

2017

Joint Working Group meeting of pandemic influenza preparedness focal points in Cairo

A joint Working Group meeting of the WHO Country Office pandemic influenza preparedness (PIP) focal points was held at the Regional Office, Cairo, Egypt from 21 to 22 May 2017. The meeting was organized in order to support timely implementation of the PIP countries' activities funded by the Partnership Contribution (PC) for 2017, and also to brief the WHO Country Office PIP focal points on the new cycle of funds and priority activities for 2018.

Pandemic influenza preparedness work plan 2017

The PIP activity work plans for 2017 for the Regional Office and the PIP priority countries, Afghanistan, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Yemen, were developed and finalized. All PIP priority countries in the Region have developed national pandemic preparedness plans.

Training on influenza disease burden in Morocco

Training on influenza disease burden, facilitated by the Regional Office, was conducted in Rabat, Morocco, from 3 to 7 April 2017. It was aimed at building up national capacities to calculate the burden of disease and estimate the different thresholds, and to provide needed information for decision-makers for better planning and pandemic preparedness.

Capacity-building on pandemic influenza preparedness

The Regional Office lent support to finalize the estimation of the infectious disease burden for severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) and influenza-like illness (ILI) surveillance data in 2017.

2016

EMFLU platform

With financial support under the PC plan 2013–2016 of the PIP framework, the Infectious Hazard Management Unit launched the Eastern Mediterranean Flu (EMFLU) Network in May 2016. EMFLU is a regional online platform designed for the submission and management of influenza epidemiological and virological surveillance data from the countries. It complements and is interlinked with the global platforms FluNet and FluID. The regional platform has been steadily embraced by countries in the Region as a data submission platform: up to the end of December 2016, 9 countries had already started uploading SARI data to it.

Expert group and country focal points meeting on PIP PC Beirut, Lebanon

During November 2016, an expert group meeting on PIP planning in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and a meeting of country focal points for the implementation of the PIP PC plan were held in Beirut, Lebanon, for 3 consecutive days from 20 to 22 November.

WHO review mission

In 2016, WHO conducted several assessment missions to 4 out of 6 PIP countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The first mission was to Afghanistan in May 2016, the second was to Egypt in June 2016, then the PIP team from the Regional Office visited Jordan in April 2016, and finally a mission to Morocco was conducted in March 2016.

The main objective of the field missions was to review the implementation of PIP support provided to these countries under the PIP PC implementation plan. In addition, the missions aimed to review influenza surveillance activities (SARI/ILI) to discuss the sustainability of influenza surveillance and pandemic preparedness and to provide recommendations for improvement in PIP implementation, influenza surveillance and pandemic preparedness. The missions also aimed to support sharing the experience through the participation of staff from other ministries of health.

2015

Sentinel sites increased

Fifteen new sentinel sites have been established, 13 have been revived, and after PIP implementation, 48 functional sites had been established in the Eastern Mediterranean Region up to 2016.

Joint mission for national preparedness enhancement in Jordan (Amman, Jordan)

A joint mission visited Amman, Jordan, in March 2015 to support the Ministry of Health to enhance its national preparedness level against threats posed by influenza and other respiratory pathogens. The mission comprised experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), US NAMRU-3, Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) and WHO.

Group work on research and policy gaps in influenza and respiratory

diseases with pandemic potential (Cairo, Egypt)

A group work meeting with experts on research and policy gaps in influenza and respiratory diseases with pandemic potential was organized at the WHO Regional Office in Cairo on 13–14 May 2015. Experts from the Regional Office and member countries, including Egypt, Jordan and Pakistan, as well as renowned academics from the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) participated in this meeting and deliberated on various areas during the group work.

Group work on PIP implementation with country focal points (Cairo, Egypt)

Group work on the implementation of the PIP PC plan with country focal points was conducted on 10–11 June 2015 at the Regional Office in Cairo. Participants included WHO regional staff, temporary advisors from 6 PIP support beneficiary countries in the Region (Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco), WHO HQ staff and representatives from partner organizations.

Group work on finalizing SARI/ILI sentinel surveillance assessment tools (Cairo, Egypt)

A group of experts and WHO staff, comprising epidemiologists and virologists involved in influenza surveillance, met in the Regional Office in Cairo on 17–18 August 2015 to review a draft package of tools on assessment of sentinel surveillance for influenza at country level.

Influenza research in the Region highlighted at the Ninth International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases (Atlanta, United States of America)

Influenza and respiratory disease research from the Region was prominently featured, with a specific panel session on emerging infectious diseases and 3 respected leaders in infectious diseases from the Region, at the 9th International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases, held in Atlanta, USA, on 24–26 August 2015. The conference was attended by global infectious disease experts.

Training on data analysis, scientific writing and publishing (Amman, Jordan)

A course on data analysis, scientific writing and publishing was held in Amman, Jordan on 4–6 October 2015. The course was attended by epidemiologists, virologists and concerned WHO

country office staff from Afghanistan, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Yemen. Training material was designed and delivered by experts from Columbia University, Johns Hopkins University, St Jude Children's Hospital and Research Centre and Sultan Qaboos University.

Training workshop on laboratory specimen collection, transportation and shipment (Cairo, Egypt)

A training certification course on laboratory specimen collection, transportation, shipment of influenza and other pandemic-prone respiratory viruses in accordance with International Air Transport Association (IATA) regulations was organized for PIP priority countries in the Region, Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Yemen. The course was held at the WHO Regional Office in Cairo on 12–14 October 2015 and was also attended by Regional Office staff and partner organizations (US NAMRU-3, Aga Khan University, VACSERA Egypt and Pasteur Institute in Morocco).

Training course on advanced epidemiological data analysis under PIP framework (Dubai, United Arab Emirates)

A cohort of epidemiologists working with ministries of health, WHO country office staff and selected fellows from the Field Epidemiology Training Program of the CDC in countries of the Region were trained on advanced epidemiological data analysis approaches in Dubai on 23–26 November 2015. The training was a collaborative venture between WHO and Aga Khan University in Pakistan.

Training on genotype sequencing for influenza virus under PIP (Muscat, Oman)

A laboratory training workshop on influenza virus genotyping by Sanger sequencing was conducted in Muscat, Oman, on 6–10 December 2015. Participants from central public health laboratories in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman and Tunisia as well as WHO regional staff and staff from WHO collaborating centres in London, UK, attended.

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