

Cairo, 12 January 2023 – The spread of the mpox (monkeypox) outbreak has been limited in the Eastern Mediterranean Region with 10 countries reporting 80 laboratory-confirmed cases and one associated death, mostly correlated with a travel history to areas where the outbreak is steadily circulating.

From the very inception of the mpox outbreak in the Region, the World Health Organization (WHO) has responded to effectively enhance country preparedness and response to the newly emerging outbreak.

[With the declaration of the first case in the Region](#) in May 2022, WHO established a regional technical working group as part of the Multi-Disease Outbreak Incident Management Support Team to coordinate the regional and country response to the mpox outbreak. The working group, comprising WHO technical experts, has the mandate of closely monitoring the situation, synchronizing the overall regional support and providing any country-specific assistance, including planning and capacity-building activities.

Support extended by the technical working group to all Member States is marked by relentless coordination with ministries of health, academic institutions and technical and financial partners to enhance surveillance, field investigation, laboratory diagnosis, case management, infection prevention and control, and risk communication and community engagement.

These all inclusive exertions develop as the technical working group has produced the first regional-specific technical guidance on managing mpox outbreaks, taking into careful consideration the regional context.

“A limited number of mpox cases have been officially reported in our Region yet investing in epidemic readiness and preparedness has been a key driver in our mpox response while supporting in parallel the response in countries with confirmed cases,” says Dr Ahmed Al Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

Timely technical and logistical support has been made accessible. WHO has delivered much needed laboratory supplies, such as testing kits and reagents, and supported building the

capacity of several national laboratories to enhance early detection and diagnosis of the disease. In countries where laboratory capacity has been inadequate, WHO has supported the transportation of samples to reference laboratories for testing and sequencing.

Given the nature of the disease as newly emerging in the Region, the need to sensitize policy-makers, health care providers and communities has been pressing. WHO has conducted several capacity-building training sessions and disseminated information and communication materials on preventive and protective measures.

The WHO Regional Office also collaborated with the Gulf Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in supporting a 2-day risk assessment workshop with the objective of aiming for a better understanding of underlying risk factors for mpox transmission, recommending cost-effective and context-specific control measures and reducing excess morbidity.

“Emerging health threats are a fact of nature and will inevitably increase in the light of the compounded crises the world is experiencing, placing anyone at risk, but it is still within our hands to reduce the risk,” adds Dr Al Mandhari. “We need, now more than at any time before, a much more robust approach to research and development of countermeasures against pathogens with epidemic and pandemic potential, let’s all pledge to achieve that.”

Mpox is an illness caused by the mpox virus. It is a zoonotic viral infection that can spread from animals to humans. It can also spread from person to person through contact with body fluids, lesions on the skin or in the mouth or throat, respiratory droplets and contaminated objects.

It causes a range of signs and symptoms ranging from mild to severe. The most common symptoms include fever, headache, muscle aches, back pain, low energy, and swollen lymph nodes, followed or accompanied by the development of a rash that may last for 2 to 3 weeks. People at higher risk include pregnant women, children and immunocompromised persons who may develop serious illnesses and need care in a health facility.

Vaccines and treatments to prevent and control mpox outbreaks are not available anywhere. Therefore, partnership and collaboration with academic/research institutes and pharmaceutical companies inside and outside the Region, while scaling up and decentralizing diagnostic capacity, is critical.

Related links

[Read more about the regional response](#)

[Mpox \(monkeypox\) outbreak 2022 - Global](#)

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