

## United Against Tobacco and COVID

### INTRODUCTION

The rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a global health crisis that has proven to be the most unprecedented challenge of our time. Researchers have highlighted the relationship between smoking and the severity of COVID-19 infection and called on governments and states to consider this an opportune time to increase bans on tobacco products and to disseminate targeted mass media messages to support and encourage smoking cessation. In fact, the global discourse around tobacco has become more promising since the beginning of the epidemic, and the positive effects of anti-smoking media campaigns have been well documented.

Accordingly, GHD|EMPHNET, in collaboration with the US CDC and Vital Strategies, is implementing a project titled “United Against Tobacco and COVID” through supporting country partners to develop and disseminate tobacco risk messaging through mass media outlets.

### AIM & OBJECTIVES

The “United Against Tobacco and Covid” aims to disseminate country-specific and culturally appropriate media messages. The objectives of the project are to educate and raise awareness of the harms of smoking, change smoking-related behaviors, and promote smoking cessation to reduce morbidity and mortality rates in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

### BENEFICIARIES

This project intends to reach adolescents and adults who are active smokers or who are not smokers but are open to smoking.

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Project Start and End Date</b>   | October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022  |
| <b>Partner Organizations</b>        | Ministries of Health in Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, and Egypt<br>The Royal Health Awareness Society in Jordan<br>The Institute of Community and Public Health at Birzeit University in Palestine<br>The United Iraqi Medical Society for Relief and Development (UIMS) in Iraq<br>The Cairo Association against Smoking, Tuberculosis and Lung diseases- in Egypt (CASTLE) |
| <b>Funded by</b>                    | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  |
| <b>Collaborators</b>                | Vital Strategies  |
| <b>Technical Advisory Committee</b> | WHO-EMRO, CDC-MENA, CDC-Egypt, UNICEF, SESRIC   |

## GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

The campaign will be implemented in four countries of the MENA region: Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, and Egypt. The prevalence of current tobacco use among adults in the involved countries is relatively high compared with the global rates. Jordan marked the highest percentage of 41% followed by Palestine, Egypt and Iraq, at 31.3%, 22.7% and 20.2%, respectively.

<sup>1</sup> Data sources: Jordan (STEPS 2019, age group 18-69 years), Egypt (STEPS 2017, age group 16-69 years), Iraq (STEPS 2015, age group 18+ years) and Palestine ("Smoking and Tobacco Consumption Survey, 2021" by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), age group > 18 years)

## PROJECT PHASES

The project involves three phases:

Phase I – The initial phase included forming a Regional and International Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and establishing communication with targeted countries, ensuring ministry engagement, and aiming to identify eligible grantees and appropriate workplan proposals. A steering committee was also formed that included influential decision and policy makers, to support implementation of the activities.

Phase II – The second phase was initiated once grantees were identified, and country proposals were reviewed and chosen from each country. It involved refining each country's workplan and technically assisting the countries in developing their media risk messaging.

Phase III – The third phase is yet to commence, which is disseminating the messages through the various media outlets as decided upon by each of the country partners and respective ministries. This will be followed by an outcome evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the campaigns.

### BY NUMBERS

4

Countries  
Supported

Jordan, Palestine,  
Egypt & Iraq

157  
Millions

Total Population

23.7%

of Individuals  
Smoke Tobacco

### GHD|EMPHNET: Working Together for Better Health

Global Health Development (GHD) is a regional initiative created to support countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) and to strengthen their health systems to respond to public health challenges and threats. GHD was initiated to advance the work of the Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) by building coordinating mechanisms with Ministries of Health, International Organizations and other institutions to improve population health outcomes. As an implementing arm to EMPHNET, GHD aligns its strategies with national policies and directions. Serving as a collaborative platform, GHD|EMPHNET is dedicated to serve the region by supporting national efforts to promote public health policies, strategic planning, sustainable financing, resource mobilization, public health programs, and other related services.