

2024 Highlights

EMPHNET in Afghanistan

A glance at activities and achievements of EMPHNET in 2024

EMPHNET in Afghanistan

Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) which operates in Afghanistan since 2017, achieved milestones to strengthen the health system of Afghanistan during 2024.

During 2024, EMPHNET implemented Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) and Public Health Empowerment Program (PHEP) to improve the capacity of Afghan health workers in addressing current health challenges.

To address the nation's health challenges, EMPHNET in Afghanistan sought opportunities beyond capacity building and worked on long-lasting partnerships.



Afghanistan Field Epidemiology Training Program

In 2024, EMPHNET continued the implementation of fifth intermediate cohort of Afghanistan Field Epidemiology Training Program (AFETP). The program which is housed in Afghanistan National Public Health Institute (ANPHI) was completed during September 2024 after continuing four didactic workshops and completing deliverables.

As part of the program's deliverables, residents of fifth cohort were engaged in outbreak investigations and conducting epidemiological studies addressing critical health challenges in Afghanistan such as returnees health, immunization and vector-borne diseases.



16

participants in fifth intermediate cohort, 10 provinces



4

didactic workshops conducted during 2024



20+

Outbreaks investigated by participants of this cohort



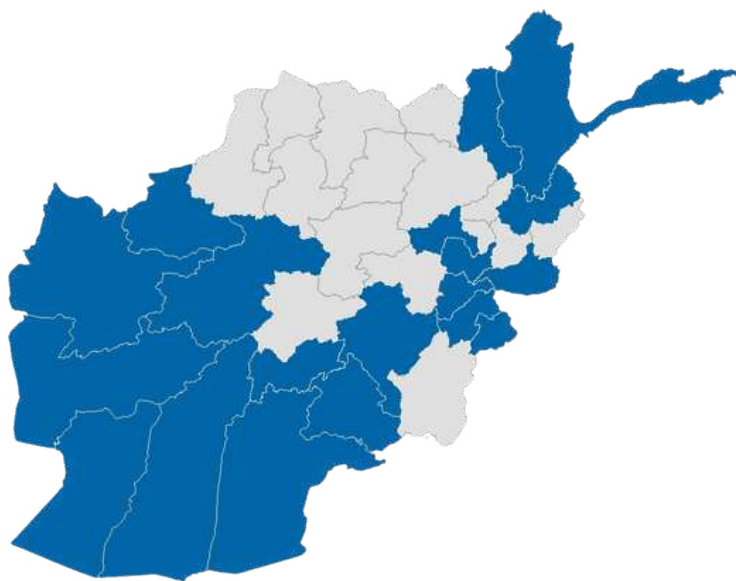
4

epidemiological studies conducted by the participants

Afghanistan Public Health Empowerment Program

In June 2024 the Public Health Empowerment Program for Polio and EPI Officers (PHEP-PEO) first cohort was officially inaugurated in Afghanistan National Public Health Institute (ANPHI). This program which focuses on the capacity building of National Expanded Program on Immunization (NEPI) and National Emergency Operation Center for Polio Eradication (NEOC) of Afghanistan technical staff is an adaption of frontline FETP tailored for this purpose.

The program's first cohort continued during 2024 while residents of PHEP-PEO engaged in field activities as well.



29

participants from 18 provinces of Afghanistan



3

workshops of PHEP-PEO first cohort was completed in 2024



Participants are engaged in field practical assignments and outbreak investigation



Public Health Empowerment Program First Cohort Participants During Field Activities





Strengthening Mentorship: Public Health Empowerment Program

To support the implementation of Public Health Empowerment Program in Afghanistan, EMPHNET conducted mentorship workshop in two phases consisting of theoretical aspects along with practical field visits.

Consequently, mentors are expected to support the participants of the PHEP-PEO program in their field activities as well as completing the deliverables.



17

Mentors received training in two phases to support PHEP-PEO



65%

of the mentors are FETP graduates



Scientific Communications

EMPHNET 8th Regional Conference

FETP Afghanistan participated in EMPHNET 8th Regional Conference held in Amman, Jordan September of 2024.

3
Oral Presentations

1
Poster Presentations



FMIC 14th Scientific Conference

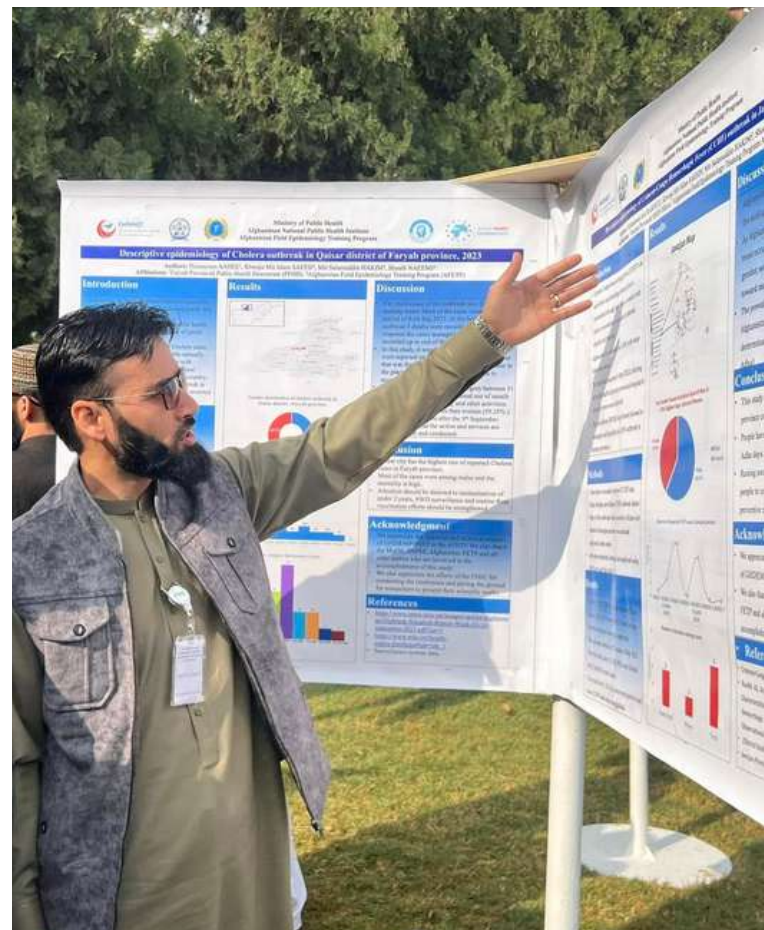
During November of 2024, FETP Afghanistan participated in French Medical Institute for Mothers and Children (FMIC) 14th International Scientific Conference and Quality Convention held in Kabul, Afghanistan.

3
Oral Presentations

7
Poster Presentations



A poster presentation was ranked among top-3 poster presentations of the conference.





Malaria Outbreak in Kandahar

During summer and early fall of 2024, Kandahar province experienced an unprecedented malaria outbreak, unlike previous years. This outbreak, which was unusually widespread in this region, drew significant attention from Afghanistan's scientific and public health community. EMPHNET in Afghanistan in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and other relevant authorities, initiated a case-control investigation into the outbreak.

EMPHNET in Afghanistan in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and other relevant authorities, initiated a case-control investigation into the outbreak. The outbreak, reported in Takhta Pull district of Kandahar province, saw the active participation of the technical advisor for the Afghanistan Field Epidemiology Training Program (AFETP), representing EMPHNET on the ground.

The investigation identified major factors contributing to the outbreak, including recent floods, the absence of proper window screens in homes, low awareness about malaria, and favorable conditions for mosquito breeding due to unprotected water storage. Immediate measures were recommended, including the urgent provision of insecticide-treated bed nets (ITNs) and treatment with chloroquine and primaquine. The report is expected to be shared for further application in future potential outbreaks in similar settings.



Vaccination and Mobile Population in Afghanistan



In February 2024, EMPHNET undertook a qualitative study aimed at examining and documenting migration patterns and access to vaccination services by conducting interviews with national and provincial officers, health workers, and community members.



The primary objective of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of health-seeking behaviors, with a specific focus on preventative vaccination services among migrant Afghan populations. Furthermore, the study sought to identify and analyze the barriers and challenges that impeded access to vaccination services, while also exploring the factors that contributed to variations in vaccination uptake, both low and high, as reported by migrant populations. An additional focus of the study was to assess vaccine knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) among transitory Afghan communities. Ultimately, the study aimed to provide informed recommendations on effective strategies to enhance vaccination coverage within migratory populations.



Methods

Purposive qualitative study in two provinces in the East Region

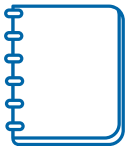
Target Population

Nomad population, those who travel for work community leaders/Imams, community healthworkers, national EPI and PEI staff



Information, Education and Communication

During 2024, EMPHNET provided Information, Education and Communication Materials (IEC) to National Expanded Program on Immunization of Ministry of Public Health of Afghanistan. This initiative aimed to support the Afghanistan's health system in increasing the awareness of community towards immunization importance during campaigns and beyond to promote routine immunization and public health.



Totally, 5,000 notebooks covered with awareness messages regarding immunization and polio virus were provided to be distributed during community engagement activities, health campaigns and school programs. Furthermore, polio awareness posters were also provided by EMPHNET to NEPI of Afghanistan.



EMPHNET installed direction boards to guide parents and guardians to vaccination centers, ensuring smooth operations and improved turnout. Additionally, wall paintings were used as daily reminders to reinforce the importance of polio vaccination, reaching a broad audience, including those with limited access to other information channels.



EMPHNET provided vests to health workers and volunteers, enhancing visibility, professionalism, and community trust during training and field activities. Additionally, hard disks were distributed to NEPI for organizational utilization. Furthermore, file folders and operational plans were printed for NEPI to support its activities in the field.

In 2024, EMPHNET worked on expanding partnerships and collaborations in Afghanistan





Membership of ACBAR

ACBAR, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghans Relief and Development operates in Afghanistan for more than 36 years. This agency is a coordinating body bringing together more than 200 national and international NGOs in Afghanistan working in different areas. EMPHNET Afghanistan Country Office obtained the membership of this coordinating body in November 2024. This membership will help EMPHNET to expand its network with national and international NGOs in Afghanistan along with accessibility to mapping tools and other relevant resources and cooperation and coordination with government related activities, while enhancing the visibility of EMPHNET in the country.



Side Meetings of EMPHNET 8th Regional Conference

During EMPHNET 8th Regional Conference during September 2024, delegates of Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health had side meetings with EMPHNET and representatives of the international organizations and donors. During side meetings, delegates of Afghanistan discussed about the gaps in health system while highlighting the importance of joint efforts. The meetings facilitated by EMPHNET created dialogue to address the critical challenges in health system of Afghanistan with particular focus on immunization and polio eradication while serving as steppingstone of next steps.



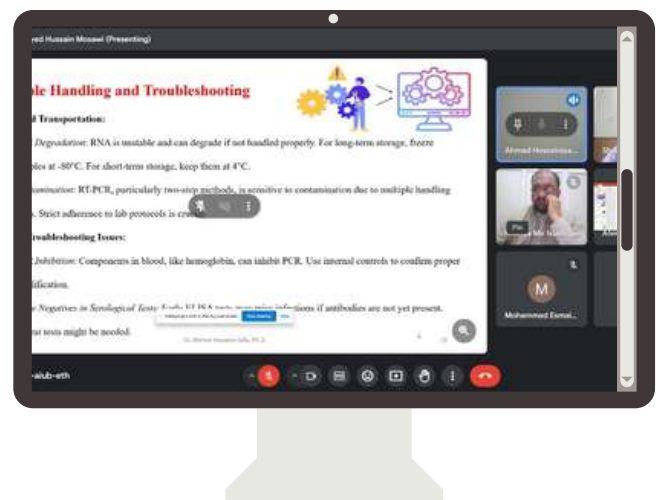
Partnership Meetings

In 2024, EMPHNET Afghanistan Country Office had partnership meetings with national and international NGOs, universities and directorates. During this period, EMPHNET Afghanistan Country Office had meeting with Central Public Health Laboratories, Kabul University, Kabul Medical University and Ghalib University to expand its network along with improving the visibility and utilization of IAPH as learning hub for Afghan fellows. The country office also met with Health Protection and Research Organization (HPRO), a national NGO in Afghanistan to expand EMPHNET's network in clinical and institutional development through mutual collaboration.

EMPHNET AFCO also had meetings with Centre for Humanitarian Studies of University of Geneva, Geneva Water Hub, WHO Afghanistan Office and UNICEF Afghanistan Office. EMPHNET is planning to implement a training program for capacity building in water-borne and vector-borne outbreaks in Afghanistan in partnership with the Centre for Humanitarian Studies, University of Geneva.

Joint Webinars

In 2024, EMPHNET Afghanistan Country Office conducted two joint webinars on Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) and Dengue Fever Virus in collaboration with Afghanistan National Public Health Institute, Kabul Medical University, Ghalib University, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Nanjing Agricultural University and Health Services Academy of Pakistan. These two separate webinars aimed to improve the awareness and broaden the knowledge of public health professionals and researchers of Afghanistan regarding emergence of these vector-borne diseases beyond the country.





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