

# Sixth meeting of the Regional Verification Commission of Measles and Rubella Elimination in the Eastern Mediterranean Region<sup>1</sup>

Keywords: measles, rubella, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Oman, Qatar, Eastern Mediterranean

Citation: World Health Organization. Sixth meeting of the Regional Verification Commission of Measles and Rubella Elimination in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. *East Mediterr Health J.* 2024;31(7):478. <https://doi.org/10.26719/2025.31.7.478>.

Copyright © Authors 2025; Licensee: World Health Organization. EMHJ is an open access journal. This paper is available under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo>).

## Introduction

As of 2019, 3 countries (Bahrain, Islamic Republic of Iran, Oman) in the Eastern Mediterranean Region had verified the elimination of measles and rubella, while Egypt verified its elimination in 2022 (1–3). In December 2023, WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean held the sixth meeting of the Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella Elimination to review progress and verify elimination status for the 4 countries and Qatar.

## Summary of discussions

Evidence shows that Bahrain, Islamic Republic of Iran, Oman continued to sustain their measles and rubella elimination status, particularly in 2021 and 2022 (1,2). Bahrain has been implementing strategies for further prevention of nosocomial infections. Egypt faces challenges with high-risk populations in geographical locations with high cross-border population movement. However, they have strengthened surveillance at borders and entry points and enhanced case classification for imported and import-related cases.

Islamic Republic of Iran continues to show strong political commitment to improve primary health care, including for measles and rubella. They have revised their national measles and rubella elimination guidelines to sustain the elimination status in the country. Efforts are being made to increase population immunity, particularly among high-risk populations.

In Oman, efforts have been made to strengthen immunization at the borders with Yemen and to maintain an

immunization database for expatriate children. Qatar had made progress towards measles and rubella elimination. The country had interrupted endemic transmission for more than 36 months. Genotype lineage evidence shows that cases in 5 years prior to the meeting had been imported or imported-related. Strategies are being implemented to support high vaccination coverage among high-risk and expatriate populations.

## Recommendations

### To Bahrain, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Oman and Qatar

- Review the membership of the National Verification Committee to avoid conflict of interest, and address challenges identified by the committee.
- Enhance surveillance, vaccination and cross-border prevention activities and strengthen capacity for case investigation, particularly among high-risk and migrant populations.
- Review existing guidelines and standards to update case and outbreak definitions.

### To WHO

- Continue to support measles and rubella elimination at country level, including capacity strengthening for relevant stakeholders.
- Review and update the regional measles and rubella elimination verification guidelines.
- Review, develop or update relevant measles and rubella reporting templates.

## References

1. Teleb N, Atta H, Hajjeh R. Measles and rubella elimination in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: successes and challenges. *East Mediterr Health J.* 2019;25(10):667–668. doi: 10.26719/2019.25.10.667.
2. Farid M, Fahmy K, Ghoniem A, Sharifuzzaman M, Hasan Q, Crowcroft N, O'Connor P. Progress of Measles and Rubella Surveillance in the Context of Measles Elimination in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2019–2022. *Vaccines (Basel).* 2024;12(12):1349. doi: 10.3390/vaccines12121349.
3. O'Connor P, Masresha B, Pastor D, Musa N, Hagan J, Khanal S, Lee C-W, Crowcroft N. Global Status Report for the Verification of Measles and Rubella Elimination, 2022. *Vaccines* 2024; 12(8):947. <https://doi.org/10.3390/vaccines12080947>

<sup>1</sup> Summary report on the sixth meeting of the Regional Verification Commission of Measles and Rubella Elimination in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. <https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/WHOEMEPI363E-eng.pdf?ua=1>.