

DPHSWD in Iraq



Accomplishments in Iraq

- Established, with the Iraqi MOH, the Iraqi FETP which currently has 22 residents.
- Established, with the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), a high diploma certificate degree for the two-year FETP.
- In 2011, Iraqi FETP residents were essential in responding to serious outbreaks of measles, hepatitis A, B, and E, cutaneous Leishmaniasis, and Crimean–Congo hemorrhagic fever.
- FETP residents shared vital lessons learned about disease detection and response by presenting over 15 abstracts at regional and international conferences.
- Improved MOH capacity by participating in and coordinating workshops on mass-gatherings, emergency medicine, food and waterborne safety, research methods in mental health and injury surveillance.

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 in Iraq since 2009 to reduce the burden of major public health problems by building capacity and strengthening public health systems. DPHSWD supports the Iraqi Ministry of Health (MoH) in training public health officers through the Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP). Areas of focus include disease surveillance, outbreak response, and program evaluation through training programs in applied epidemiology. This collaboration includes a two-year Iraq FETP, associated short-courses for officers at the national and sub-national level, and supporting outbreak response and investigations throughout the country.

Program Description

Building Workforce Capacity

The Iraq FETP currently supports 22 residents. These residents and other Ministry of Health Officials have participated in specialized trainings to improve the capacity of Iraqi medical personnel to respond to emergencies, better understand the situation of water and foodborne diseases in the country, support mental health well-being, and ensure safety during mass-gatherings.

Strengthening Public Health Systems

Through the FETP, DPHSWD is engaged in long-term projects that will improve surveillance systems within the country. For example, residents are developing a bacterial culture-based sentinel surveillance system for typhoid fever, improving the prevention, detection and control of viral hepatitis cases through an enhanced surveillance system, and improving maternal health by examining new tools for monitoring and tracking maternal mortality.

Strengthening Public Health Infrastructure and Institutions

The Iraq FETP and DPHSWD support the Iraq Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) in granting a high diploma certificate degree to graduates of the FETP. This year the first FETP cohort will move to sites in the provinces to conduct their fieldwork which will increase sub-national epidemiology capacity. In addition, FETP residents will be connected to specific CDC subject matter experts that can mentor and assist with specialized projects.



Dr. Faris Lami, Iraq FETP resident advisor, reviewing protocol with FETP residents in the field, Iraq, 2011.



Iraq FETP resident taking a blood sample for hepatitis B testing during an outbreak investigation in Salahaldin Province, Iraq, 2011.



Iraq FETP residents crossing difficult terrain to conduct field work in Iraq provinces, Iraq, 2011.

Future Plans

In 2012, the Iraqi FETP will graduate eleven epidemiologists and select a third cohort. The graduates will become FETP mentors for the new residents, a process that supports sustainability of the program.

The program aims to have rapid response teams of three field epidemiologists in each of Iraq's 18 provinces within 10 years in addition to supporting 50 individuals at the national level. This translates to a total of over 100 epidemiologists trained in the next ten years. This will support MOH's reconstruction efforts and increase their ability to respond to new and emerging health concerns throughout Iraq.

In reaching this goal, DPHSWD will continue to provide support for the Iraqi FETP cohorts by:

- Providing additional workshops that will address gaps or supplement the University-provided classroom sessions
- Refining strategies for public health systems strengthening and workforce development in Iraq
- Developing activities at the sub-national level to improve the quality of disease detection, reporting, and response at all levels

In partnership with MoH and WHO/EMRO, CDC will also support a zoonotic stakeholder workshop to assist in the development of an Iraqi strategic plan to address health concerns at the animal-human interface. Following the stakeholder conference, implementation workshops on Crimean–Congo hemorrhagic fever, visceral Leishmaniasis and brucellosis will be held to implement disease specific recommendations to prevent disease.

As the capacity of the program continues to strengthen, I-FETP will continue to improve the quality and increase the quantity of scientific communications in Iraq, thus more effectively translating science into action that improves the health of the Iraqi people.

Key Partners

- Iraq Ministry of Health (MOH) Directorate of Public Health
- Iraq Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE)
- World Health Organization (WHO)

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