

Current major event

Ongoing conflict in Yemen : Surveillance needs to be stepped up

The ongoing conflict in Yemen has severely damaged the public health infrastructure in the country. As a result and owing to severe destruction of the public utility services and routine public health services, there is an apprehended risk of major outbreaks in the country as the summer months progress.

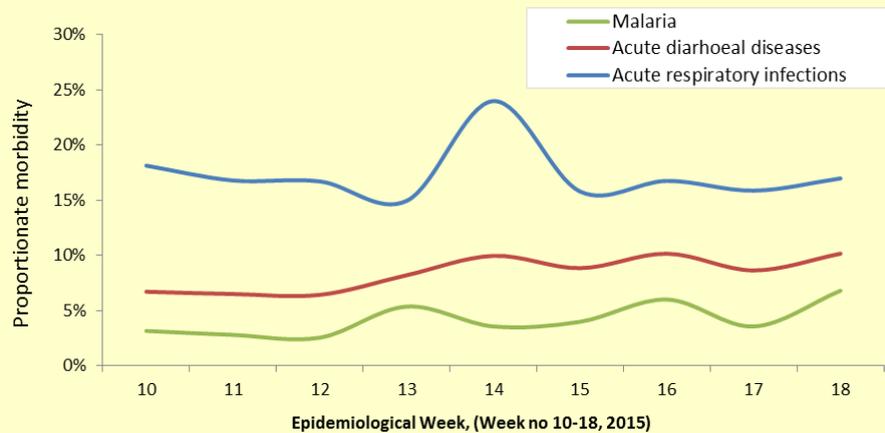
Editorial note

The on-going conflict in Yemen has severely dented the routine health care services in the country specially the primary healthcare services. The conflict has also severely compromised the preventive public health programmes in the country like the vector control, routine immunization as well as other utility care like the water and sanitation services.

In a recent situation report of Yemen, it has been stated that compared to pre-crisis level, the total consultations for any medical cause throughout the country have fallen by over 50%-an ominous sign of deteriorating access of the population to routine healthcare services in the country. Given the fact that the country remains prone to major outbreaks from infectious diseases (*please see the table*), such compromised access of vulnerable populations to routine healthcare services may result in outbreaks fanning out owing to lack of early detection as the surveillance system mostly relies on the patients' consultations at the health facilities specially at the primary healthcare level.

The breakdown of routine immunization programme, vector control activities and the water and sanitation services in the country may have a detrimental effect on the populations. The country is endemic for dengue and other vector borne diseases including malaria. Although, not endemic, the country has also reported cholera in the past specially amongst the refugee populations coming from Eritrea. Thus, the situation remains ideal for disease outbreaks with potential implications for spread cross border. Already the recent surveillance data is showing increase of acute febrile cases

Three leading causes of seeking medical consultation, week no 10-18



Major outbreaks reported in Yemen in the recent past (2009-2015)

- 2009: Cholera [55(3)]
- 2010: Cholera [300 (4)]
- 2010: Dengue [8109 (10)]
- 2011 Cholera and acute watery diarrhea [31789 (134)]
- 2011: Chikungunya [15000 (104)]
- 2012: Chikungunya [234 (0)]

[Cumulative N° of cases (deaths)]

(*please see the graph above*) along with acute diarrhoeal diseases and suspected malaria cases.

Although the trend of acute febrile illness represented, probably by, acute respiratory infections, is stabilizing, the general upward trend of acute diarrheal diseases and suspected cases of malaria appear to be sustained. So far, the 42 alerts of suspected disease outbreaks were reported and the current insecurity situation prevailing in the country remains a significant challenge for the field epidemiologists in the country to rapidly investigate these rumours and respond appropriately.

Given the currently prevailing situation in the country, the early warning system for disease surveillance which was functional in the governorates prior to the crisis needs to be restored as much as it is possible to do so within the challenging circumstances. It is plausible that the routine surveillance system is no more functional in the country and it would be only prudent to say that the disease early warning system will be required to be strengthened in the short-term to early detect and rapidly respond to any outbreak or public health event.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

MERS-CoV in Saudi Arabia and Qatar

Current public health events of international concern [cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian Influenza : 2006-2015

Egypt (A/H5N1)	[336 (114), 24%]
Egypt (A/H9N2)	[2(0)]

MERS-CoV: 2012-2015

Saudi Arabia	[1004 (429), 42.7%]
Jordan	[12 (6), 50%]
Oman	[5 (3), 60%]
UAE	[71 (9), 12.7%]
Kuwait	[3 (1), 33.3%]
Tunisia	[3 (1), 33.3%]
Qatar	[12 (4), 33.3%]
Yemen	[1 (1), 100%]
Egypt	[1 (0), 0%]
Lebanon	[1 (0), 0%]
Iran	[5 (2), 40%]

Ebola Virus Disease: 2014-2015

Guinea	[3635 (2407), 66.2%]
Liberia	[10666 (4806), 45%]
Sierra Leone	[12632 (3907), 31%]
UK	[1(0)]
Nigeria	[20 (8), 40%]
Senegal	[1(0)]
Spain	[1(0)]
Italy	[1 (0)]
USA	[4(1), 25%]
Mali	[8(6), 75%]

Wild poliovirus: 2014-2015

Pakistan	[325 (0)]
Afghanistan	[29(0)]