



EMPHNET

The Eastern Mediterranean
Public Health Network

Capability Statement

Our Mission:

To prevent and control diseases, to conduct multidisciplinary research, and to translate research into practice in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) by strengthening and expanding applied epidemiology capacity and working jointly with similar associations, networks and organizations.





A DRIVING FORCE IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Our Values

These are the values that drive our efforts and inspire all of our actions every day.

Partnership

We have a steadfast commitment to being a good partner focused on building productive, collaborative, trusting and beneficial relationships with governments, health organizations, and communities.

Collaboration

Our contribution to global health is increased through collaboration. We recognize that shared goals and mutual support lead to greater success than trying to go it alone.

Excellence

Excellence guides our pursuit of finding solutions to the regional challenges affecting global health issues and our persistent commitment to overcoming those challenges.

Innovation

We are dedicated to seeking opportunities that introduce creative solutions to health challenges in an effort to attain successful results.

Competence Competence describes our performance, and we are committed to maintaining the highest standards of performance and adhering to the principles of continuous quality improvement.

Accountability

We deliver measurable results and create positive impact through our work. We are committed to maintaining effective and efficient governance.

Health Equity

We believe health is a fundamental right of every person and this belief is the driving force behind everything we do. We advocate for public health policies and programs that promote fairness, social justice, and cultural awareness.

EMPHNET's Overview

THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK (EMPHNET) is a non-profit organization that was established in 2009 with the goal of improving the health status of the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR). It builds national and regional capacities in several priority public health areas, such as outbreak investigation, disease surveillance, rapid response, International Health Regulations (IHR) implementation and more. Its main areas of focus include applied epidemiology and research, non-

communicable disease, communicable disease, outreach and emergency and health security. By providing technical support, capacity building and research, EMPHNET has successfully built a network of expertise, which it sees as one of its strongest attributes for meeting public health needs in the region. It supports and promotes innovative approaches in meeting the region's public health challenges and it is guided by its commitment to change, thus acknowledging the ongoing process of knowledge sharing.



EMPHNET'S Approach

EMPHNET utilizes knowledge, skills and attitudes it believes are necessary in the practice of public health. It views these as essential for the effective planning, execution and management of public health programs. EMPHNET supports field epidemiology training programs (FETPs), as these programs allow countries to strengthen their assessment and analysis capabilities. It also concentrates on the importance of information and knowledge exchange, viewing it as a main component for delivering evidence-based information to decision and policy makers. EMPHNET also utilizes the latest research techniques to gather information regarding the health status of populations and their various health determinants, as it views such information as crucial to the practice of public

health. It builds capacities of health practitioners to ensure that they demonstrate competent knowledge about disease profile, health systems, health equity, disease prevention, health promotion, and determinants or factors that influence health. Its capacity building efforts are designed to enable public health practitioners to be proficient in applying public health concepts and theories to practice. In addition, EMPHNET believes that informed policy making and program planning and evaluation are crucial competencies for delivering effective public health practice. As a result, it contributes to the management of disease outbreak by designing programs that address public health problems. Within these programs, EMPHNET contributes to the effective implementation of

appropriate actions and practice guidelines, and is involved in planning, implementing and evaluating policies and programs related to various public health issues and concerns. EMPHNET values partnership and collaboration, viewing these as two important components for enhancing performance through shared resources and knowledge. Through the partnerships it forms with NGOs, International organizations, ministries of health, public health institutions, and even the private sector, it addresses public health issues in order to influence the health of populations. Skilled advocacy and team building skills are important factors for facilitating partnership and collaboration, thus EMPHNET encourages improving such components.

“ It is the knowledge of the way in which the disease is propagated which will cause them to disappear. ” – John Snow

EMPHNET's Working Areas

APPLIED EPIDEMIOLOGY AND RESEARCH

EMPHNET builds EMR capacities in applied epidemiology and public health research to provide technical assistance by facilitating training sessions and workshops for FETPs in the region. Additionally, EMPHNET focuses on research application and consultancy.

HEALTH SECURITY

EMPHNET enhances regional preparedness in preventing, detecting and responding to international disease threats. Its initiatives promote the implementation of the existing global health security frameworks, such as the International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005) and the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA).

COMBATING COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

EMPHNET works to interrupt the transmission chains of communicable diseases within at-risk populations. It engages in health security-related projects to prevent the spread of epidemics and to ensure the early detection of threats and rapid

assessment. Within this unit, EMPHNET contributes to global efforts to eradicate vaccine preventable diseases, as well as emerging and re-emerging disease threats.

COMBATING NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASE (NCD)

EMPHNET collaborates with a variety of organizations to address the challenges that impede the control of NCD spread and to contribute to improving health by reducing their prevalence among population at risk within Eastern Mediterranean Region.

OUTREACH AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

EMPHNET provides needs-based response solutions that save and preserve life in humanitarian crises. The unit works to alleviate human suffering and maintain human dignity. Its solutions encompass assistance, relief and protection operations that respond to both the man-made crises (including complex emergencies) and to natural disasters.



Applied Epidemiology and Research

1 FETP STRENGTHENING

FETPs are two-year long ministry of health (MOH) programs that are modeled after the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) program, Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS). EMPHNET works specifically to strengthen FETPs and to utilize the skills of FETP residents and graduates. EMPHNET coordinates with its partners to conduct workshops, host and organize conferences, develop training material and techniques, and undertake research projects for FETPs.

2 SURVEYS AND RESEARCH

Within its research interventions, EMPHNET recognizes opportunities for undertaking low-cost research and secondary analyses when resources are scarce.

EMPHNET offers training in areas that bring about the advancement of public health and help foster a research culture. These trainings focus on: Research Process, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Data for Decision Making

EMPHNET provides consultancy and expert assistance in areas related to research, statistics and epidemiology. EMPHNET also offers a full range of services tailored to specific needs, such as evaluation services, high quality research to inform policy and practice, feasibility studies, and program reviews.

3 HEALTH INFORMATICS

EMPHNET employs information technology that is responsive to regional needs and recognizes the diversity of regional communities in its study design. As a result, the studies it makes are both context-sensitive and sustainable. EMPHNET constantly monitors information technology developments and looks for innovative opportunities to lead by example. EMPHNET connects with clinicians through many channels of communication to translate anonymous patient records into meaningful population-level information.



More About FETPs

By implementing a number of new projects and by scaling up the implementation of existing projects in the EMR, EMPHNET's FETP strengthening activities are designed to:

- Strengthen and expand applied epidemiology capacity in the region for existing and new programs.
- Improve communication and information sharing among FETPs in the region as well as with other international organizations.
- Promote evidence-based decision making by strengthening information and knowledge management.
- Develop innovative approaches in managing common public health problems.
- Establish an effective networking system for FETP residents and graduates.
- Ensure the quality of training in FETPs.
- Strengthen epidemiological activities such as outbreak investigations, disease surveillance, operational research, and conducting interventional projects.



Health Security

1 INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS (IHR)
The IHR legal framework is seen as a means of enhancing global public health security by supporting both existing and innovative approaches in the global detection of events; response to public health risks and emergencies; national surveillance systems; epidemic intelligence; verification; risk assessment, outbreak alerts; and coordination of international response. EMPHNET builds the capacities of public health professionals to carry out IHR functions. In collaboration with the WHO, EMPHNET also implements the IHR toolkit training.

2 RAPID RESPONSE TEAMS
In an environment as chaotic as the EMR, multi-national rapid response teams can play a pivotal role in containing the undesired effects of emergency situations such as humanitarian crises, disease outbreaks, and natural disasters. EMPHNET builds the capacities of qualified individuals across the EMR to conduct rapid, coordinated epidemiological investigations and assessments which, in turn, allow for an effective response to public health emergencies.

3 BIOSAFETY AND BIOSECURITY
Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) have been—and continue to be—exposed to numerous types of emergencies, disasters, and other crises which make the region an ideal environment for biosecurity and biosafety threats. EMPHNET collaborates with national and local authorities, as well as the public health workforce across the EMR, to provide adequate training, equipment, and access to information for effective rapid response mechanisms.

4 HEALTH ASSESSMENT
EMPHNET conducts health assessments through systematic, comprehensive data collection and analysis. EMPHNET believes in: community engagement, transparency and accountability, evidence-based interventions, innovation practices, evaluation for ongoing improvement, use of pooled data, and use of latest technology.



Combatting Communicable Disease

1 VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES
While the EMR has made remarkable progress toward eliminating vaccine preventable diseases, vaccine coverage is still lacking due to the sociopolitical, geographical, and economical factors affecting the region. With the belief that efforts will be more effective when building the knowledge and capacities of local service providers that speak the local languages, EMPHNET focuses on immunization efforts through training and technical consultation and assistance. In doing so, it improves surveillance to achieve the eradication of vaccine-preventable diseases regionally.

2 EMERGING AND RE-EMERGING DISEASES
Emerging and reemerging diseases know no boundaries, so the strengthening of security and safety in order to detect and control infectious diseases is instrumental in ensuring health security, particularly in the EMR. By focusing on emerging and re-emerging disease detection and control, EMPHNET aims to strengthen the capacity for public and veterinary health systems in identifying, reporting, and managing outbreaks. Important work areas include defining the spectrum of disease severity (extent of virus transmission), detecting change in incidence of infection, improving case definitions, identifying sources of infection, identifying opportunities to improve isolation during patient care, and determining the risk factors that contribute to the transmission of these diseases among susceptible populations.



Combatting Non-Communicable Diseases

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) are, to a large extent, caused by four unhealthy behaviors: tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and overconsumption of alcohol. These unhealthy behaviors lead to increasing the risks of high blood pressure, overweight/obesity, high blood glucose levels/diabetes, and hyperlipidemia (high levels of fat in the blood). In the EMR, reducing the prevalence of such diseases comes with its own set of challenges. The region is home to many humanitarian crises. These have resulted in large numbers of IDPs, hard to reach communities, broken national health systems and over saturated health systems in host countries. Such conditions present policymakers and humanitarian and health aid organizations with a challenge to address the burden of NCDs.

EMPHNET contributes to bridging such gaps by collaborating with international organizations, civil society organizations, and Ministries of Health across the region to:

- Review the current status and facilitate sharing of experiences related to NCDs
- Strengthen the capacity of NCD civil society organizations to drive advocacy, policy reform, accountability; and social reform.
- Collaborate with civil society organizations to promote better lifestyle choices
- Disseminate information regarding NCDs
- Contribute to strengthening regional public health systems

Outreach and Emergency Response

1 COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Through its community empowerment plans, this unit creates and implements plans that enable emergency affected community members to have greater control of their lives. This way, communities are enabled to find the best use of the factors and decisions that shape their lives.

Within its empowerment programs, the unit sees that communication plays a vital role. Therefore, it adopts a participatory approach that encourages discussions and debates amongst the target community members that result in increased knowledge and awareness, and a higher level of critical thinking. EMPHNET believes that critical thinking enables communities to understand the interplay of factors affecting their lives. and helps them make their own decisions.

2 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The Outreach and Emergency Response Unit addresses the needs of communities affected by incidents or events that threaten public safety, health, and welfare like natural disasters or man-made crises and emergency situations. If the impacts are severe or prolonged, facilitating an effective response can exceed the capacity of first responders. As a result, emergency response plans evolve based on the unit's experience in dealing with emergency situations. However, most of its plans follow the cycle outlined below:

- Recognition or identification of risks related to the emergency
- Ranking risks according to their severity
- Resourcing controls
- Facilitating the reaction plan to the emergency
- Reporting and monitoring risk performance
- Reviewing the Risk Management framework



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