A WHO expert explains the R programming language tool during the training. Photo credit: WHO/Health Emergency Information and Risk Assessment Unit25 December 2023, Cairo, Egypt – Data management skills can help experts to better handle health emergency data and respond to public health challenges. To strengthen data management in health emergency response, WHO conducted the Regional Training on Capacity Development of Data Analytics and Dissemination, using R software, in Amman, Jordan, on 3–7 December 2023.

The training was attended by epidemiologists and surveillance officers from the Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network, ministries of health from Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and WHO country offices in Afghanistan, Egypt and Jordan.

To address a critical need in public health data analytics, participants took part in an in-depth programme to enhance their abilities to manage and analyse health emergency data using R software. This is crucial to maintain the accuracy and timeliness of information.

The training emphasized the importance of using R software, a versatile, open-source programming language tool that public health professionals across the globe are increasingly adopting. The training aimed to equip participants with the skills to handle datasets, automate reports and create reproducible analyses with high-quality outputs.

Participants listen to a WHO expert during the training. Photo credit: WHO/Health Emergency Information and Risk Assessment UnitParticipants gained a foundational understanding of the R language, the RStudio interface – a user-friendly interface for R – and how to apply various R packages. They also learned to perform essential data steps; conduct analyses, including graphical representation; and generate reports, which are critical to inform public health decisions and strategies.

This training aims to not only boost skills but also foster a regional network of skilled public health professionals who can share their newly acquired knowledge within and beyond their countries. This, in turn, reinforces a data-driven approach to public health challenges.

WHO will virtually follow up with participants to track their progress in applying the training modules and to respond to any queries. The training will be extended to more countries in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region in 2024.

WHO will also conduct another training on advanced analysis, to nurture a transition to using R software as a powerful tool for data analytics.

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