

Read in this issue:

- ⇒ Pakistan- Evaluations of Polio Vaccination Coverage in Lahore District
- ⇒ EMPHNET Launch of Rapid Response Teams Training in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
- ⇒ EMPHNET Greets Dr. Peter Bloland in Jordan
- ⇒ Physical Activity Counseling Kicks Off with Great Success
- ⇒ EMPHNET holds a Regional Workshop on “Analysis and Interpretation of Large Data Sets”
- ⇒ Leadership and Management Training Focus on Team Building
- ⇒ EMPHNET conducted the Regional Vital Registration Training for FETPs in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.
- ⇒ FETP Anecdote By: Dr. Iman Bambouk

EMPHNET's Word

By: Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour, Executive Director

I present to EMPHNET's members, friends and colleagues this newsletter with pride, honor and a deep sense of contentment. We have concluded this quarter with a high sense of achievement and success. Over the last three months we have been inclined to work hard at fulfilling our objectives in a way that can allow us to continue with confidence and stature.

EMPHNET moves forward with enthusiasm and delight in welcoming TEPHINET's Seventh Global Scientific Conference in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The conference will be conducted in Amman - Jordan, during November 10-15, 2012, and is expected to bring together representatives eager to exchange knowledge and experience from all over the world. EMPHNET considers the conference as a co-operative venture of regions where focus is awarded to the active role of countries and their achievements in advancing public health and epidemiology. EMPHNET is working hand-in-hand with the Jordanian Ministry of Health in organizing TEPHINET's conference and is keen on making it a successful and noteworthy experience. We are proud to be working with TEPHINET in providing a showcase opportunity for presenting innovative and state-of-the-art expertise that is nurtured and created by the Field Epidemiology Training Programs from around the world. EMPHNET is honored to be a partner in facilitating such a valuable event and is investing all efforts in creating and presenting a wealthy global exchange platform.

Together we will make this opportunity a huge success.....

Pakistan- Evaluations of polio vaccination coverage in Lahore District

9th – 11th June, 2012: On the invitation of Department of Health Punjab, WHO Pakistan and Prime Minister's cell on Polio eradication, Pakistan FELTP launched one of the biggest and quickest evaluations of polio vaccination coverage in Lahore District (estimated population 10 million). With the active participation of Punjab Department of Health and Lahore District Government, Pakistan FELTP deployed 24 teams in all 165 Union Councils of Lahore. Each teams

comprised of two medical epidemiologists/public health officers and one local vaccinator. In a two and half days period, teams evaluated more than 3,465 houses with 7094 with less five children. Preliminary results were shared with Punjab Department of Health on the third day during a reception and dinner hosted by the City government in the honor of visiting FELTP fellows and 5th annual course participants. Data is being cleaned and verified to provide in depth analysis of the situation to stakeholders.

EMPHNET Launch of Rapid Response Teams Training in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The Rapid Response Initiative at EMPHNET is a multi-stage project which was launched with a Basic Regional Rapid Response Teams Training in July 2012. The participants of this training workshop were from Afghanistan, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syria, Sudan and Yemen. A total of 34 participants trained in a week long course with facilitators from EMPHNET, Naval Medical Research Unit-3 (NAMRU-3), World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) USA.



Participants of the Rapid Response Teams Training: Group photo.

The purpose of this course was to construct the platform for National Rapid Response Teams and to find suitable candidates for the Regional Rapid Response Teams Training. Nineteen out of 34 were selected as members of the Regional Rapid Response Teams and trained in a three long course titled “Advanced Rapid Response Teams Training” which was conducted September 16th to October 4th, 2012. The advanced course was facilitated by experts from EMPHNET, WHO Jordan, NAMRU-3, Ministry of Health Jordan, Ministry of Health Sudan, Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) Geneva, Center for Disaster

and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine (CDHAM-US) and CDC (US). Participants attended class sessions and hands on training in a refugee camp in Jordan. The Rapid Response Teams with a mandate of rapid assessment, investigation and response to outbreaks and natural and manmade disasters are ready for deployment at the regional level. These teams will start national and sub-national training activities to build Rapid Assessment and Response capacity of the member states in 2013 and beyond. The teams will be deployed to affected countries upon the request of the Ministry of Health of the affected

countries and in collaboration of other regional stakeholders. It’s worth mentioning that over a hundred million populations in Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) have been affected by natural and manmade disasters in the last four decades. Fifteen out of 23 EMR countries are suffering from small to large size civil unrest. In addition, the region experienced major disease outbreaks like the cholera outbreak in Iraq and Afghanistan (2008), Dengue Fever in Pakistan and Yemen (2010-11), Rift Valley Virus in Sudan (2010), and a recent polio outbreak in Afghanistan and Pakistan.



Part of the Training Activities.



Participants Field visit to Al Za'tary Camp for Syrian Refugees.

EMPHNET Greets Dr. Peter Bloland in Jordan



EMPHNET was honored to receive a notable visit by Dr. Peter Bloland, Director for the Division of Public Health Systems and Workforce Development (DPHSWD) at the Center for Global Health (CGH). Dr. Bloland’s visit befell during his visit to participate in a WHO/EMRO consultation meeting on “Health Information Systems and the Global Burden of Disease 2010 Study for Eastern Mediterranean Countries” held in Amman in the course of the third week of July, 2012.

EMPHNET seized the opportunity of Dr. Bloland’s visit to introduce him to EMPHNET’s projects and engage him in EMPHNET’s vision and future strategy. The visit allowed EMPHNET staff with the opportunity to describe their work, communicate the successes and interact closely with a high rank CDC figure. Dr. Bloland’s visit allowed EMPHNET to outline strategies for implementing the rapid response and non-communicable project as well as

unveil the main challenges in sustaining these projects. The visit offered EMPHNET with the opportunity of presenting Dr. Bloland with its interests and pursuits for enriching the FETPs in the region.

During his stay in Jordan, Dr. Bloland met with the General secretary of the Ministry of Health, Dr Diefalla al Lawzi, and the Director of Primary Health Care Administration, Dr. Bassam Hijjawi. During this meeting Dr. Blolland was briefed on the major efforts and difficulties confronting Jordan’s FETP and the long term strategy and in country expectations.

Physical Activity Counseling Kicks Off with Great Success

EMPHNET's awareness of the severity and seriousness of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in the region prompted it to support the Ministry of Health in Jordan in starting an innovative project for preventing and controlling these diseases. A comprehensive approach was planned in late 2011 to implement an NCD project to increase physical activity in Ajloun governorate. Graduates and residents from Jordan's Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) participated actively in conducting a behavioral risk factor survey in Ajloun and Jarash governorates. FETP graduates and residents used data from this survey to practice complex data analysis. Recently, EMPHNET prepared and released a report describing the results of this survey. Following a preparatory phase that involved assessment of physical activity facilities and training on physical activity counseling, the project kicked off successfully in the villages of Anjara, Rajeb and Sakhra. The current phase of the NCD project revolves around creating a physically active community in these geographical areas by supporting health center staff to work collectively in partnership with the community to promote physical activity as a means for preventing and controlling NCDs. The core principle that drives the project is centered on counseling provision and increasing community awareness of NCD risk factors.

Supporting healthy walks

With the aim of creating opportunities for direct involvement in physical activity, EMPHNET supported the health providers in Anjara and Rajeb health centers to organize healthy walks with their local communities. These efforts aim at removing barriers to physical activity by encouraging brisk walks which EMPHNET is promoting as types of healthy living opportunities. Health providers and personnel from Ajloun health directorate, including the Health Director, participated in these healthy walks. Patients enrolled in the NCD clinic at the health centers of these locations joined actively in these walks. EMPHNET continues to support local village communities in combatting preventable chronic disease and obesity by encouraging communities to increase physical activity opportunities and by promoting the important role of physical activity in energy balance, especially among the older adults. FETP graduates and residents are involved actively in the NCD Physical Activity project and EMPHNET perceives their engagement in monitoring project activities as a valuable learning opportunity.



Health workers lead a healthy walk in Anjara Village.

Seizing opportunities

While recognizing the important role of physical activity in combatting preventable chronic disease and obesity, EMPHNET focused on promoting physical activity by procuring physical activity equipment. Based on the circumstances of each of the chosen villages, EMPHNET arranged for the purchased equipment to be placed either at the health center or at a community establishment in the relevant village. The equipment was received with enthusiasm and appreciation by the health center staff and the communities at large. It is important to note that recreational physical activity centers in these communities are non-existent and that EMPHNET considers capturing this need as a favorable opportunity for employing referral when counseling.



Health worker provides physical activity counseling at Rajeb Health Center.

EMPHNET holds a Regional Workshop on “Analysis and Interpretation of Large Data Sets”

As part of the NCD project activities, EMPHNET conducted a regional workshop titled “Analyzing and Interpreting Large Data Sets”, in Amman, Jordan from 8 to 12 July, 2012. Twenty health officials (FETPs) from five Eastern Mediterranean Countries (Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen) joined this regional workshop which was organized and carried out in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC-US). The workshop aimed at providing knowledge and skills on analyzing large data sets that are based on population surveys from a public health perspective. The ultimate goal of this workshop was to strengthen FETPs' ability in producing results for public health officials and poli-

cymakers based on available survey information to enable them to establish data driven policies and evidence based programs. While publishing country specific data on non-communicable disease risk factors is an essential component of preventing and controlling these diseases, health officials need to understand priorities and issues of significant analysis. The workshop emphasized meaningful risk factor analysis using BRFSS data, while concentrating on preparing data analysis plan and performing data analysis for complex samples. Participants gained practical skills by applying data analysis procedures on the Ajloun and Jarash BRFSS data.

Leadership and Management Training Focus on Team Building

As a part of Sustainable Management Development Program (SMDP) Project activities, EMPHNET, in collaboration with CDC, have conducted a second workshop entitled “Building strong teams for successful field epidemiology training programs”. The first workshop was conducted during 4th- 8th March, in the evaluation of which, the topic “Team Building” was reflected as a priority. In addition, more than half of the programs requested training on the

topics related to project management and leadership in the latest EMPHNET Need Assessment Survey (March 2012).

The five day workshop, intended for mid to high level managers/administrators of field epidemiology training programs in the region, was designed specifically for the ‘people’ aspect of leading a successful program. This highly interactive workshop aimed at enabling participants to develop positive and

productive working relationships among team members, choose appropriate coaching and mentoring methods when fostering professional development in others, determine the root cause of a performance problem, design the didactic portion of an FETP to achieve maximum results, and successfully advocate for their program and engage with key stakeholders.

EMPHNET conducted the Regional Vital Registration Training for FETPs in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET), in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), conducted a 5 day training workshop during Sept. 24-28, 2012 in Rabat, Morocco.

The regional workshop aimed at training and providing information on the source and range of uses of existing vital statistics data and identify potential areas for country-level improvement; pilot the CDC civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) curriculum before releasing it for general use by country FETP programs; and provide a regional platform for ex-

changing views, ideas and best practices on CRVS in the region.

The training included participants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Jordan, Iraq and the hosting country Morocco. The training targeted FETP residents and mentors with strong analytical background who have interest in civil registration, vital statistics, or its implications for maternal, infant, under 5 mortality rates. Trainees were nominated based on their availability to participate in all activities included in the project cycle.

The activity comes as the first of three training components that include: one

week training workshop on CRVS, performing a Rapid Assessment of the country CRVS system using a standard assessment tool developed by WHO and the University of Queensland, and conducting a country CRVS follow-up meeting.

The CRVS project activities will extend into year 2013, where the results of the rapid assessment for each country will be compiled and presented by residents during a follow-up meeting that will be held in each participating country beginning early 2013.

FETP Anecdote By: Dr. Iman Bambouk

While working at the Center for Strategic Health Studies in my home country – Syria, I had the chance to participate in the “First Mass Gathering Workshop” held by EMPHNET in Amman, during September, 2010. During the workshop, I learned about the scope and benefits of the Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) and decided to pursue admission to Jordan FETP. I was motivated by the idea of becoming an FETP focal point in my country when I learned that establishing a new FETP is being considered for Syria. In addition, meeting colleagues from many countries in the region who were FETP graduates, trainees, or FETP staff

and learning about their experience inspired me to join the Jordan’s ninth FETP cohort. The program allowed me to get hands-on experience in outbreak investigations and evaluations of surveillance system, and enabled me to participate in applied epidemiological research along with an opportunity to advance my scientific writing ability and presentation skills. I grew to appreciate the power of public health in improving the lives of people far beyond what I could have ever seen in a doctor’s office. Upon returning to Syria, I became subject to a situation that prevented me from practicing what I learned in the field, primarily due to the

political unrest. I felt helpless as a doctor and disappointed by the hardship inflicted upon our public health system. Like many of my colleagues and fellow citizens, I became prone to insecurity and instability. As circumstances became more complicated and critically alarming I decided to flee to Jordan in pursuit of security and protection for my family. I believe that being an FETP graduate from Jordan played a major role in deciding on choosing Jordan as a refuge. My FETP training allowed me to engage in activities and events in the region. I feel honored for being a graduate of the Jordan FETP and fortunate for being involved with EMPHNET.



The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET)

Tel.: +962 6 5519962

Fax: +962 6 5519963

P.O.Box: 963709 Postal code: 11196 Amman – Jordan

Email: info@emphnet.net Website: www.emphnet.net