



Security for In-Country Shipping and Handling of Biological Agents and Disposal of Expired Reagents in Afghanistan

Project Information

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

OBJECTIVES

This project aims at building capacities essential for biological threat reduction, namely the capacity for handling of biological samples and safe storage and disposal of reagents.

Hence, reduce access to dangerous infectious agents, lab agents and other materials and contribute to the development of more effective public health systems and biosafety/ biosecurity measures.

REGIONS OF WORK

This project will be implemented in Afghanistan targeting health staff from central, regional and provincial levels.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

GHD|EMPHNET supported the development and drafting of relevant Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for packaging, transport and safe disposal of reagents. The SOPs were adapted to the country context and translated to official country languages for training and distribution to targeted facilities. GHD|EMPHNET has also conducted a joint Train the Trainer (TOT) for staff from the Ministry and key laboratory officials. Subsequent trainings will target regional labs, provincial labs, and field efforts led by technicians, veterinarians, and para-veterinarians who collect human and animal biological samples. The training will focus on how to safely and securely handle and pack biological samples for intra- and inter-lab shipment, as well as safe storage and disposal of reagents that support diagnostics assays and other daily laboratory operations. GHD|EMPHNET is also aiming to strengthen the capacity for biological threat reduction by supplying labs with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits and IATA standard triple packages.

BENEFICIARIES

The Project targets health professionals at the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) /Directorate of Diagnostic Services, the Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL), the Central Veterinary Diagnostic and Research Laboratory (CVDRL), and the Vaccine Production Directorate officials

PROJECT PHASES

This project is carried out over a period of one year as follows:

Phase I – Preparations: obtain country stakeholders support and engagement for coordinating activities implementation. Develop and adapt Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) for laboratories.

Phase II – Implementation and documentation: conduct training workshops at central and sub-regional levels for human and animal health laboratories staff and provision of supplies and materials to enhance biosafety and biosecurity best practices. Documentation of trainings materials and reports.



Project Start and End Date	04/01/2020 – 12/31/2021
Partner Organizations	Ministry of Public Health/Directorate Diagnostic Services, the Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL) the Central Veterinary Diagnostic and Research Laboratory (CVDRL), and the Vaccine Production Directorate
Funded by	U.S. Department of State (DOS) Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, Office of Cooperative Threat Reduction's (ISN/CTR) Global Threat Reduction Programs, including the Biosecurity Engagement Program (BEP)

Currently . . .

Crucial gaps in the practices and procedures pertinent to laboratory network and management continue to be present. Most of the infectious agents tested and shipped within Afghanistan's laboratories are select agents and can be used as biological weapons. The biological human and animal samples collected support national surveillance of intentional bioterrorism or natural outbreaks, are screened in regional and provincial labs, and are subsequently sent to the central laboratories for further confirmation and final processing. More than 50 percent of the samples shipped intra- or inter-labs in Afghanistan are leaked, damaged, or lost during sample handling and transportation. Meanwhile, most lab technicians or veterinary workers collecting, or handling samples are not familiar with proper packing, labelling, and handling of the infectious agent samples.

What is next . . .

Project activities will enhance the undertake of practices in line with the SOPs to reduce opportunities for access to dangerous infectious agents, lab reagents, and other dual-used items that can be used by nefarious actors or terrorists for the development and use as WMDs. SOPs for handling biological samples and safe storage and disposal of reagents adapted and in local languages will be available to laboratories to provide guidelines to enhance practices.

GHD|EMPHNET Information: Global Health Development (GHD) and 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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