

Yemen is a lower-middle income country in western Asia with a gross national income (GNI) of US\$ 1.330 (2013)¹. The population size is about 24.41 million (2013)¹. The Human Development Index is 160 out of 186 countries (2012)². Yemen has four seasons but it is likely that influenza virus is being circulated year round. Thus, there is great probability of getting different patterns of circulating influenza virus throughout the year.

There was successful collaboration between the Ministry of Public Health in Yemen and other sectors during the avian and pandemic influenza outbreak. An emergency preparedness and response plan was developed during the pandemic influenza outbreak in the country with the support of WHO. In 2013 more than 250 cases of influenza and 10 deaths were reported. The Surveillance Department, Ministry of Public Health, proposed to include influenza in the Joint Programme Review and Planning Mission.

The Central Public Health Laboratory is not yet recognized as a national influenza centre. Facilities to carry out polymerase chain reaction and serology are available and are functional. Virus isolation is available too but is not currently functioning; sequencing is not available.

Strengths

Strong political commitment has been shown by Yemen in recent years to strengthen the influenza and serious acute respiratory infection surveillance system and designate its Central Public Health Laboratory as a national influenza centre.

Partnership Contribution funds can be used by the country to improve the laboratory and surveillance capacities for serious acute respiratory infection and influenza-like illness and designate its Central Public Health Laboratory as a functioning national influenza centre that can detect and isolate circulating influenza and other respiratory viruses.

Gaps and recommendations

Yemen established a surveillance system for serious acute respiratory infections in 2010, however, its functioning has not been optimal. National emergency preparedness and response plans developed during the avian influenza, the pandemic influenza and the rift valley fever outbreaks should be expanded to cover other events in line with the requirements of the International Health Regulations (2005).

Reagents and supplies for laboratory testing for influenza at the Central Public Health Laboratory are lacking. The main reason for not having virus isolation activity and national influenza centre recognition in Yemen is the fact that no specimen collection for influenza-like illness is carried out.

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