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EMPHNET's Word By: **Dr. Mohannad Al-Nsour, Executive Director**

When thinking of the several challenges facing our region, one cannot neglect the effects of conflict and wars on people's health. Since 2010, conflict and instability have escalated in our region to touch several countries with serious effects ranging from destroyed infrastructure to the fleeing of health and medical professionals to more safe and secure countries. Preventing disease in our region became a challenging priority, and we continue to witness increased suffering and struggling for better health. Our region became the center of public health attention as millions of refugees got displaced due to war and conflict. Moreover, health systems in some countries became frail and unable to respond to the constantly increasing public health needs, making it difficult to address critical public health issues that need attention including outbreaks of infectious diseases.

Even though public health challenges are constantly increasing in our region, we continue to seek ways to assist countries in strengthening their public health systems. Our efforts during the past quarter continued to serve countries improve their response to disease outbreak as well as empower public health workers to leverage the public health situation, thus positively impacting the health outcomes of the nations. We are proud of having the opportunity to work with countries in the fight against vaccine preventable diseases and in the combat against non-communicable diseases. Our mission remains intact as we continue to engage in research, capacity building, data management, surveillance activities, and more. Our most important asset in contributing to better health of populations in our region is our commitment to collaboration and to building knowledge and skills.

As we continue our efforts to assist countries in strengthening their public health systems, we try to respond to the numerous uncertainties that threaten health security. Unfortunately, the severity of diseases can sometimes interfere with the degree and level of response needed to counteract the effects of such diseases, as is the case of the recent Cholera Outbreak in Yemen. In such instances, collaboration becomes a favorable approach in alleviating the impact of the disease and its suffering. Based on this notion, EMPHNET is currently engaging efforts with the World Health Organization (WHO) to support Yemen in a nationwide program for empowering public health workers with basic field epidemiology knowledge and skills that can increase the effectiveness of response to the Cholera Outbreak in Yemen. We believe that collective actions, resource mobilization and strong country capacities are key when responding rapidly to health threats and outbreaks, such as the severe Cholera Outbreak in Yemen.



FETP News

Egypt

Egypt FETP Cohort 19 Present Results of Surveillance System Evaluations

During the past quarter, FETP residents of cohort 19 conducted an evaluation of the National Egyptian Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS), an evaluation that relied on CDC updated guidelines. At a workshop conducted April 18-19, 2017 in Cairo, the results of this evaluation were presented to the central surveillance leaders at the Ministry of Health and Population (MoPHP). The workshop included open discussions on the system's strengths and weakness(es), and the residents' recommendations for improvement in the light of their findings.



Key surveillance MoPHP officials at the Department of Epidemiology and Surveillance Department and NAMRU-3 experts attended the event.

Iraq

Residents and Graduates Deployed in Health Interventions in the North

In Mosul, a team of the Iraq FETP residents and graduates, along with other departments from the Ministry of Health were deployed to review the health situation in the newly liberated parts of the province and to identify their health needs. The team will assess the health services provided to internally displaced persons in camps.



In cooperation with GHD/EMPHNET, five residents from the Iraq FETP were also deployed to an IDP camp in northern Iraq (Khazer U2 Camp) to investigate a large food poisoning outbreak that affected more than 800 individuals during Ramadan.

Morocco

FETP Conducts Workshops for Quality Improvement

Biosecurity and Biosafety

From March 20 to 24, 2017, a workshop was conducted to provide FETP residents and people working in the area of biorisk management with training focused on preparedness and response activities relevant to chemical, radiations emergencies and threats of infectious diseases. This acquired knowledge is expected to build the participants' capacities in emergency preparedness and response.





Geographic Information System Workshop

In collaboration with the CDC Atlanta and TE-PHINET, the Morocco FETP conducted a training workshop on the Geographic Information System (GIS) between April 17 and 21, 2017. This workshop was designed for FETPs in their second year of training, enabling them to analyze their own data and produce thematic maps. The objective of this workshop was to introduce the basic concepts of GIS and to provide an overview of the QGIS mapping tool, particularly using its features to provide health indicators.



Training for Field Supervisors Workshop

Morocco FETP conducted a training workshop for field supervisors between March 14 and 16, 2017 to provide the supervisors with the necessary skills they need to fully carry out their role as mentors, regardless of the technical content of the deliverables. The workshop also aimed to facilitate the integration of the residents into the internship sites and to improve their supervision during their training period.



Yemen

Y-FETP Responds to the Cholera Epidemic in Yemen

The Y-FETP is working closely with the MoPHP, the WHO, UNICEF, and other partners to respond to the cholera upsurge in Yemen.

First, the Y-FETP residents and graduates were deployed to conduct this assessment of strengths, weaknesses, and to suggest improvements in the Cholera Outbreak Response activities of the “Hot Districts.” Second, Y-FETP was deployed to support “Hot Districts” with high caseload to develop Districts Outbreak Response. Third, the Y-FETP was Appointed in the Cholera Command and Control Team.

The Y-FETP also conducted three cholera outbreak investigations during this quarter which constitutes the first confirmed cases in the second wave of cholera which started on April 27, 2017. Furthermore, three analyses of cholera cases’ admissions to the main hospitals at Amanat al-Semah, Al Hodeida and Tamar governorates were also conducted by the residents.



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EMPHNET Feature

GHD/EMPHNET Gets Involved in the Cholera Outbreak Response in Yemen

The worst worldwide cholera outbreak is currently affecting communities within war-torn Yemen. So far, this health crisis has resulted in more than 1800 deaths and not less than 330,000 suspected cases spread almost throughout the country. While Yemen has been affected by cholera outbreaks before, none have ever been of the present magnitude.



GHD/EMPHNET started contributing to the Yemen cholera outbreak response actions early this year when its country office was still under establishment. An intensive training program targeting surveillance officers at governorates' level has been planned for and processed in April 2017. This program, the Public Health Empowerment Program- Surveillance for Polio Officers (PHEP-SPO), is an activity within the framework of a strategic partnership with the Ministry of Health and Population (MoPHP) in Yemen and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to enable health workers to take informed decisions in interventions against outbreaks and the spread of communicable illnesses.

Also in partnership with the MoPHP and the World Health Organization (WHO), GHD/EMPHNET is involved in training rapid response teams (RRTs) and surveillance officers in 98 high priority districts out of the 309 which reported cholera cases. These teams will be responsible for house-to-house behavioral change activities enabling people to protect themselves from cholera and other water-borne diseases. This training is part of GHD/EMPHNET's development of RRTs not only in Yemen but throughout the region where they are ready for immediate deployment in case of any event with potential public health impact. Considering the tumultuous situation of the region, cholera threatens to spread beyond the borders of individual countries. The outbreak is already affecting Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan. To avoid this impending threat, GHD/EMPHNET is now joining other global and regional partners to develop and implement plans assisting countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region in relevant multi-hazard emergency preparedness and response plans of their own. GHD/EMPHNET will continue to provide the needed support to Yemen and countries across the EMR to ensure an effective, comprehensive management of the cholera crisis.

EMPHNET News

EMPHNET Delegation Meets with WHO EMRO Regional Director in Cairo, Egypt

On June 11, 2017, at the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (WHO EMRO), a delegation from EMPHNET met with the WHO EMRO Regional Director Dr. Mahmoud Fikri and his management team.

Headed by the Executive Director Dr. Mohannad Al-Nsour, the delegation expressed continued interest and commitment to cooperate with WHO EMRO and discussed future cooperation within the framework of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that will define the nature and scope of cooperation in a way that will draw together expertise for leveraging essential health services.



EMPHNET Conducts Training Workshops on ELISA Brucellosis Test at Military Hospital in Jordan



As part of its project to prevent and control brucellosis- a zoonotic disease endemic to Jordan, EMPHNET is enhancing the capacity of health professionals in Mafrq especially in their diagnosis of human and animal brucellosis, an area where only simple tests are used to detect the disease.

Targeting military hospitals in the second phase of the project, EMPHNET conducted two training workshops at the King Talal Military Hospital in Mafrq for clinicians and laboratory technicians on the enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA), an advanced serological test used to detect infection with Brucella.

Another training workshop on data entry for Brucellosis cases using Epi Info was conducted for three laboratory technicians from the hospital. Participants were trained on how to use the mobile version of the software to fill the investigation form for human cases, determine their location, describe the correlation between human cases and whether they are in contact with animals, and analyze data to provide recommendations for controlling the disease.

EMPHNET Presides Jordan Non-Communicable Disease Alliance



The Jordan Non-Communicable Disease Alliance (JNCDA) officially announced that it will begin operations during an official ceremony on April 4, 2017 in Amman, Jordan.

The JNCDA brings together six non-profit and non-governmental organizations in Jordan: EMPHNET, Jordan Health Aid Society, Lina and Green Hands Society, Al Waad Society for Advocacy and Survivorship, the Jordanian CSO Health Alliance, and the Royal Health Awareness Society. Its establishment in Jordan responds to a pressing need, as per the World Health Organization (WHO), 75% of all deaths in Jordan are caused by NCDs with leading risk factors being smoking, alcohol consumption, obesity, and high blood pressure

EMPHNET Together with Ministry of Health and Relief International Observe World Health Day

EMPHNET collaborated with the Jordanian Ministry of Health and Relief International to observe the World Health Day at the Zaatari Camp in Mafraq, Jordan. The event's activities were designed to fit the theme of the day for this year which is depression and the World Health Organization (WHO), year-long campaign "Depression: Let's Talk."

Held earlier in April, the event was attended by over 50 residents of different age groups from the camp.



It started off with a lecture by the Director of the Mental Health Unit at the Jordanian MoH Dr. Fateen Janem, who discussed signs and symptoms of depression and their impact on the quality of life of community members.

In the second portion of the event, EMPHNET's team members engaged the audience in a Q&A session, encouraging them to speak about their experiences with depression, low self-esteem, and their support systems at home and within their broader communities.

Global Health Development News

GHD Supports Capacity Building for Expanded Programs in Immunization (EPI) in Egypt and Iraq



Starting late April and extending throughout May 2017, the Ministry of Health in Iraq conducted a total of nineteen training workshops for 255 routine immunization (RI) staff all coming from the primary health care centers of the Kirkuk and Maysan provinces. Supported by GHD, these workshops trained RI staff on how to develop and update micro-plans for routine immunization for their centers. The purpose of this training was to improve immunization coverage and equity by maximizing the number of children vaccinated within communities of these two provinces, known to be at high risk for vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs).

The workshops' facilitators were provincial-level Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) managers all of whom participated in GHD/EMPHNET's Training of Trainers (ToT) conducted last year as well as the district-level EPI focal points activities. In Kirkuk, the Director of Preventive Affairs also joined in facilitating sessions, while in Maysan the sessions were facilitated by a representative of GHD/EMPHNET. Read more.

Also in an effort to support capacity building efforts in Egypt, throughout May 2017, the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) also conducted six training workshops for peripheral staff from Primary Health Centers of the Aswan, Matrouh, New Valley, North Sinai, Red Sea, and South Sinai governorates. A total of 783 nurses, sanitarians, and administrative staff were trained on skills relevant to the National Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI).

With support from GHD/EMPHNET, these workshops took place in remote governorates known to be at high risk for vaccine preventable diseases. Their aim was to enhance the capacities of frontline immunization health workers in essential routine immunization functions. The need for such training was recognized as a priority through a training needs analysis process implemented during a GHD/EMPHNET workshop where the MoPH delegation identified priority needs to support the ministry's EPI goals.

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GHD Supports Egypt Ministry of Health and Population in Rapid Response Teams Training



Conducted between April 9 and April 13, 2017 in Cairo, the workshop saw participation from 22 public health professionals. Coming from five governorates and central Egypt, these participants included; surveillance officers, doctors, veterinarians, pharmacists, laboratory personnel and other national public health selected technical staff who were nominated based on their current and planned national level involvement in the areas of outbreak detection, investigation and response.

The workshop responds to the need to improve national and sub-national capacities and systems to respond to disease outbreaks, especially because recent public health threats like the Avian influenza have significantly contributed to compromising the health status of some of its communities.

GHD Hosts Partners' Coordination Meeting on Routine Immunization and Measles Elimination



On June 20 and 21, 2017, GHD/EMPHNET, the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (WHO EMRO), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Atlanta co-organized a meeting with major partners involved in Routine Immunization (RI) and Measles Elimination in the Eastern Mediterranean Region; namely GAVI – Vaccine Alliance, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), UNICEF, and UNRWA.

The meeting served to study the challenges confronting RI and measles elimination in the region, especially in conflict-stricken countries. More importantly, the meeting also sought to identify mechanisms for sustainable synergies among key actors with the objective of combining and integrating their efforts for short-term and long-term impact on immunization outcomes.



GHD Participates in Scientific Symposium on Africa CDC's Five-Year Strategic Plan

GHD participated in the Scientific Symposium on the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) Five-Year Strategic Plan. The symposium was held March 24-25, 2017 at the African Union Commission (AUC) headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The goal of the symposium was to officially launch the Africa CDC Five-Year Strategic Plan. The symposium's specific objectives were to consider the methods needed to implement the plan's activities, to agree on those that must be achieved in the short run, and to explore public health partnerships in the continent.



GHD Participates in International Conference on Diabetes for Refugees



With support from the World Diabetes Foundation (WDF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) conducted the conference at the Crowne Plaza Jordan Dead Sea Resort and Spa between April 10-12, 2017.

Its sessions aimed to propose experience-based solutions to help prevent and control NCDs in general, and diabetes in particular, among refugees in the MENA region, among which there is a rising prevalence of NCDs, especially Type 2 Diabetes. GHD's representative took part in one of the conference's working group sessions, *Promotion and Awareness of Healthy Life Style among Refugees with Diabetes*.

EMPHNET Clinic at Zaatari Camp in Jordan

Established in early 2016, the clinic serves the health needs of refugees in the camp. Through it and in coordination with the Jordan Ministry of Health, EMPHNET helped vaccinate infants under the age of two and women of childbearing age (14 - 45) at the camp. Also through this clinic, training has been provided to the camp's health staff in areas of disease prevention, food safety, vaccination, and vaccine management.

