



EMPHNET

The Eastern Mediterranean
Public Health Network



Afghanistan Country Office

Annual Report 2025

EMPHNET in Afghanistan

Achievements and Ways Forward



EMPHNET

The Eastern Mediterranean
Public Health Network

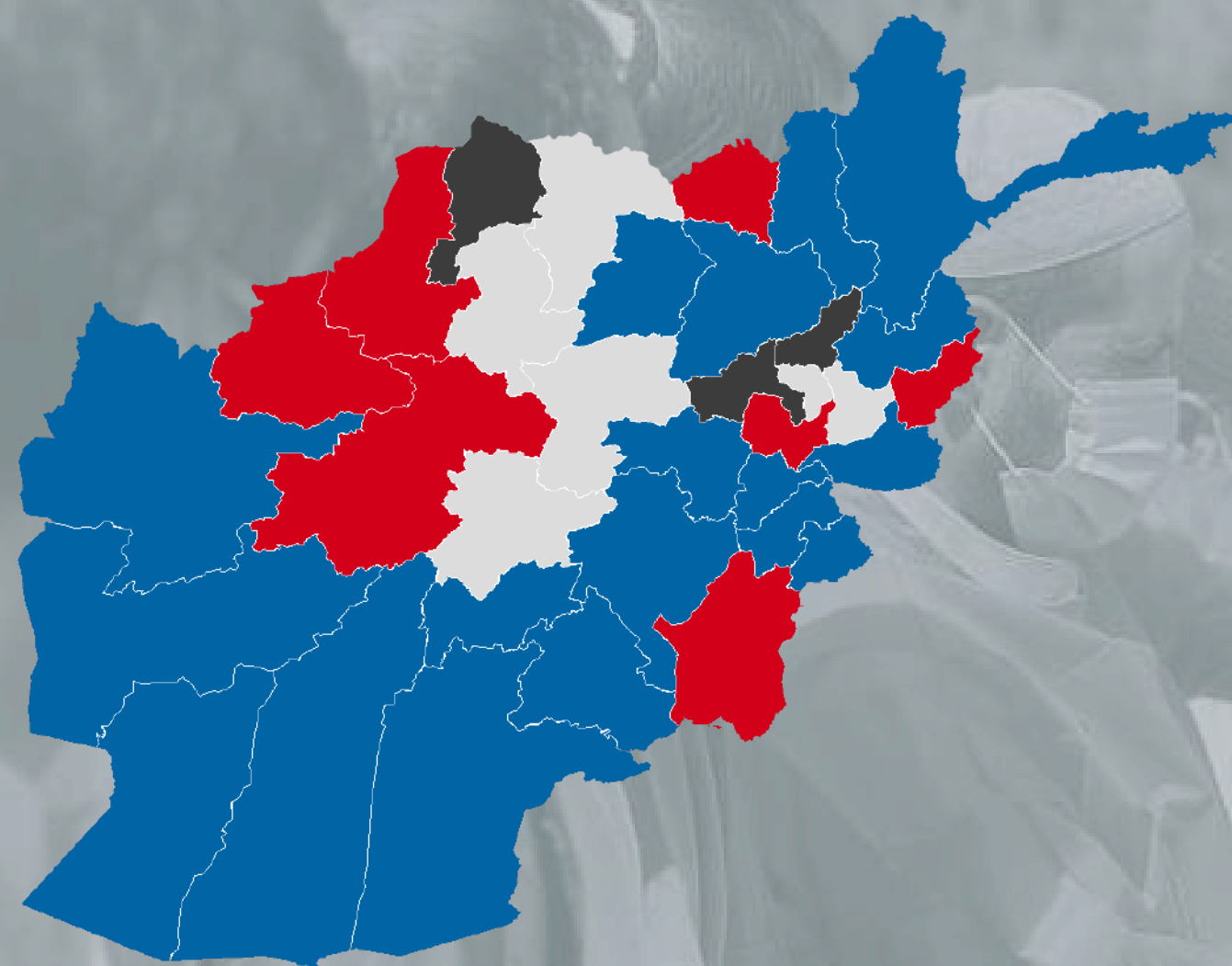
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Kabul, Afghanistan

Programs Coverage



- PHEP-PEO Program
- PHEP-PEO and Intermediate Program
- Intermediate FETP Program

Key Indicators



PHEP-PEO Program

Implemented Cohorts: 02

Number of Graduates: 57



Intermediate FETP Program

Implemented Cohorts: 01

Number of Graduates: 16



Outbreaks & Cases Investigation

Number of Outbreaks Investigated: 57

Number of Measles or AFP Cases Investigated: 177



Scientific Communications

Papers Published : 11

Abstracts Presented: 08



Information, Education, & Communication

Number of Posters Distributed: 1,000

Target Audience: Parents, Caregivers, Health Workers



Operational Supports

Number of Graduation Ceremonies: 02

Number of Participants in Regional Workshops: 04



Partnerships & Collaborations

Number of Signed MoU with Partners: 01

Number of Meetings with Partners: 18

Public Health Empowerment Program

The Public Health Empowerment Program for Polio and EPI Officers (PHEP-PEO) is an initiative aims to strengthen the capacity of frontline public health workforce in domains of routine immunization and polio surveillance and eradication. As contextualized format of basic FETP, this program blends the didactic workshops with mentored field assignments and applied exercises. During 2025, EMPHNET continued the implementation of PHEP-PEO in Afghanistan with continuation of first cohort, and inauguration and completion of second cohort, while setting the stage for initiation of third PHEP-PEO cohort.

PHEP-PEO First Cohort

After completing field activities, during April 2025, residents of PHEP-PEO first cohort participated in their fourth and final workshop with the support of EMPHNET. This concluding workshop saw residents presenting their fieldworks in surveillance, outbreak investigation, data quality, and case investigations, while being equipped with the concepts of polio campaigns, Afghanistan Polio Management Information System (APMIS), International Health Regulations (IHR), as well as leadership and management. By conclusion of this workshop, 29 public health workforces graduated ready to serve in the front line of response and management of public health events.

PHEP-PEO Second Cohort

Supported by EMPHNET, the PHEP-PEO second cohort was inaugurated in June 2025 after rigorous selection process by Steering Committee. Overall, 30 frontline workers were enrolled in this cohort from 16 provinces. The cohort completed its four-workshop scheme during June, July, September, and November of 2025 respectively. With the employed unique and context-tailored contents of applied epidemiology, routine immunization, and polio surveillance and eradication coupled with provision of technical support during field activities, EMPHNET remained committed in strengthening the Afghanistan's health workforce. Totally, 28 residents were graduated from this cohort on November.

PHEP-PEO Third Cohort

During November 2025, EMPHNET presented the award letter for third cohort of PHEP-PEO to H.E. Deputy Minister for Policy and Health Development of Ministry of Public Health. This cohort which is planned for 25 public health frontliners in areas of routine immunization and polio surveillance will continue to support the health system of Afghanistan to address its burdening challenges in polio eradication and expanded immunization. The cohort is planned to inaugurate early 2026, with a mentorship workshop planned to be conducted in early January to support this cohort in its full extent.



Kunar, Afghanistan

Field Epidemiology Training Program Intermediate Tier

The intermediate tier of Afghanistan Field Epidemiology Training Program, as cornerstone program celebrated significant milestones during 2025 including graduation of fifth cohort, accreditation, and participation of its graduates in a capacity-building workshop in Jordan.

Graduation of Fifth Intermediate Cohort

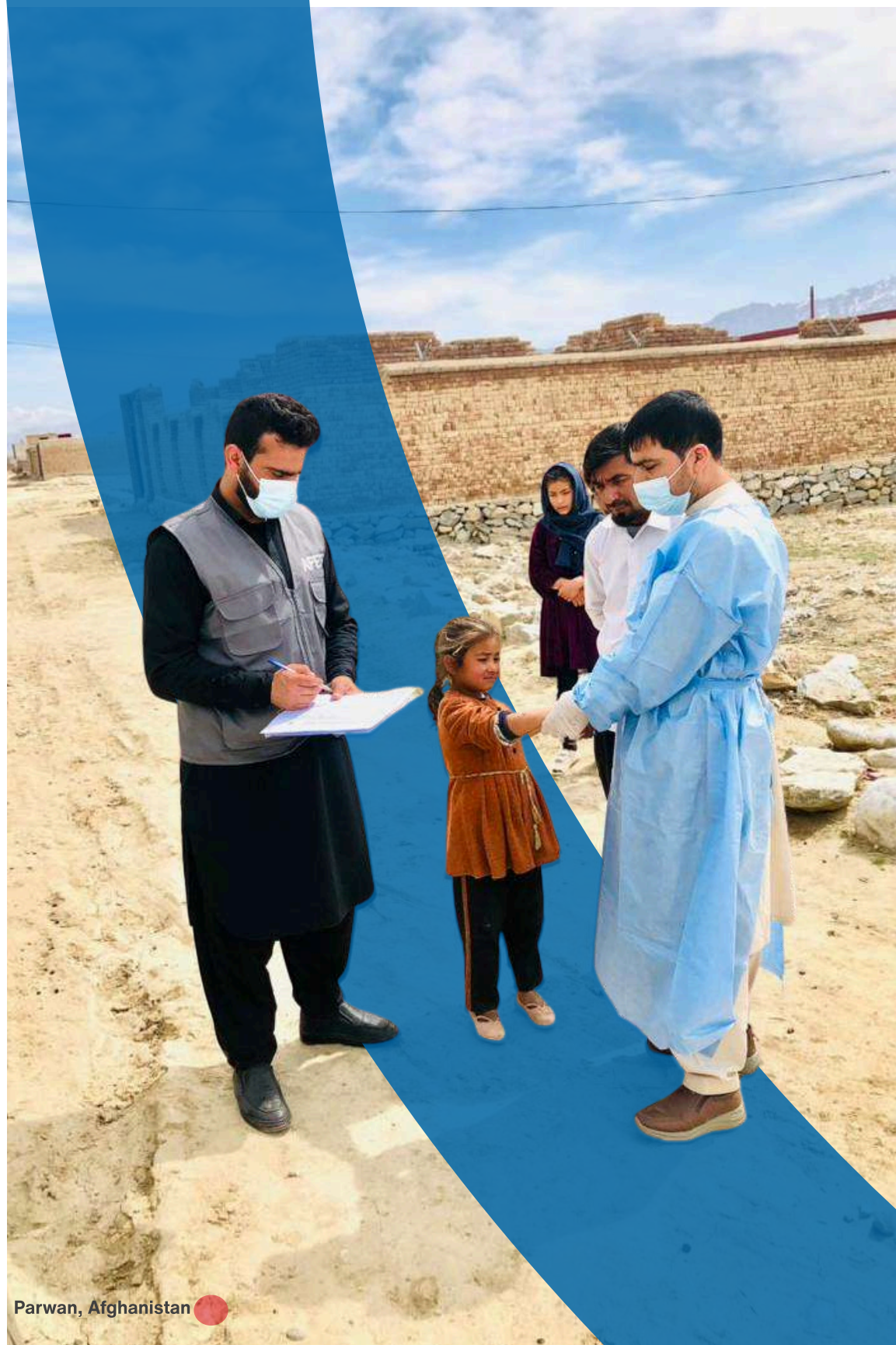
After completing six didactic workshops and 5 field intervals, 16 residents from 10 provinces graduated from the intermediate tier of FETP during April of 2025. Through support of EMPHNET, residents of this cohort received training programs on basic and applied epidemiology, scientific communications, ways for conducting epidemiologic studies, field investigations, and leadership and management. The graduated residents continue to serve the Afghanistan health system equipped with competencies and skills in applied epidemiology.

Teaching Case Studies Workshop

In May 2025, EMPHNET supported the participation of two graduates of AFETP fifth intermediate cohort in Teaching Case Study workshop conducted in Amman, Jordan. This workshop focused on transforming outbreak investigations and field expertise into structured teaching case studies aligned with applied epidemiology curriculum. This technical engagement exposed the Afghan alumni to regional practices, strengthening professional network, while developing two teaching case studies for the context of Afghanistan.

Accreditation of Intermediate Tier

With the support of EMPHNET, Afghanistan FETP had been implementing the intermediate tier of the program since 2019, completing five cohorts. The intermediate tier of FETP in Afghanistan received the accreditation valid for five years by Global Accreditation Body (GAB) in 2025. This milestone was celebrated by the Ministry of Public Health, EMPHNET, and other relevant stakeholders and it is viewed as significant achievement, barely obtained at the regional level, showcasing the competency and standard level of the program.



Parwan, Afghanistan

Quick Facts

Afghanistan Intermediate FETP Accreditation

- The program received accreditation in November 2025
- The program is among 33 globally accredited FETPs
- Afghanistan Intermediate FETP is the only intermediate tier program received accreditation beside Iraq's Intermediate FETP in the EMR Region

Coordination & Networking with Afghanistan Health System

During November of this year, two delegates from headquarters of EMPHNET visited Afghanistan in one-week mission. The main purpose was to strengthen EMPHNET's strategic partnership with the Ministry of Public Health and key institutions, review ongoing technical needs, introduce new initiatives, and coordinate future programs in the areas of polio, expanded immunization, surveillance, health workforce capacity development, and public health management. The mission also served as a platform for formal recognition of the Afghan government's contributions and a renewed commitment to sustainable support for the country's health system.

Meetings and Official Visits

Delegates of EMPHNET held meetings with H.E. Deputy Minister for Policy and Health Development of Ministry of Public Health, National Expanded Program on Immunization (NEPI), National Emergency Operation Center for Polio Eradication (NEOC), Afghanistan National Public Health Institute (ANPHI), Primary Health Care Department of Ministry of Public Health, , Kabul University of Medical Sciences, World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF Afghanistan Country Office, and HealthNet TPO Afghanistan Office.

Key Achievements and Outcomes

EMPHNET received an official letter of appreciation from the Ministry of Public Health in recognition of its contributions to strengthening Afghanistan's public health system. The delegation also conveyed award letter for the third cohort of the PHEP-PEO program and shared a letter from EMPHNET's Executive Director acknowledging the Ministry's support for AFETP implementation and the accreditation of the Intermediate Tier by TEPHINET. Discussions further resulted in agreement to develop collaboration frameworks with the Ministry of Public Health. Agreements were also reached to develop operational frameworks with visited universities, while potential areas of collaboration with UN Agencies and HealthNet TPO particularly in sustaining primary healthcare service delivery, polio eradication, and expanded immunization were reviewed.



Kabul, Afghanistan

Scientific Communications

EMPHNET in Afghanistan continued to support the research and scientific culture through channeling its technical expertise to national researchers, universities, and institutions. This contribution resulted in numerous manuscripts publications and scientific communications in international health conference on trending public health challenges in Afghanistan, improving the available literature body within the country context.

On this scientific journey, the AFETP alumni network were successful in communicating their scientific findings at French Medical Institute for Mothers and Children (FMIC) 15th Scientific Conference and Quality Convention. During this conference, 8 abstracts were presented in oral and poster presentation format by five alumni of AFETP, reflecting their continuous involvement in reliable evidence generation. The following abstracts were presented:

Oral Presentation

1. Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice of Healthcare Workers Toward Childhood Vaccination: Insights from Health Facilities of Kandahar, Afghanistan
2. Descriptive Analysis of Acute Watery Diarrhea Outbreak in Parwan Province, 2025
3. Enhancing the Awareness of Policymakers about Non-Communicable Diseases Tsunami in Afghanistan: A Health in All Policy Dialogue



Poster Presentation

1. Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice of Breastfeeding Among Mothers Visiting Indra Ghandi Hospital, Kabul, Afghanistan: A Cross-Sectional Study
2. Descriptive Analysis of Typhoid Fever Outbreak in Kafshan Village of Parwan Province, 2024
3. Descriptive Measles Vaccine Coverage in Ghor, Afghanistan: A Descriptive Study, 2020-2022
4. Gastric Duplication Cyst in a Young Patient: A Case Report from a Tertiary Surgial Center in Western Afghanistan
5. Isolated Primary Orbital Hydatid Cyst in Two Pediatric Patients: A Rare Case Report, Afghanistan



Publications

In 2025, the technical team of EMPHNET in Afghanistan was involved in publication of **11** manuscripts in different thematic areas of public health including:



Communicable Diseases



1. Nosocomial Outbreak Investigation of Crimean Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) in Kandahar
2. Visceral Leishmaniasis Epidemiological Landscape in Afghanistan
3. Orbital Hydatid Cyst in Pediatric Patients in Kabul, Afghanistan
4. Descriptive Measles Vaccine Coverage in Ghor, Afghanistan: A Descriptive Study, 2020-2022
5. Measles Outbreaks in Kabul, Afghanistan: A Descriptive Study, 2023



Non-Communicable Diseases

1. Risk Factors of Kidney Stone in Nimruz Province
2. Psychological Distress Among Healthcare Workers



Health System Research

1. Evaluation of Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) Surveillance
2. Factors Influencing Blood Donation, Journal of Hematology and Allied Sciences



Other Publications

1. Gastric Duplication Cyst Case Report in Kabul
2. Confirmed Giant Abdominal Lymphangioma Report



Operational Support

Graduation Ceremony

In 2025, EMPHNET in Afghanistan coordinated and facilitated two graduation ceremonies of Public Health Empowerment Program (PHEP-PEO) two cohorts, Afghanistan FETP intermediate tier fifth cohort, and mentors for PHEP-PEO in April and November. The two graduation ceremonies were conducted in Intercontinental Hotel and Sohela Sediq Conference Hall of Ministry of Public Health hosting nearly 200 guests aggregated. The graduation ceremonies were attended by authorities of Ministry of Public Health, representatives of relevant stakeholders and organizations and national broadcasting media. The ceremonies were covered in major TV and news stations, highlighting the milestones achieved by the public health system of Afghanistan with the support of EMPHNET.

Information, Education, and Communication Materials

In September 2025, 1,000 informational posters on polio and routine immunization were delivered to the National Expanded Program on Immunization (NEPI) at the Ministry of Public Health. Designed to raise public awareness, the posters highlight the importance of vaccination, risks of non-compliance, and shared responsibility of families and communities in protecting children from vaccine-preventable diseases, including polio.

These materials were displayed in health centers, public spaces, and during vaccination campaigns to inform parents and caregivers, and support health workers in delivering key messages. This initiative reinforces community engagement, promotes trust in the health system, generate demand for vaccines, and demonstrates the joint commitment of health partners to improving immunization coverage and child health across Afghanistan.

Institutional Support

During 2025, EMPHNET AFCCO facilitated the participation of two Afghan delegates in Evidence to Recommendation (EtR) 5-day workshop in Amman, Jordan. This training which targeted National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) to provide latest knowledge and skills regarding vaccines and immunization.

In 2025, Afghanistan FETP Director virtually participated in the regional three-day FETP sustainability workshop to provide an opportunity of dialogue, experience-sharing, and exploring collaborations between programs and key stakeholders of 11 countries for developing actionable national FETP sustainability plans.

From Classroom to Field

Strengthening Data Quality in Routine Immunization Reflection from Dr. Sohrab Melma, Data Quality Officer – West Region, PHEP-PEO Alumnus

For the past decade I have served as Data Quality Officer for the Regional Expanded Program on Immunization EPI Management Team (REMT) in Afghanistan’s west region. My role focuses on routine facility supervision and desk-based analysis to assess the quality of immunization data. While several challenges rose to contribute to poor data quality, inconsistency of reported data was prominent. Persistent inconsistencies, often due to lack of vaccinators’ capacity, across the three primary recording levels—child registers, tally sheets, and monthly reports—undermined DHIS2 reporting and compromised planning, supervision, and programmatic decision-making.

With the support of **EMPHNET**, I participated in the first cohort of in-service training of PHEP-PEO. During second workshop of PHEP-PEO, I came to learn about data triangulation for improvement of the data quality. I learned to compare the data from three levels of child registers, tally sheets, and monthly reports and reconciled these with DHIS2 extracts, followed by graphical analysis of congruency to project consistency of data in all administrative levels. While I dealt with inconsistent data at a regional level, I was fascinated with this practice and became committed to scale-up this understanding in my routine supervisions.



After graduating in April 2025, I implemented data triangulation in handful of facilities and scaled up to nearly 30 health facilities within the region as part of my supervisory visits during May to December 2025, highlighting errors in basic administrative levels, calculating discrepancies for specific antigens, while sharing technical tips with vaccinators in conducting routine data triangulation on weekly basis. To institutionalize the practice, I delivered cascade practical and on-field training for seven EPI supervisors from implementing partner and two regional EPI personnel in Herat province, emphasizing register management, practical recording exercises, and supervisory feedback techniques to coach vaccinators.

Since scaling up triangulation and targeted capacity building, facility-to-DHIS2 consistency has improved in regional level: monthly assessments report fewer discrepancies, supervisors routinely verify source records, and vaccinators demonstrate improved recording practices. This experience shows that routine data triangulation, coupled with focused capacity strengthening for vaccinators and supervisors, is a low-cost, high-impact strategy to enhance immunization data quality and enable evidence-based program management. Thanks to EMPHNET’s PHEP-PEO curriculum, many EPI officers now understand data triangulation. This familiarity supports piloting similar reconciliations in other provinces and provides a practical pathway for integrating triangulation into national supervision and reporting policies to reduce discrepancies and improve immunization data quality.

Partnerships

EMPHNET in Afghanistan valued strategic partnerships with governmental, and non-governmental organizations, making it as fundamental step in improving the health outcomes in Afghanistan.

ANPHI

EMPHNET remained as one of the key regional partners of Afghanistan National Public Health Institute (ANPHI). During 2025, EMPHNET in Afghanistan provided technical support and assistance in training programs of ANPHI, Ghazanfar Medical Journal, Institutional Review Board, and other technical areas, while ANPHI housed the PHEP-PEO and AFETP, and provided administrative and technical supports in implementation of these programs. ANPHI's immense role during AFETP accreditation process is noteworthy.

HPRO

In early 2025, EMPHNET signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Health Protection and Research Organization (HPRO) to establish a framework for coordination and collaboration between both entities. This partnership is aiming to leverage the strengths, expertise, and resources of both organizations to address the trending public health challenges in Afghanistan. Moreover, this partnership opens the path for joint initiatives, in areas of research, capacity building, advocacy, and proposal development.

HealthNet TPO

EMPHNET in Afghanistan expanded its portfolio of partnership during 2025, with the aim to foster collaborations, leading to improved health outcomes. In this process, EMPHNET AFCO held several preliminary meetings with HealthNet TPO office in Kabul discussing the areas of collaboration and partnerships. Moreover, both organizations are exploring joint initiatives, leveraging their technical expertise to improve the public health landscape in Afghanistan.

ACBAR

In November 2025, EMPHNET AFCO celebrated its first year of membership in Agency Coordinating Body for Afghanistan Relief and Development (ACBAR). Throughout 2025, EMPHNET participated in the General Assembly of ACBAR, technical working groups, Focus Group Discussions, dialogues with governmental sectors, and surveys, as international NGO operating in Afghanistan.



Priorities for 2026

Lead and Advance Applied Epidemiology to Strengthen Workforce in Afghanistan



EMPHNET AFCO plans to continue its leadership in applied epidemiology in Afghanistan through enhancing the workforce capacity through the PHEP-PEO and FETP, tailored to the contextual landscape. Furthermore, EMPHNET continues to advocate, facilitate, and lead high-quality operational research in the country to support innovative solutions and evidence generation.

Strengthen Organizational Development, Sustainability, and Performance



EMPHNET in Afghanistan will continue its advocacy efforts to sustain and institutionalize the public health programs in Afghanistan relying on operational frameworks with its partners and their practical application from 2026 onwards to achieve this priority. EMPHNET in Afghanistan will work to diversify its portfolio of partners and resources to enhance the support provided to the health system of Afghanistan.

Strengthen Public Health Programs and Response to Public Health Needs



EMPHNET prioritizes the strengthening of public health programs in routine immunization, polio eradication, surveillance, One Health, and emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. EMPHNET will rely on using multisectoral and evidence-based approaches to improve the implementation and sustainability of these programs while prioritizing long-lasting and sustainable impacts.

Promote Knowledge Transformation, Information Exchange, and Networking



EMPHNET AFCO will host interns through EMPHNET's ENGAGE Internship Program, empowering young professionals in the country to gain practical experience, and transform knowledge into real-world impact. Furthermore, EMPHNET plans to continue the FETP resident exchange program to strengthen the information exchange and networking with other health systems in the region.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR BETTER HEALTH

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همکاری مشترک برای صحت بهتر



EMPHNET

The Eastern Mediterranean
Public Health Network



Afghanistan Country Office

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 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, resources mobilization, public health programs, and other related areas.

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