



## Biosafety and Biosecurity Capacity Building efforts in Iraq

### Project Information

- ◆ Department: Public Health Programs
- ◆ Unit: Public Disease Control and Prevention

### OBJECTIVES

The main goal of the project is supporting Iraq in disease detection, outbreak response, biosafety & biosecurity, and health security efforts. Implementing activities of this project will contribute to more effective public health systems in Iraq.

### REGIONS OF WORK

The project was implemented in Iraq

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project was considered a capacity-building partnership that will contribute to leveraging national health security. The activities of this project will enhance biosafety and biosecurity aspects in Iraq laboratories by building capacities in bio risk management system that the Ministry of Health (MOH) has in place to support disease detection, outbreak response, and health security efforts in Iraq.

In specific, mini grants opportunities were allocated for FETP graduates, residents and other Public Health officers to conduct research projects. This effort was supported by Study Research Committee from expert in the field to provide technical support and approve final abstracts.

Further, technical support was provided to develop educational training materials on Biosafety and Biosecurity with relevant guidelines and protocols to be utilized to train public health personnel and university students in the colleges and departments with functioning bio-laboratories.

### BENEFICIARIES

- Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) residents, mentors, and graduates.
- Public health personnel from different Iraqi governorates.
- University students in the colleges

### PROJECT PHASES

- Announce and support mini grants for public health research projects related to biosecurity, biosafety, outbreak investigation, infectious disease surveillance and response.
- Developing educational training materials on Biosafety and Biosecurity subjects for the university students in the colleges and departments with functioning bio-laboratories.

<b>Project Start and End Date</b>	<b>02/22/2019 – 11/30/2020</b>
<b>Partner Organizations</b>	<b>Iraq Ministry of Health (MOH) and Iraq Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE)</b>
<b>Funded by</b>	<b>Training Programs in Epidemiology and Public Health Interventions Network (TEPHINET)</b>



## Currently . . .

Iraq continue to be at risk of disease outbreaks for several reasons attributed to the country being strained with more than a decade with conflict, none-state actors, attrition of skilled staff namely at retaken areas and misapplied dual-use of life science and tackling this burden.

The biosafety and biosecurity best practices in diagnostic and public health laboratories have become an enormous issue that needs be assessed and improved. Some of the missing practices that should be in place are safe and secure handling of biological samples, safe use of lab equipment, safe facility design, protection of laboratory staff and public environment from intentional and unintentional exposure to infectious substances.

Concurrently, there is a lack of sufficient standard teaching and learning materials with relevant guidelines and protocols that can be used to build capacities of higher education students and health staff in biosecurity and biosafety management.

## What is next . . .

Throughout this project the activities resulted in the development of Bio-risk Management Manual which is a milestone towards availing required education and training materials to builds national capacities. The manual will be targeting university students in the colleges and departments with functioning bio-laboratories with multipurpose use for training multidisciplinary team to enhance the biosafety and biosecurity aspects in Iraq laboratories.

Additionally, through supporting mini grants opportunities, six projects identifying local gaps were proposed, and the support was extended to a priority project that address need to enhance biosafety and biosecurity in one governorate in Iraq. The mini grant project evaluated the biosafety standards practices, techniques and precautions adopted in diagnostic laboratories. The evaluation also determined the awareness of laboratory staff towards potential hazards. The findings of the evaluation will assist the MOH and MOHE in addressing capacity building needs and bridging gaps in practices and knowledge in biorisk management.

## By the Numbers

6

Proposals applied for mini grants opportunities to conduct biosafety and biosecurity research projects of those one accepted and supported

11

Diagnostic Laboratory in Diyala province enrolled in the Biosafety and Biosecurity precautions assessment

95%

of surveyed labs showed need to be trained on biosafety management

1

Biorisk Management handbook developed in English & Arabic Languages

**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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