

# Real-Time Surveillance of Infectious Diseases During 2020 Mass Gathering in Iraq

## Project Information

- ◆ Department: Public Health Programs
- ◆ Unit: Disease Control and Prevention

## OBJECTIVES

This Project aims to support Iraq Ministry of Health to conduct real-time surveillance for infectious disease outbreaks during the Al-Abra'een Mass Gathering.

## BENEFICIARIES

The project's main beneficiaries are health staff from central level and 200 health facilities distributed in 11 governorates on pilgrimage route.

## REGIONS OF WORK

This project will be implemented during the Al-Abra'een Mass Gathering in 11 governorates in which a key pilgrimage route runs in Iraq. These governorates are Baghdad, Karbala, Al-Najaf, Babel, Wasit, Diwaniya (Al-Qadisiyah), ThiQar, Maysan, Al-Muthanna, and Diyala.

## PROJECT PHASES

This project involves three phases as follows:

Phase I – Preparations: Meetings with MOH investigation team, key stakeholder meeting, update and refine surveillance tool and software.

Phase II – Implementation: Train-the-Trainers workshop, data system launch, roll out training to health facilities, data collection.

Phase III – Data Management and Documentation: Data cleaning and data analysis, report development, disseminate key findings with stakeholders.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Since 2014, GHD|EMPHNET has been supporting the Ministry of Health (MOH) to establish and expand a syndromic surveillance system during Arba'een pilgrimage. The support focus on building the capacity of health workers to manage and respond to major infectious disease outbreaks during Al-Abra'een mass gathering event that can lead to pandemics and cause a serious strain on resources. This includes ministerial and stakeholders meeting to review and update the surveillance and data collection tools, customize and update the mobile data collection software including COVID-19 related data. Conduct Training for Trainers for MOH health staff and support rolling out trainings to the health facilities staff. As well as provide required IT equipment and support to data collectors during the event to implement real time surveillance and migrate data to MOH server. This is followed by surveillance data analysis and generating report within the framework of the public health approach for technical briefing meeting with stakeholders and generating recommendations for future events.

<b>Project Start and End Date</b>	<b>April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 – March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021</b>
<b>Partner Organizations</b>	<b>Ministry of Health, Iraq</b>
<b>Funded by</b>	<b>U.S. Department of State (DOS) Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, Office of Cooperative Threat Reduction's (ISN/CTR) Global Threat Reduction Programs, including the Biosecurity Engagement Program (BEP)</b>



## Currently...

Disease outbreaks are key concern during *Mass Gatherings* with enormous sizes of population that take place within a relatively limited space and time. Such events can pose a serious challenge to global public health namely due to the risk of diseases spread during & after mass gatherings due to crowd density & population movement.

In addition, it poses overwhelming constrains on the national infrastructure and resources. To fill this gap, advances must be made in several interdivisional domains such as mass gathering medicine, epidemiology, and biosecurity.

## What's next...

This support shall continue to improve the preparedness and response to potential disease outbreaks of concern in an expedient way thereby enhancing response and disease control. The information gained serves as a foundation for more efficient syndromic surveillance events. Further it enhances the use of data for making informed decisions that support a better planning, risk mitigation, prevention, and response. Ultimately, this will support the MOH in planning how health facilities can better serve the needs of pilgrims traveling and use the gained experience, successes and lessons learned to efficiently plan for similar mass gathering surveillance events.

# ABOUT IRAQ AL- ABRA'EEN EVENT

The Arba'een pilgrimage in Iraq is now the largest annual gathering in one place worldwide. Over 20 million Shia pilgrims from inside Iraq and other countries walk over 80 kilometers to the Holy Shrine of Imam Hussain on the 20th day of Safar, a lunar month in the Islamic Calendar. The Arba'een pilgrimage takes place approximately 11 days earlier each year.

## By the Numbers

141

Total health facilities

11

Governorates were monitored all over Iraq

285

Data collectors trained to conducted Real-Time Surveillance in Iraq

18

Total of the days data collectors carried out surveillance during the Mass gathering

+330,000

Patients were seen by medical staff and data collectors

### GHD and EMPHNET: Working together for better health

Global Health Development (GHD) is a regional initiative created to support countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region strengthen their health systems in response to public health challenges and threats. GHD was initiated to advance the work of the Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) by building coordination mechanisms with Ministries of Health, International Organizations, and other institutions to improve population health outcomes. As an implementing arm to EMPHNET, GHD aligns its strategies with national policies and directions, while serving as a collaborative platform dedicated to support national efforts in promoting public health policies, strategic planning, sustainable financing, resource mobilization, public health programs, and other related services.

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