



Smoking and COVID-19: Data Driven Risk

Messaging

Project Information

- ◆ Department: Center of Excellence for Applied Epidemiology
- ◆ Unit: Research and Policy

SCOPE OF WORK

The project's main goal is to raise awareness of the harms of smoking, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, through developing country-tailored and culturally appropriate media messages to disseminate, educate, and promote smoking cessation to reduce morbidity and mortality from the virus. The project will be implemented over a period of around 12 months.

BENEFICIARIES

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

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

The project will be implemented in four countries of the MENA region: Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, and Egypt.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

During the past year, the association between smoking and the severity of the COVID-19 infection was extremely highlighted calling governments and nations to consider this as an opportune time to increase bans on tobacco products and to disseminate population targeted messages supporting and encouraging smoking cessation. GHD|EMPHNET, in collaboration with the CDC and Vital Strategies, will implement a project titled “**Smoking and COVID 19: Data-Driven Risk Messaging**”. The specific outcome that this project is planning to achieve is to raise awareness of the harms of smoking, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic through media coverage. This goal will be achieved by providing country partners with sufficient funds and technical expertise to develop and disseminate risk messaging through mass media outlets. The project will follow three phases of activities. The initial phase will be to form a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and to establish communication with targeted countries. The second phase involves the implementation of the risk messaging campaigns. The final phase will be the Monitoring and evaluation for the outcomes of the project.

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| Project Start and End Date | October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022 |
| Partner Organizations | Ministry of Health in Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, and Egypt |
| Funded by | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) |
| Collaborators | Vital Strategies |

PROJECT PHASES

The project involves three phases:

Phase I – The initial phase will be to form a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and to establish communication with targeted countries, ensuring ministry engagement, and aiming to identify eligible grantees and appropriate workplan proposals. Grant mechanism and proposal requirements will be dependent on the country context and partners involved, and will include a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) TOR to ensure grantees have a standardized approach to in-country activity M&E. A steering committee will also be formed that includes influential decision and policy makers, to support implementation of the activities.

Phase II – The second phase will be initiated once grantees and proposals are identified and chosen from each country, and it will involve refining their workplan proposals and technically assisting the country partners in developing and disseminating risk messaging through mass media outlets.

Phase III – The third phase involves the Monitoring and Evaluation activity. The project will be monitored over the period of implementation through periodic review and feedback on Fidelity and Dissemination Reports. Additionally, the project outcomes and evaluation will be assessed in one country in terms of the short-term outcomes of the disseminated messages on producing the desired change in awareness, knowledge, and behavior with regards to smoking within the populations served.

Currently . . .

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 Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine 22.8%, 20.7%, and 20.2%¹, respectively. Recent studies demonstrated the association between smoking and the severity of COVID-19 infection in which the harms of smoking, and the risk of serious infection, suffering and death, are exacerbated by COVID.

What's next . . .

The project collaborators will be implementing on-the-ground mass media campaigns to reach tens of millions of people and/or at-risk populations. The effects of smoking counter-marketing through mass media campaigns have been well documented. Mass-reaching communication campaigns can be a powerful tool for shaping social norms in terms of tobacco use, limiting tobacco initiation, and promoting tobacco cessation to reduce COVID-19 mortality and morbidity in the region.

By Numbers

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Countries supported: Jordan,
Palestine, Egypt & Iraq

> 157 M

Total population

23.4%*

of individuals Smoke Tobacco

*Weighted Average

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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¹ 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 (STEPS 2010-2011, age group 15-64 years)