Case Study Development

Throughout 2025, EMPHNET brought together public health professionals, primarily FETP residents and graduates, from across the Middle East, North Africa (MENA), and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) regions for a series of online and in-person teaching case study development workshops. These workshops aimed to strengthen participants' skills in creating locally relevant, high-quality teaching case studies that address regional public health challenges and support practical, field-based learning for Frontline, Intermediate, and Advanced FETP residents.



Beyond technical skills in case study development, the training emphasized critical thinking, communication, and interpersonal skills that are essential for public health professionals involved in education and capacity building. It also empowered participants to transform their learning into practice, ultimately leading to the development of more than 25 high-quality, context-specific case studies across the two regions.

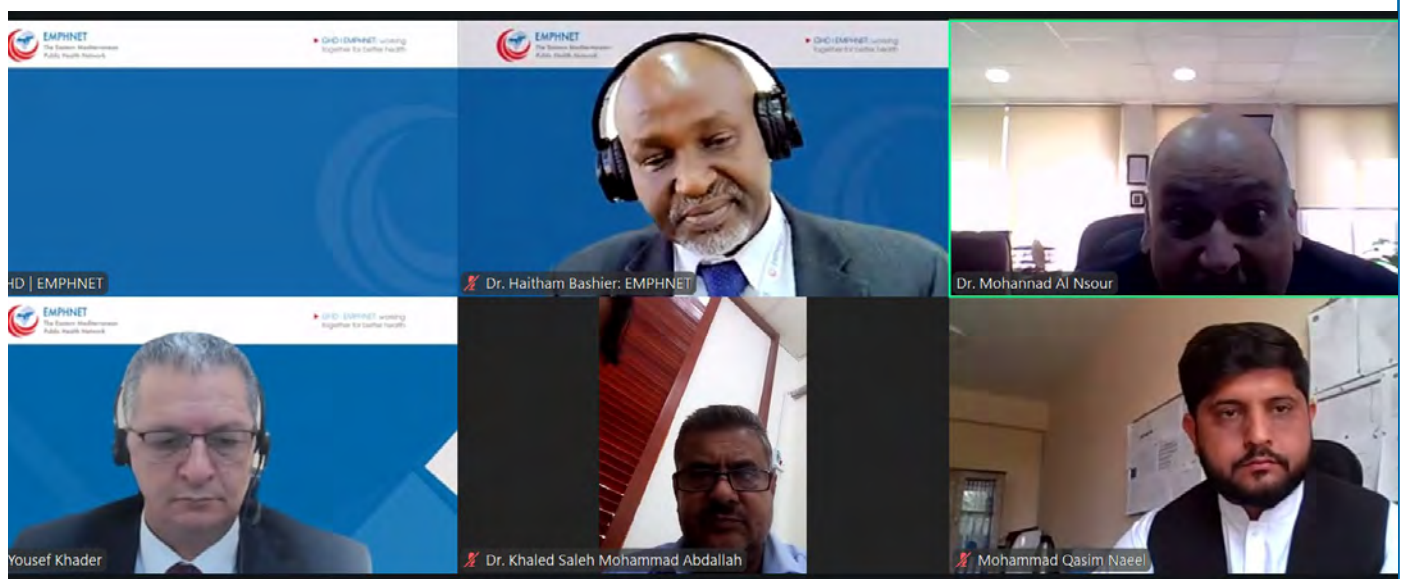
Celebrating World Field Epidemiology Day

World Field Epidemiology Day (WFED), celebrated annually on September 7, is a global observance that recognizes the vital contributions of field epidemiologists in safeguarding communities and advancing global health security. First observed in 2021, WFED has served as an annual event calling on the global health community to further support for FETPs in several aspects, including capacity building, field deployments, and sustainability.

This year's theme, "Making Our Mark: Field Epidemiology in Action," highlighted the role and impact of field epidemiologists worldwide. In keeping with the spirit of this theme, EMPHNET marked the occasion by hosting a regional symposium titled "A Lens from the Field: FETP Stories of Impact."

Held virtually on September 7, 2025, the event brought together FETP leaders, residents, and graduates from across the Eastern Mediterranean Region and other priority countries to share success stories, and visions from their country programs on the way forward.

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GHD|EMPHNET: Working Together for Better Health

The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) is a regional network that focuses on strengthening public health systems in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) and beyond. EMPHNET works in partnership with ministries of health, non-government organizations, international agencies, private sector, and relevant institutions from the region and the globe to promote public health and applied epidemiology. To advance the work of EMPHNET, Global Health Development (GHD) was initiated to build coordination mechanisms with partners and collaborators. Together, 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 areas.

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