

DPHSWD in South Caucasus



Accomplishments in South Caucasus

- SC-FELTP residents investigated 12 outbreaks in Georgia in 2011.
- SC-FELTP residents supported LSDB's development of Standard Operating Procedures for surveillance and laboratory diagnosis of select agent pathogens.
- SMDP and LSDB used project management to mentor laboratory managers from human health and veterinary health sectors to implement QMS training in their agencies.
- SC-FELTP residents investigated outbreaks of Shiga Toxin producing E. Coli (STEC) in Georgia and led to active surveillance for STEC in 2011.
- The first class of 11 SC-FELTP residents graduated in June 2011; one graduate is leading laboratory QMS program in Azerbaijan Food Safety Agency; another graduate is leading QMS efforts in Georgia Food Safety Agency.
- SC-FELTP veterinary residents helped design, train field staff, and conduct the first scientific survey of brucellosis in cattle, sheep, and goats in Georgia.
- SC-FELTP assisted other USG partners to develop a Russian-English Epi Glossary.
- SMDP helped develop curriculum and train SC-FELTP residents in project management and leadership.

Overview and Goals

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), through its Division of Public Health Systems and Workforce Development (DPHSWD), has been working closely with the Ministries of Health and Ministries of Agriculture in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan to build public health workforce capacity and strengthen public health systems and institutions needed to effectively respond to health problems in Georgia and the other South Caucasus countries. To improve capacity for effective and timely response, DPHSWD provides technical assistance and training in areas such as applied epidemiology and laboratory management, and helps support standardized disease surveillance systems.

Program Description

Building Workforce Capacity

DPHSWD is taking a comprehensive approach to developing the public health workforce and strengthening laboratory and informatics capacity in the South Caucasus region (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan). In 2009, CDC established the South Caucasus Field Epidemiology Laboratory Training Program (SC-FELTP), which is hosted by the Georgia National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) based in Tbilisi, Georgia. The program trains and mentors epidemiologists, veterinarians, and laboratory managers from the countries' Ministries of Health and Ministries of Agriculture. This 2-year competency-based program builds workforce capacity in human and veterinary field epidemiology, as well as in laboratory management and leadership skills for laboratory managers and scientists.

DPHSWD SC-FELTP and Sustainable Management Development Program (SMDP) are collaborating with CDC's Laboratory Systems Development Branch (LSDB) to conduct continuous training in project management and in developing a laboratory Quality Management Systems (QMS) program in Georgia and the region. This effort complements the large increase in laboratory infrastructure developed by Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) over the last five years. CDC also conducts workshops to encourage discussions on bridging animal and human laboratory systems and fostering further collaboration. In this way, CDC is helping to establish a sustainable, in-country program to strengthen the public health surveillance and laboratory workforce.

Strengthening Public Health Systems

DPHSWD, through its Global Public Health Informatics Program (GPHIP) and SC-FELTP is evaluating disease surveillance. These evaluations also review the DTRA-supported Electronic Integrated Disease Surveillance System (EIDSS), a disease surveillance tool. GPHIP is also helping to develop the requirements to guide future modifications to EIDSS.

GPHIP has also worked with partners to develop and train on the analytic report functions of EIDSS. As of August 2011, about 300 sites in Azerbaijan and Georgia are using EIDSS.

In Armenia, DPHSWD experts from SMDP in collaboration with LSDB have conducted an initial lab system situational analysis that resulted in a draft work plan for each key Armenian agency that is part of the laboratory system. Gaps were identified as well as potential interventions and monitoring and evaluation measures.



South Caucasus FELTP resident interviews resident during E. coli outbreak in a village in the Republic of Georgia, 2009.



South Caucasus FELTP resident conducts initial lab system situational analysis at the laboratory of Georgia National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC), 2011.



Car accident due to speeding in Tbilisi, Georgia, 2011.

Strengthening Public Health Infrastructure and Institutions

DPHSWD's strategy for strengthening surveillance and laboratory management includes providing the skills necessary for leaders and managers to better coordinate their activities and manage their countries' biosurveillance and response systems. Since 2008, DPHSWD and LSDB have been training managers within the Georgia NCDC on lab QMS and project management. The unified approach to laboratory management capacity building for South Caucasus includes.

- Strengthening management capacity through needs-assessments and skill-building workshops
- Establishing projects facilitated by graduates of the Management for International Public Health course offered by SMDP
- Developing a comprehensive laboratory quality assurance program and national testing strategy

Future Plans

The Pakistan FELTP plans to:

- Establish injury surveillance for motor vehicle accidents
- Evaluate laboratory system strengthening activities
- Strengthen regional outbreak response capacity and public health surveillance
- Provide regional training of trainers for institutions in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan
- Annually enroll up to 18 epidemiologists and laboratory managers from the region in the SC-FELTP
- Develop a CDC Global Disease Detection Regional Center in collaboration with the Georgia Ministry of Labor Health and Social Affairs, hosted at the Georgia NCDC.

Key Partners

- Georgia Ministry of Labor, Health, and Social Affairs
- Georgia Ministry of Agriculture (Food Safety Agency; Laboratory of Ministry of Agriculture)
- Georgia National Center for Disease Control
- Armenia Ministry of Health
- Armenia Ministry of Agriculture
- Azerbaijan Ministry Health
- Azerbaijan Ministry of Agriculture
- US Department of Defense's Defense Threat Reduction Agency
- US Department of State's Biosecurity Engagement Program
- HHS/Office of Global Health Affairs

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