



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 was implemented over a period of around 15 months.

BENEFICIARIES

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

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

The project was implemented in four countries of the EMR region: Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, and Egypt.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

During 2020, 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, implemented a project titled “**Smoking and COVID 19: Data-Driven Risk Messaging**”. The specific outcome that this project planned to achieve is to raise awareness of the harms of smoking, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic through media coverage. This goal was achieved by providing country partners with sufficient funds and technical expertise to develop and disseminate risk messaging through mass media outlets. The project followed three phases of activities. The initial phase was to form a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and to establish communication with targeted countries. The second phase involved the implementation of the risk messaging campaigns. The final phase was the Monitoring and evaluation for the outcomes of the project.

Project Start and End Date	October 1, 2021 – December 31, 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 was 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 were dependent on the country context and partners involved. A steering committee was formed that includes influential decision and policy makers, to support implementation of the activities.

Phase II – The second phase was initiated once grantees and proposals were identified and chosen from each country, and it involved 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 involved the Monitoring and Evaluation activity. The project was monitored over the period of implementation through periodic review and feedback on Fidelity and Dissemination Reports. Additionally, the project outcomes and evaluation were assessed in Jordan and Palestine 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 was successful in achieving its goals and therefore it will be extended in two of the four countries because 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 mortality and morbidity in the region.

By Numbers: Total Reach

<u>Jordan</u>	<u>Palestine</u>	<u>Egypt</u>	<u>Iraq</u>
TV 2,735,200	Radio 2,200,000	TV and Radio 8,500,000	Radio 8,000,000
Social Media 2,477,348	Social Media 4,067,400	Social Media 20,100,000	Social Media 10,900,000

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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