



18 December 2023 – King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center, KASOTC Jordan has hosted a pioneering training initiative that aims to reinforce the interdisciplinary humanitarian response capacities in the Middle East and Africa.

Through a collaboration between WHO and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Jordan hosted the first Interdisciplinary Humanitarian Response Simulation Exercise (IHRSE) outside the United States of America.

IHRSE is offered each year to professionals from around the world at Harvard Humanitarian Initiative in Boston, USA. But this year's exercise took place instead at the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center in Amman, Jordan, on 3–12 December 2023.

The IHRSE programme seeks to equip future emergency leaders from the Middle East and Africa with the skills needed to prepare for and respond effectively to complex humanitarian crises.



“We are very pleased that the Government of Jordan supported this exercise at a critical time when health is severely affected by emerging crises. Building a network of highly skilled professionals to respond is paramount as we must increasingly tackle such emergencies,” said Dr Samar Al-Mutawakel, WHO Regional Emergency Health Workforce Focal point/Lead.

“Effective and rapid response to emergencies requires strong preparedness. Jordan will spare no efforts to support this programme given current challenges facing our country,” emphasized Eng. Bilal Shtaiyat, Jordan Center for Disease Control.

“Countries across the Africa and Middle East regions remain the most vulnerable to ongoing and new emergencies,” noted Dr Sean Kivlehan and Dr Michelle Niescierenko, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative. “We are proud to support the skills and expertise of the humanitarian responders in these regions.”

The IHRSE programme is a mix of expertise and collaboration. The exercise trained 65 humanitarian responders and future leaders from 52 countries across the Africa and Middle East regions –representing the WHO Africa and WHO Eastern Mediterranean regions – and from international and local nongovernmental organizations.



The programme also involved 21 professionals from Jordan’s Ministry of Health, Jordan Center

for Disease Control, the National Center for Security and Crises Management and the Ministry of Interior. More than 100 eager volunteers also supported the field simulation exercise. This large group included undergraduate medical students from 3 Jordanian medical universities and institutes.

Despite the evolving situation, WHO invited humanitarian colleagues in the occupied Palestinian territory to join the IHRSE event. Five Palestinian Red Crescent Society personnel who operate in the West Bank took part.

The event's 35 speakers and facilitators came from more than 20 countries to share their expertise and experience with participants.

The IHRSE programme blends theory and practice. Through presentations and hands-on tabletop exercises offered by faculty and guest lecturers, participants get to apply the main frameworks used in the humanitarian field ( human rights, international humanitarian law, livelihoods and Sphere standards).

Participants focused on practical issues in the field, operational approaches, and humanitarian negotiations in complex humanitarian emergencies. A 3-day field simulation exercise let participants apply the knowledge gained in the classroom learning in a complex disaster and conflict scenario.

“Amid the increasing crises and emergencies driven by conflict and the climate emergency in these regions, the event is much more than a training exercise alone. It is a vital step towards building a robust global network of skilled humanitarian professionals who are ready to respond,” emphasized Dr Al-Mutawakel.

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