



GHD | EMPHNET Newsletter

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GHD | EMPHNET Marks a
Decade of Supporting the
EMR to End Polio

Spotlight on Public Health Experts

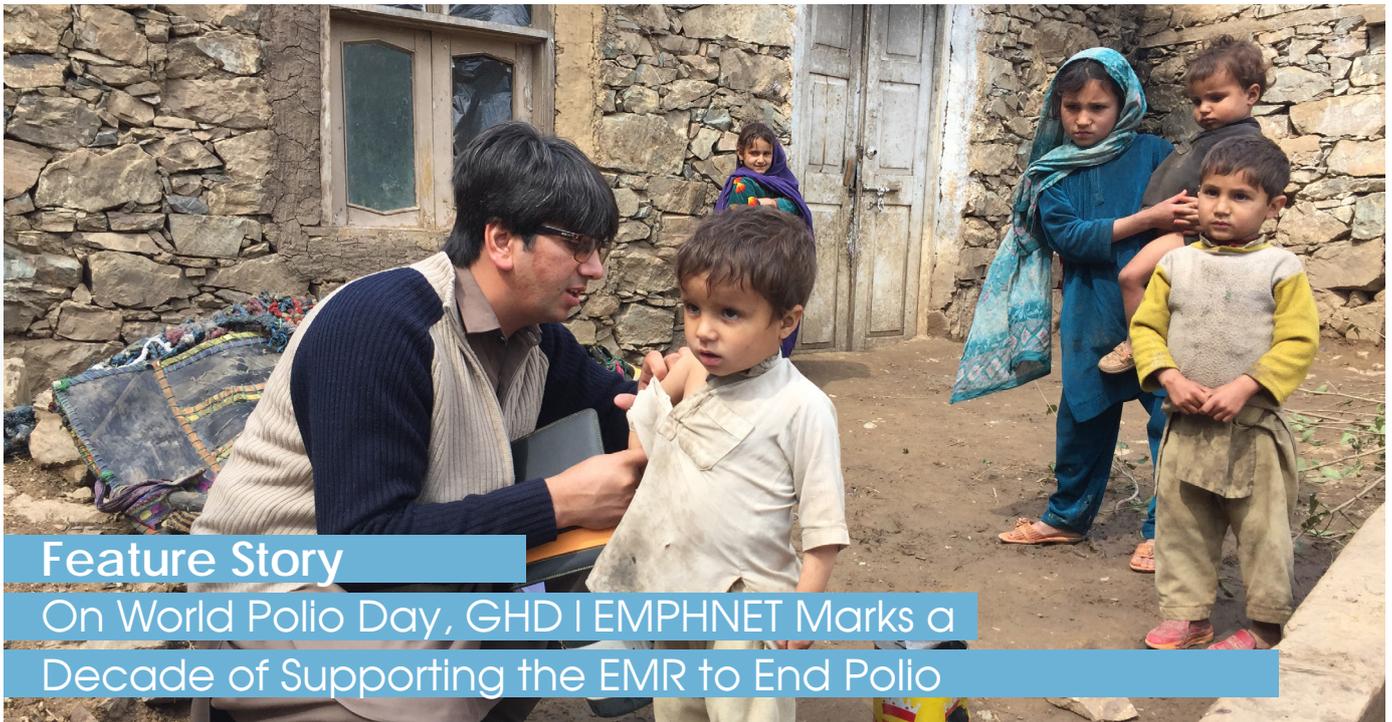
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Feature Story

On World Polio Day, GHD | EMPHNET Marks a Decade of Supporting the EMR to End Polio

In our region, two countries are endemic to the wild poliovirus and others are experiencing outbreaks of the wild or vaccine-derived poliovirus. On World Polio Day, GHD|EMPHNET marks important contributions to international, regional, and national efforts to end polio in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Afghanistan

GHD|EMPHNET worked in support of the Ministry of Public Health to increase demand for immunization, using appropriate communication interventions for improving knowledge of and attitudes towards immunization services. Five polio-endemic and high-risk provinces were targeted: **Helmand, Kandahar, Kunar, Laghman, and Nangarhar**. In a KAP study conducted to determine the effect of these interventions, results indicated a significant improvement among the interventions' group in all components of knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding child immunization.

Also with support from GHD|EMPHNET, the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) established a data software to **improve EPI's data quality**. On this software, over 300 staff members were trained on data quality and were provided with technical support to upgrade and improve the EPI's database to aid in analysis at the health facility, district, provincial, and national levels. This effort reflected positively on the timeliness of EPI reporting at all levels and the EPI data at the national and provincial levels.

Pakistan

Building on the success of a project it initiated in 2016 in other EMR countries, GHD|EMPHNET is supporting the Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, Government, to institutionalize and operationalize routine immunization (RI) microplanning: The aim is to empower immunization workers with the skills needed to prepare and implement microplans to enhance RI service delivery, ensuring that immunization services are delivered continuously and efficiently especially in hard-to-reach areas.

Egypt

In 2017, GHD|EMPHNET initiated the first phase a project to **utilize domestic polio assets to strengthen RI** and to reach measles elimination targets in Egypt in three high-priority governorates: Aswan, Matrouh, and Red Sea. The second phase of the project is covering highly populous, at-risk governorates comprising hard-to-reach communities: Qalubia and Sharkia. So far, the project covered 30% of the Egyptian population.

Sudan

Capitalizing on its relevant experience in other EMR countries, GHD|EMPHNET started supporting the Federal Ministry of Health in equipping immunization workers with the skills they need to prepare and implement microplans: to be able to cover all details of the immunization services delivery to ensure immunization services are delivered continuously and efficiently, with focus on hard-to-reach communities.

Yemen

In Yemen, GHD|EMPHNET trained volunteers from all over the country under the Polio Village Volunteers Project, expanding the community's role in strengthening surveillance and improving RI. An independent evaluation showed that Non-Polio AFP rate in children ≤ 15 years and the Adequacy Rate have increased in Yemeni districts where the volunteers were trained.

Iraq

GHD|EMPHNET is supporting Iraq Ministry of Health in utilizing domestic Polio Program assets in high-risk areas to reach targets for measles/ rubella elimination. The targeted areas are in the governorates of Anbar, Baghdad Al-Kerkh, Baghdad Rasafa, and Ninewa. So far, the project covered 40% of the population. In the last ten years, GHD|EMPHNET also supported the ministry in strengthening community engagement, routine immunization microplanning, and improving immunization in practice, among other efforts.

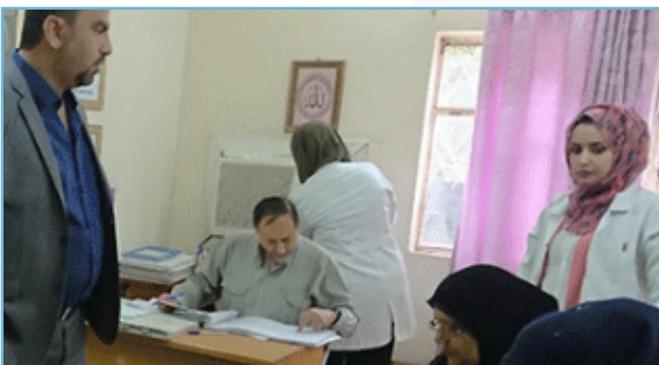
Highlights



Building capacities of staff of the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) at the peripheral and frontline levels in Egypt



Contributing to the improvement of AFP surveillance indicators by implementing different interventions in Morocco



Supporting immunization supportive supervision and monitoring in Iraq



Supporting the development of the EPI Communication Strategy in Yemen

Spotlight on Public Health Experts

Dr. Hassan El Bushra

Through a three-decade career in leadership roles, Dr. El Bushra from Sudan contributed to preparedness and response to major infectious disease outbreaks in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Dr. El Bushra holds a PhD and an MPH from UCLA, USA, and membership of the Faculty of Public Health Medicine (MFPHM) of the Royal College of Physicians, London, United Kingdom. At the University of Khartoum, Sudan, he qualified as a medical doctor (MBBS) and specialized in Community Medicine (MCM).

Working extensively for WHO-EMRO

In country-specific posts, Dr. El Bushra was the representative of WHO-EMRO in **Saudi Arabia**, leading the organization's support for the Saudi Ministry of Health in preparedness and response during the Hajj season and for MERS-CoV outbreaks.

He was also WHO-EMRO's representative to Lebanon where he worked on the response to the Syrian crisis strategically guided towards coordination, technical back up, capacity building, health awareness, access to health services, and control of outbreaks.

As the acting WHO-EMRO's representative to **Iraq**, Dr. El Bushra initiated and led projects in capacity building, advocacy, collaboration, resource mobilization, research, information generation, and monitoring and evaluation with focus on the implementation of the IHR 2005, infection control, vaccine preventable diseases, infectious diseases, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, TB, and disaster and risk reduction.

Regionally, Dr. El Bushra held a high-level position as the **WHO-EMRO** Adviser on Emerging and Communicable Diseases. His work focused on response to outbreaks of emerging diseases in the EMR, revision of IHR 2005, partnership development, and surveillance systems strengthening. He led a five-year project in collaboration with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to strengthen the capacity of all 23 countries in the EMR to rapidly detect, assess, respond to, and contain public health threats emanating from highly pathogenic avian



influenza and human pandemic influenza.

Contributing to Epidemiological Research in Saudi Arabia

Dr. El Bushra helped establish the Epidemiology Research Unit at King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center (KFSH-RC), which he headed for several years. He co-founded both the KFSH-RC's Epilepsy Registry and the Saudi Diabetes Registry.

As a consultant medical epidemiologist, Dr. El Bushra supported the Saudi Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP), maximizing the research component in the curriculum through regular research activities and large-scale surveys and outbreak investigations during the Hajj season.

He also led studies on behavioral risk factors that contributed to prevention of epidemic-prone communicable diseases and improvement in the quality of a variety of health-related services provided to the pilgrims to Mecca.

Dr. El Bushra served as the advisor to the Deputy Minister of Health for Public Health on all activities related to emerging outbreaks of MERS-CoV.

Academic achievements

Dr. El Bushra was an Assistant Professor at the Department of Community Medicine at the University of Khartoum in Sudan, and a Clinical Assistant Professor at the Department of Family and Community Medicine of King Saud University in Saudi Arabia. He also participated in teaching in short courses of epidemiology and public health surveillance for physicians, nurses, and other health personnel from across the region and beyond.

He was an external examiner for Sudan's Medical Specialization Board for Community Medicine, the Saudi Council for Health Specialties, the University of Medical Sciences and Technology in Sudan, and Ain Shams University and Cairo University in Egypt.

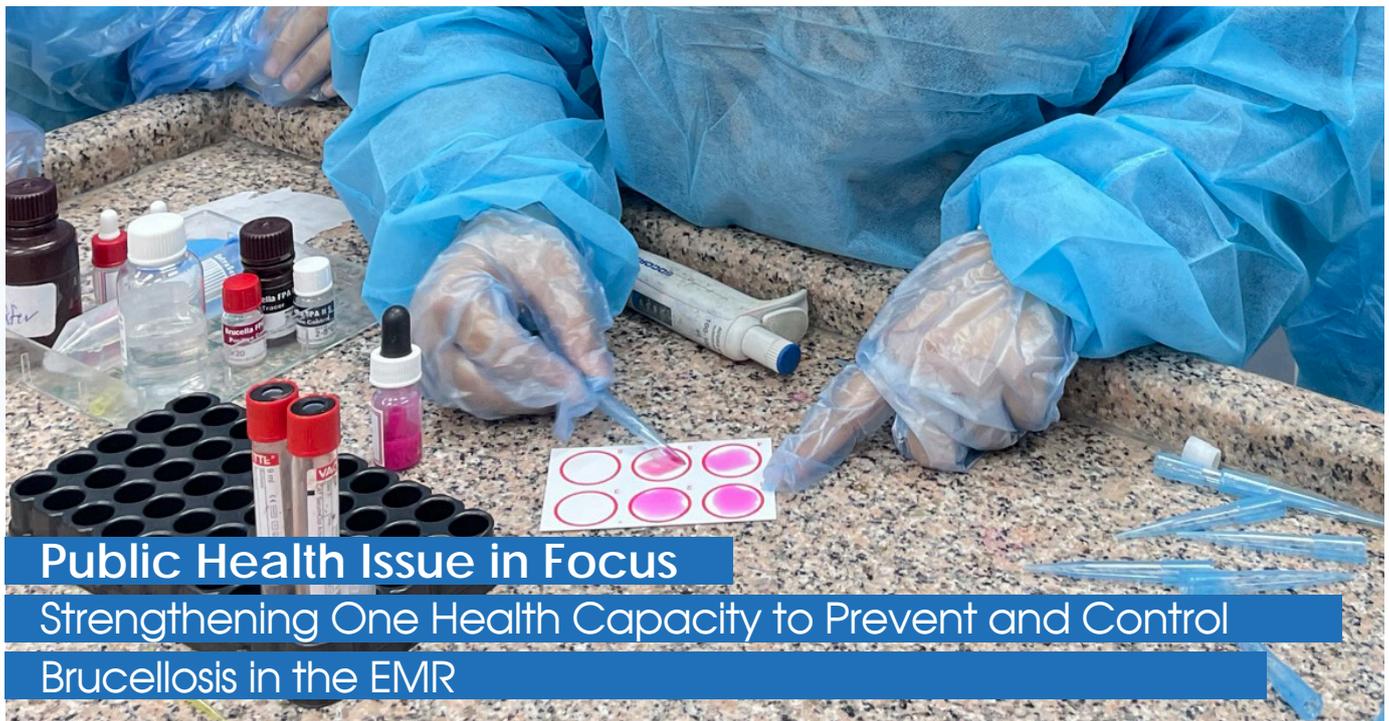
Along with having over 60 publications in peer-reviewed journals, Dr. El Bushra served on the editorial board of such journals and presented his work and spoke at international conferences.

Leading projects in Sudan

In his home country, Dr. El Bushra was a consultant for field activities for major research projects implemented by regional and international

organizations on family planning, maternal and child health, nutrition, outbreak investigations, and displaced communities.

Currently, he is a consultant for the WHO in Sudan. His recent achievements include participating in the Independent External Evaluation of the Response of the Government of Sudan to the Outbreak of **Acute Watery Diarrhea (AWD)**, 2016-2018; drafting the full epidemiological report on a **Chikungunya outbreak** that occurred in different States during the period between 2018 and 2019; an **outbreak of Diphtheria in South Darfur**, 2019, and drafting the National Comprehensive **Communicable Diseases Outbreaks Preparedness and Response Plan**, 2019-2020.



Public Health Issue in Focus

Strengthening One Health Capacity to Prevent and Control Brucellosis in the EMR

Focusing on strengthening laboratory-based surveillance using the One Health approach, GHD|EMPHNET is supporting stakeholders from the human and animal health sectors to enhance prevention and control of brucellosis which, in the region, is a highly prevalent zoonotic disease.

Jordan

Five years ago, GHD|EMPHNET joined the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture in their efforts to strengthen brucellosis surveillance, diagnosis, and control in Al Mafraq, a governorate whose dense animal population is endemic to the disease. Laboratory-based surveillance was implemented in the governorate using appropriate confirmatory testing. Not only was this collaboration a success in determining the true incidence of the disease, but it was also successful in strengthening communication between animal and human health sectors and introducing two diagnostic tests: ELISA into public health laboratories in Mafraq and PCR into the Central Public Health Laboratory. In addition to Mafraq, stakeholders soon expanded to target other endemic areas: East Amman and Karak. Laboratory-based surveillance of human and animal brucellosis was established. As a result, the circulating brucella species was determined, and epidemiological analysis is expected to estimate and characterize the true incidence of brucellosis in humans and animals and subsequently identify risk factors driving transmission.

Iraq

GHD|EMPHNET started supporting the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture to implement laboratory-based surveillance first in the provinces of Babel and Diala, and then in Maysan and Wasit. Important achievements were made: (1) Epidemiological communication was established between the human and animal health sectors (2) Diagnostic tests were introduced: ELISA into provincial public health laboratories and PCR into the Central Public Health Laboratory (3) and the brucellosis burden was determined in the targeted provinces.

Pakistan

In collaboration with the government's National Agricultural Research Council, GHD|EMPHNET initiated brucellosis sentinel surveillance sites in Islamabad Capital Territory's Tarlaj and Sohan provinces, while integrating it into the country's existing surveillance system. This helped determine brucellosis incidence in the targeted provinces.



New Public Health Academy Launched to Support Public Health Workforce in the EMR

[The International Academy of Public Health \(IAPH\)](#) was officially launched as an accredited academy providing diverse fields of study, programs, and courses ranging from long-term to mid and short-term training in public health areas to build the capacity of the public health workforce in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) and consequently contribute to the development of public health services. IAPH has an advisory board and a scientific council whose members are notable public health figures from across the EMR.



Assessment to Identify Availability and Quality of Primary Health Care Services in Jordan

GHD|EMPHNET is supporting the Jordan Ministry of Health in an assessment constituting part of a set of studies to estimate the overall situation of the country's PHC to produce evidence that would form the basis for developing the National Strategy for PHC revitalization. This study will assess (1) the availability and readiness of health services in PHC centers in six governorates (Irbid, Karak, Madaba, Mafraq, Tafleh, and Zarqa) and (2) Users' and health workers' satisfaction, experience, and perception of health service quality. [The Service Availability and Readiness Assessment \(SARA\)](#) tool, focus group discussions and key informant interviews, will be used to provide evidence-based data.

As part of this assessment, field visits to PHC facilities, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews were conducted.



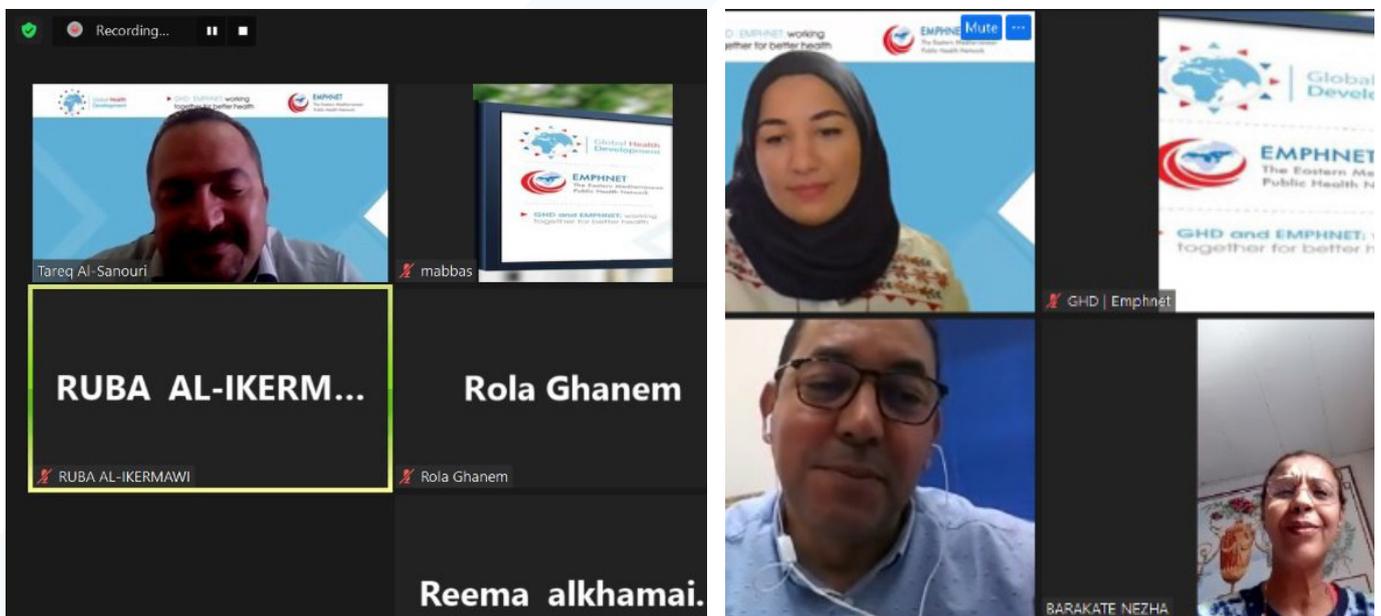
Regional Assessment Studies COVID-19 Vaccination Uptake

GHD|EMPHNET supported the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in their assessment of social and behavioral determinants for under vaccination in Afghanistan, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, and Pakistan. Focusing on the COVID-19 vaccines, the assessment is part of preparations for the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines in the region. As part of this support, GHD|EMPHNET also carried out regional social media monitoring to assess the social and behavioral determinants of under vaccination, focusing on the demand for COVID-19 and other vaccines among priority populations.



Project Launched in Jordan and Morocco to Support Biological Threat Reduction

In support of the ministries of health in Jordan and Morocco, GHD|EMPHNET is working with the Middle East Scientific Institute for Security to build capacities of laboratory technicians and concerned professionals in the identification, safe handling, and control of biological toxins such as Ricin, Abrin, and Botulinum. Under a project implemented in each country, activities will support awareness-raising, educational, and operational activities. A stakeholder meeting was held in each country to agree on the methodology of implementing project activities.



Updates

With the Partners



Becoming an Official Member of the Global Health Council

GHD|EMPHNET is pleased to announce its recent membership with the Global Health Council (GHC). GHC is the leading membership organization supporting and connecting advocates, implementers, and stakeholders around global health priorities worldwide. GHC members represent multiple sectors, including academic institutions and think tanks, associations and coalitions, contractors and consulting firms, corporations and corporate foundations, and non-governmental implementers. They focus on a variety of functions, from research through delivery and evaluation, and operate in more than 150 countries worldwide.

Signing a Memorandum of Understanding with TEPHINET



GHD|EMPHNET is proud to announce the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Training Programs in Epidemiology and Public Health Intervention Network (TEPHINET). The purpose of this MoU is to advance the collaborative ideas and objectives of the GHD|EMPHNET and TEPHINET as they relate to strengthening field epidemiology capacities and accelerating progress towards the recommendations of the Field Epidemiology Roadmap.



Meeting with WHO-EMRO

The GHD|EMPHNET team welcomed WHO-EMRO's Emergency Director Rick Brennan and other WHO-EMRO representatives to discuss mutual areas of collaboration focusing on field epidemiology and emergency preparedness and response, among other priority areas.