

Pakistan FELTP



Background and Goals

In 2006, the Pakistan Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Program (FELTP) was started in Islamabad.

The program works within the context of the National Strategic Framework on Disease Surveillance (2005–2015) developed by the Pakistan Ministry of Health (MOH). Its goals are to strengthen the public health system and to improve capacity in applied epidemiology, public health surveillance and response, and public health laboratories.

Funding and Partnerships

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission in Pakistan has funded the FELTP for the initial 3 years. Now the program is funded by

- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- USAID (Washington and Pakistan)
- U.S. Department of State
- Pakistan Ministry of Health
- Provincial Departments of Health (DOHs)

Program Components

The Pakistan FELTP has several components.

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The 2-year, full-time training and service program involves 25% classroom instruction and 75% field assignments.

While in class, fellows take courses in epidemiology, communications, economics, and management. In the field, they conduct epidemiologic investigations and field surveys, evaluate surveillance systems, perform disease control and prevention measures, report their findings to decision-makers and policy-makers, and train other health workers.

As the program is accredited by the University of Health Sciences, Lahore, fellows may receive a Master of Science in Field Epidemiology—the first of its kind in Pakistan—by fulfilling few additional requirements of the University. In addition, the FELTP has now a new partnership with University of Washington, USA, for certificate courses in public health.

Viral Hepatitis Surveillance

Viral hepatitis is a priority under the Prime Minister's National Plan for Prevention and Control of Hepatitis. In support of this plan, case and risk factor based surveillance for acute hepatitis is operational in five sentinel sites.

Legal Framework for Surveillance

A draft legal framework for disease surveillance has been handed over to MOH after input from provincial DOHs, CDC, WHO, and other stakeholders. This document would assist the government to discharge its responsibilities under revised International Health Regulations 2005.

Laboratory Quality Systems

Through a cooperative agreement with Pakistan's National Institute of Health a National Reference Laboratory is being networked with four provincial laboratories as a pilot project to support laboratory quality and standards. Numerous trainings have been arranged for laboratory staff on Quality assurance and bio-safety issues.

Influenza Surveillance

Due to security situation in the region where most poultry farms are located, the FELTP has started its initial work by conducting two knowledge, attitude, and practice studies: one covering poultry handlers and one covering high-risk health staff in the Khyber Pakhtoon Kwah province.

Informatics

CDC is developing an electronic disease surveillance system at five pilot sites, building on the hepatitis and influenza activities. This informatics system will be expanded to influenza and can be expanded to other diseases and deployed throughout the country if required.

Program Achievements

FELTP residents have been placed in their field assignments at the national and sub-national levels. Examples of their work include the following:

- First human Avian influenza outbreak in Khyber Pakhtoon Kwah province,
- HIV/AIDS outbreak in Punjab,
- Polio vaccine coverage in District Lahore,
- Prevalence of diarrhea in children under 5 years of age in Murree,
- Thirty surveillance system evaluations,
- National surveillance of viral hepatitis,
- Surveillance of bacterial meningitis in Islamabad, and
- Measles surveillance in District Attock, North West Frontier Province.



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