

Current major event

Regional network for outbreak alert and response

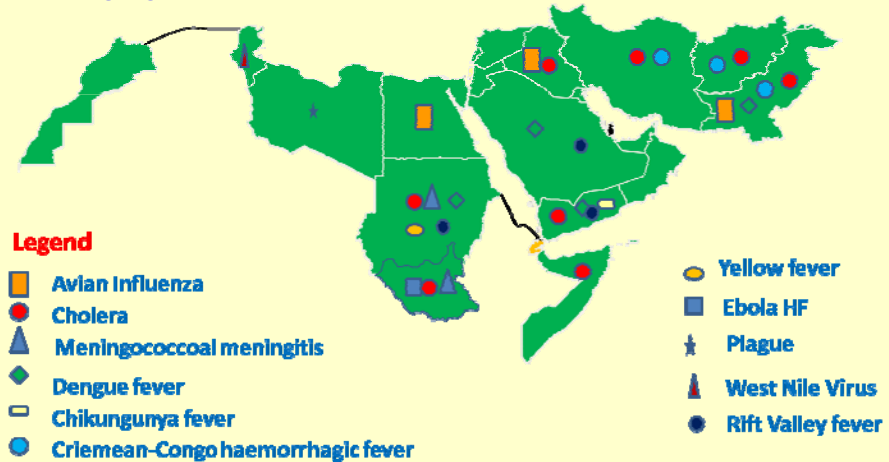
The World Health Organization Office for Eastern Mediterranean Region organized a three-day meeting in Casablanca, Morocco from 21 –23 October 2012 to consider the establishment of a regional network for outbreak alert and response. A total of 35 experts representing institutions from 11 countries in the Region and four WHO Collaborating Centers participated in the meeting.

Editorial note

The emergence of infectious disease outbreaks has increased to an unprecedented scale both globally as well as in the Eastern Mediterranean Region of WHO. In the last decade (*please see the graph*) emerging infectious disease outbreaks reported in the region have increased in both number and frequency. There is also an expansion of geographic distribution of diseases and countries previously known to be free from a particular diseases have reported cases of these emerging disease which could be a result of re-introduction of new pathogen or re-infestation with disease vectors. In addition to increasing trend of infectious disease outbreaks, novel human pathogens that are mostly zoonotic in origin are emerging in the region enhancing the risk for international spread as diseases do not respect geo-political boundaries. The recent infection of novel human coronavirus reported in patients from Saudi Arabia and Qatar are examples of this.

A number of factors are responsible for emergence of these infectious disease outbreaks in the region which include rise in international travel and trade, increased unplanned urbanization, changes in climate and ecosystem, population growth and changes in demographics, microbial adaptation, etc. The prevailing humanitarian emergency in a number of countries in the region resulting in large number of displaced populations is one of major risk factor for spread of new diseases.

Emerging Infectious Disease Outbreaks in the EMR, 2000-2011



International outbreak response operations in the EMR in recent time

Year	Country	Outbreak
2004	South Sudan	Ebola HF
2005	Sudan	Yellow fever
2007	Sudan	Rift Valley fever
2009	Yemen	DF/Severe dengue
2010	Pakistan	Cholera
2010	Pakistan	DF/Severe dengue
2011	Yemen	Chikungunya

In recent time (*please see the table*) a number of countries in the region requested for assistance of international outbreak response as either these countries were not able to contain the outbreak or there was an anticipated risk of international spread of these diseases.

In view of these repeated outbreaks from the region, where the coping capacities of any single institute or agency to respond can be overwhelmed, the Regional Office is considering to set up a regional network for outbreak alert and response as a regional arm of WHO's Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN). The network, to be participated by agencies both within and outside the region, is expected to assist in international outbreak response saving lives and protect public health in the region.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Hepatitis E: in South Sudan; Cholera: in Iraq; and CCHF: in Pakistan;

Current public health events of international concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian influenza

China	[43(28), 65.1%]
Egypt	[168 (60), 35.7%]
Indonesia	[190 (158), 83.1 %]
Viet Nam	[123(61), 49.5%]
Cambodia	[21(19), 90.4%]
Bangladesh	[6(0), 0%]
Global total	[607(358), 58.9%]

Hepatitis E

S. Sudan	[621 (21),3.3%]#
----------	------------------

Marburg Haemorrhagic fever

Uganda	[9 (5), 55.5 %]
--------	------------------

Crimean-congo haemorrhagic fever

Pakistan	[55 (14) 25.4.%]#
----------	-------------------

Cholera

Iraq	[3392 (3), 0.08%] #
------	---------------------

Ebola Haemorrhagic Fever

D.R Congo	[49(24), 48.9%]
-----------	-----------------

CFR=Case-Fatality Rate; # Suspected cases