



WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region is building a cadre of leaders to strengthen its response to the unprecedented scale of health emergencies facing the Region today.

The Region hosted a 5-day workshop at the Dead Sea, Jordan, for 25 response experts who are enrolled in a year-long learning programme focused on leadership in health emergencies. The competency-based programme is part of WHO's new learning approach to create a workforce of excellence to help protect 1 billion people from emergencies by 2023.

Moving beyond the technical aspects of working in health emergencies, the workshop focused on bolstering critical skills such as emotional intelligence, negotiation and communication that will help participants manage the complexity of responding to a fast-changing crisis. It was organized under the leadership of Dr Alaa AbouZeid, acting Emergency Operations Manager and Team Lead of Operational Partnerships for the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (WHE) in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, supported by the [WHE Learning and Capacity Development Unit](#) from Geneva headquarters.

“We have finished a very successful training on leadership in health emergencies. The training was directed to the emergency managers that can lead the emergency response in the Region,” said AbouZeid. “The responses and the feedback we got from the participants were overwhelming. They are very happy with the training. Many of them indicated that this is the most successful training they have ever attended in their lives.”

The workshop utilized a mix of self-reflection activities, lectures, practical examples, role-play and table-top exercises to deconstruct key leadership theories and techniques. It concluded with an intense 40-hour simulation exercise that allowed participants to practice their new skills and receive personalized feedback on their behaviour through competency-based assessment.

“Honestly speaking, through this course I feel that I gained a lot of skills, so maybe I will be a good leader,” said Hala Shibon, a WHO participant based in Khartoum, Sudan.

Of the 25 participants, 21 were WHO staff working in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and 2 came from the Ministry of Health of Sudan. In addition, the WHO Regional Office made 2 slots available to participants nominated by the Organization’s African Region to enhance the mutual learning experience.

“Knowing in emergencies the pace at which things happen, this was a really good idea to just pause, learn really what’s required to lead teams, get help to people who require it and make sure that as an organization we have the capacity to really improve the health of people,” said Ifeanyi Okudo, a WHO participant based in Abuja, Nigeria. “I learned a lot about myself first and how to lead a team, team dynamics, and especially the kind of leadership that gets things done but also considers the members of that team as an integral part of getting the job done.”

In addition, 6 WHO staff participated in a parallel operations support track training that joined the leadership cohort for several joint sessions and the simulation exercise. The operations track was co-led by Hanane Chreki from WHO’s Regional Office, and Paul Molinaro and Georgia Galazoula from the Organization’s headquarters. The collaboration between headquarters and regional teams shows WHO’s strong commitment to fostering joint learning between the different operational areas that is essential for effective emergency response, including leadership, logistics, administration, finance and planning.

Participants also had the opportunity to learn more about the business continuity plan (BCP) through a session presented by Lead Emergency ICT Support in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (BCP Focal Point), in collaboration with Regional Field Security Officer (RFSO) which provided some key tools and practical experiences from the field on business continuity as well as some BCP applications during the simulation exercise.

The workshop marked the end of the second phase of the 12-month leadership learning programme. Before traveling to Jordan, participants completed an intermediate-level online course on the [WHO Incident Management System](#), a Myers-Briggs personality assessment, pre-course readings, a written assignment and an introductory live briefing. The final phase of the programme will include additional learning opportunities, including online briefings, coaching and practice deployments.

This is the second cohort of WHO emergency staff to embark on the leadership programme. The first cohort of 20 experts met in Dakar, Senegal, for a pilot workshop hosted by the African Region and will conclude the course in January 2020.

The programme is made possible with financial support from the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

Sunday 24th of August 2025 10:23:13 AM