



# DCD Bulletin

Division of Communicable Disease Control

## DCD Bulletin

This quarterly bulletin presents important news, events and announcements from programmes of Division of Communicable Disease Control in the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. For details, please contact [dcd@emro.who.int](mailto:dcd@emro.who.int) inserting "DCD Bulletin" in the subject line.

## Issue highlights

- Sleeping sickness on rise in South Sudan
- Consultation on developing intercountry guidelines for viral haemorrhagic fevers
- Intercountry meeting on MDR-TB
- Vaccination Week 2012
- "Avian influenza (H5N1) in Egypt" comment in the *Weekly Epidemiological Monitor*



Vaccination campaign in Al Ahwar, Iraq

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## Report on communicable diseases prevention and control in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2010–2011



Communicable diseases are among the major causes of mortality and morbidity in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. They represent a major impediment to social and economic well-being in countries. In its recent report on the status of communicable disease

prevention and control efforts, the WHO Regional Office has reported continued progress in eliminating specific diseases; controlling tuberculosis (TB); curbing the HIV/AIDS epidemic; improving communicable disease surveillance; and conducting advocacy and evidence-based research to ensure the financial sustainability of health programmes.

The report identifies several challenges impeding further progress to prevent, control and eliminate these diseases. The challenges include to: improve structures of national immunization programmes and the technical and managerial capacity of these programmes; improve identification of missing cases and case detection rates through strengthened collaboration between public and private sectors; more adequately assess the extent and local trends of the HIV epidemic; and encourage greater national commitment and domestic investment in disease prevention and control programmes.

[Communicable diseases prevention and control in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2010–2011](#)

## Programme news

### Control of Tropical Diseases and Zoonosis

#### Cutaneous leishmaniasis still highly prevalent in countries of the Region

Cutaneous leishmaniasis is highly prevalent in

the Region. The disease is endemic in 18 out of the 23 countries and, despite not being fatal, it causes immense stigma. WHO is committed to providing technical support for its control and has recently developed the first "Strategic plan on cutaneous leishmaniasis control for the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region: 2012–2016" and guidelines for case management of the disease. The launch of the strategic plan and guidelines coincides with a 3-day meeting of programme managers from countries of the Region. The meeting, held in Cairo on 30 April to 2 May, reviewed cutaneous leishmaniasis control activities.

#### Launch of the third campaign for schistosomiasis elimination in Yemen



The initial phase of the third schistosomiasis elimination campaign was conducted in Yemen from 14 to 17 May. The campaign covered five governorates and

more than 2.4 million people, mostly school-aged children, received anti-schistosomiasis treatments. The campaign is being implemented as part of Yemen's national schistosomiasis control project, which is supported by WHO, the World Bank and the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative, Imperial College, London.

#### Action needed to prevent a new epidemic of sleeping sickness in South Sudan

Human African trypanosomiasis, also known as sleeping sickness, is currently on the rise in South Sudan. The disease is transmitted by tsetse fly and is 100% fatal without treatment. Between 1998 and 2005 more than 500 000 people were screened and more than 16 000 patients were treated for sleeping sickness in South Sudan. This was done mainly by nongovernmental organizations in spite of social and armed conflict existing at that time. This led to a significant decrease in the subsequent number of cases reported. As a result, most organizations progressively stopped their activities after 2006 as it became difficult to advocate for internal and external resources for what no longer

Comparing the five years following the departure of most nongovernmental organizations (2006–2010) with the previous period of peak nongovernmental organization presence (2001–2005) revealed a 47% decrease in the number of people screened (from 399 977 to 211 946) and a 71% reduction in the number of new cases reported (from 8664 to 2475).

In 2011, only 0.4% of the 1.8 million population living in the endemic areas of Greater Equatoria State were screened for the disease. Active screening is crucial in order to diagnose patients at an early stage of the disease because those infected and not being treated act as a reservoir maintaining the transmission cycle. The percentage of screened people who underwent active screening was 70% in 2006 and fell to 8% in 2010.

The dwindling of interventions for sleeping sickness control could lead to a new epidemic. In fact, a resurgence is already occurring as evidenced by the figures for 2011 where the number of cases reported is 1.45 times higher than the previous year (from 180 in 2010 to 261 in 2011).

This was foreseen in an article published by WHO in Public Library of Sciences Neglected Tropical Diseases: [Human African trypanosomiasis in South Sudan: How can we prevent a new epidemic?](#)

### **Surveillance, Forecasting and Response**

#### **Consultation to develop guidelines for infection prevention and control in health care facilities for viral haemorrhagic fevers**

A consultation to develop regional guidelines for infection prevention and control in health care facilities for preventing nosocomial infections from viral haemorrhagic fevers was held in Cairo from 20 to 21 June 2012. Organized by the communicable disease surveillance, forecasting and response programme; the consultation was attended by participants from Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, South Sudan and Turkey, and representatives from NAMRU-3, WHO Collaborating Centre for Infection Prevention and Control, Saudi Arabia, and staff from the WHO Regional Office for Europe and headquarters. The consultation also provided an opportunity to discuss and develop a core training package to support the regional guidelines.

### **Event management system training held in the Regional Office**

A five-day training course on “Event management systems” was held from 22 to 26 April at the WHO Regional Office for WHO country office staff responsible for monitoring outbreaks and other public health events of international concern. Staff from Afghanistan, Djibouti, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan attended the training. The event management system is a WHO organization-wide system designed to manage acute public health events that may threaten regional and international health security.

### **Regional consultation on estimation of influenza disease burden**

A regional consultation on estimation of the influenza disease burden was held in Cairo, Egypt, from 15 to 17 May. The objective of the workshop was to develop guidelines for estimation of the influenza disease burden in the Region. The consultation also agreed on a defined road-map for estimation of influenza disease burden in selected countries of the Region.

### **International Health Regulations (IHR 2005)**

A national IHR advocacy workshop in Saudi Arabia was held in April to discuss all areas under the eight core capacities and Annex 1 A and B of the IHR.

Missions were conducted to assess national core capacities for implementation of the IHR in Qatar and Yemen. The mission to Qatar was supported by a parallel mission on the progress of implementing IHR national core capacities at points of entry. Both missions provided technical support to countries in assessing their compliance to the IHR by 15 June 2012, or in requesting an extension of an additional two years to ensure compliance.

To build capacity in the Region on bio-risk management an advanced trainer programme was conducted in Sharm El Sheikh from 14 to 24 May 2012. This training is intended to create a skilled pool of experts. Representatives of seven countries participated in the training, including Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.



**Participants of event management system training on outbreaks and other public health events of international concern, held in Cairo in April, 2012**

## Malaria Control and Elimination

### 'Malaria elimination – the Mesoamerican health initiative 2015' of the Global Health Institute of Barcelona

The malaria control and elimination programme was invited to participate and speak at the conference on 'Malaria elimination, the Mesoamerican health initiative 2015, held in Madrid, Spain, in April 2012. The Conference was organized by the Global Health Institute of Barcelona (ISGlobal). ISGlobal is providing technical support to one of the Initiative's components. The Initiative is an innovative public-private partnership which aims to reduce health equity gaps in the Mesoamerican region. Its main objective is to assist regional governments in their efforts towards reaching the targets of the Millennium Development Goals in four different areas: 1) maternal, neonatal and child health; 2) maternal and child nutrition; 3) vaccination; 4) malaria and dengue. The conference included three round table sessions – control and elimination of malaria; central America: progress and challenges on malaria elimination; and public-private partnerships for malaria.

### World Malaria Day 2012 commemorated

World Malaria Day 2012 was commemorated across the Region in April under the theme of "Sustain gains, save lives and invest in malaria". Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director General said in her message, "If we take full advantage of the malaria prevention and control tools we have today, while mitigating potential threats through constant vigilance and timely response, then we will sustain and extend the remarkable gains that have been made. The citizens of malaria-endemic countries are all counting on us. We must not let them down". The Day's commemorative activities were organized in several countries, including in Afghanistan, in Kabul, where the Ministry of Public Health officials, partners and the media gathered together to reiterate their commitment to malaria control in the country.

## Stop Tuberculosis

### Regional consultation to analyse and report results of drug-resistance surveys

The Stop TB programme organized a consultation to analyse and report the results of TB drug-resistance surveys recently conducted in countries of the Region. The consultation took place at the Regional Office from 23 to 26 April 2012. Its objectives were to: review and verify the quality of data collected during field work for TB drug-resistance surveys; analyse and interpret data; and report in line with global standards. The consultation was attended by TB laboratory staff working on drug-resistance surveys, statisticians and multidrug-resistance focal persons of national TB programmes from Egypt, Somalia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen.

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### Intercountry meeting on MDR-TB community management, palliative care, stigma, ethical considerations and pharmacovigilance

The Stop TB programme organized a multicountry workshop on MDR-TB community management, palliative care, stigma, ethical considerations and pharmacovigilance in Cairo, from 10 to 14 June 2012. The workshop was attended by participants from Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen. The five-day intensive workshop provided an opportunity to develop an understanding of community-based care models for MDR-TB. MDR-TB is increasingly representing a challenge for TB control programmes in the Region. Stigma and ethical issues were highlighted as cross-cutting themes to be considered and addressed while designing and implementing interventions to address MDR-TB.



Participants of the intercountry meeting on MDR-TB community management, palliative care, stigma, ethical considerations and pharmacovigilance held in Cairo in June, 2012

### Training workshop on monitoring and evaluation for Somalia

A training workshop on TB monitoring and evaluation for representatives of the national TB control programme of Somalia was organized in Djibouti from 5 to 7 June 2012. More than 30 participants received training on monitoring and evaluation concepts and tools. Proceedings consisted of a plenary session on the monitoring and evaluation of specific technical topics, including data interpretation, followed by a demonstration of its related web-based TB surveillance sections. Hands-on training for participants was provided in working group sessions.

### Global Fund Board to announce new funding opportunity for countries by end of 2012

The Global Fund Board held its 26<sup>th</sup> meeting in Geneva, from 10 to 11 May 2012. The Board discussed reforms being carried out, It welcomed the news that extra resources will be available to create a new funding opportunity by the end of 2012. The news was received positively by delegates attending the Board meeting, including the Minister of Health of Sudan, accompanied by representatives of Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Pakistan and Tunisia. The Board is likely to announce the features of new funding opportunity by November 2012.

## Vaccine Preventable Diseases

### Vaccination Week 2012

In April, the Regional Office celebrated 2012 Vaccination Week in the Eastern Mediterranean with the theme of "Reaching every community". This year, regional efforts coincided with the first World Immunization Week, bringing much-deserved attention to the value of immunization in countries. To launch the initiative, a ceremony was also organized in Yemen, under the patronage of H.E. the President. The Prime Minister, Minister of Health and the WHO Deputy Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean were among other dignitaries who attended the ceremony.

### [Immunization Week in the Eastern Mediterranean 2012](#)

### Workshop on comprehensive multi-year plans for immunization in Tunisia

A workshop on the development of comprehensive multi-year plans for immunization in Tunisia was held in Hammamet, Tunisia in April. The workshop was attended by representatives of different departments of the Ministry of Health, regional primary health care departments, the national vaccine and drug control laboratory, the national immunization technical advisory group and the General Medicine Society, in addition to national primary health care experts and staff of the OPTIMIZE project. The workshop was facilitated by staff of the WHO Regional Office and headquarters.

### Development of manual on programmatic review of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI)

The vaccine preventable diseases and immunization programme is developing a manual on programmatic review of the EPI. To finalize the manual a consultative meeting comprising various experts of the Region was held in Cairo in April. The final version of the manual is expected to be used during an in-depth review of EPI activities in Saudi Arabia, which are planned for July 2012.

## Tropical Disease Research

### Research on measuring TB burden in resource-limited settings

The inventory (capture TB) method for measuring the impact of TB control activities has been endorsed by a WHO global task force on impact measurement. The method aims to determine the extent of the underreporting of TB cases by both

public and private health care providers, as well as estimating the TB incidence and case detection rate. A guide is currently under development and was reviewed by experts during the fifth meeting of the impact measurement task force in May 2012. The method is a cost-effective option for measuring the burden of TB in resource-limited settings, with weak surveillance systems. Microscopic observation drug susceptibility assay has also proved to be an alternative method for timely and affordable identification of MDR-TB in resource-limited settings.

Another research workshop was also organized in Amman, Jordan, from 24 to 28 June for representatives of the national TB control programme in Iraq. The objective of the workshop was to develop research protocols to address the key challenges of disease control in the country.

### Publications: Weekly Epidemiological Monitor



The Weekly Epidemiological Monitor is produced by the communicable disease surveillance, forecasting and response programme. The publication aims to share information and forge sustainable technical collaboration between Member States and technical programmes within

the Regional Office.

### [Avian influenza \(H5N1\) in Egypt](#)

In its recent issue, the Weekly Epidemiological Monitor has commented on avian influenza in Egypt. Since 2006, Egypt has been experiencing outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza caused by the H5N1 subtype of influenza A virus. The first outbreak was reported in poultry in February 2006, and the first human case of avian influenza was confirmed on 15 March 2006. Since then, the human infection of avian influenza has emerged as a significant public health problem in the country. Although, the Egyptian Government has undertaken a number of steps to address the potential threat of the spread of the disease among humans, and instituted an intensive public health education campaign to increase awareness of the public stressing community practices and behaviours that will reduce transmission, the control measures are far from creating any visible impact on preventing transmission of the avian influenza virus from birds to humans.



**Vaccination Week 2012 ceremony in Yemen**