

Current major event

Annual meeting on Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework in the Region

The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean organized a virtual meeting on 7 July 2021 to review the implementation of the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Framework in the Region and discuss the progress, challenges, opportunities and way forward at the regional and country levels.

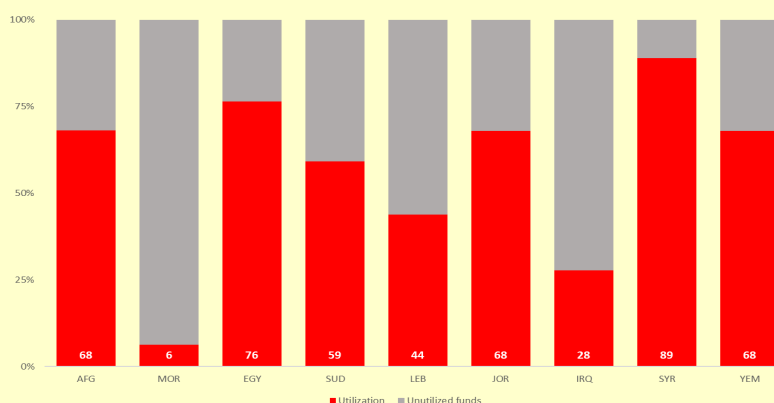
Editorial note

As of August 2021, 19 countries in the Region have functional influenza surveillance systems. These countries are Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, occupied Palestinian territory, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Nine out of the 19 countries with functioning influenza surveillance are PIP Partnership Contribution (PC) recipient countries, namely Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

The PIP Framework was established based on a resolution adopted by all WHO Member States in 2011 to help developing countries be better prepared for the next influenza pandemic and increase their access to vaccines and medicines during a pandemic. It is based on an access and benefit sharing system.

Despite a myriad of challenges including complex emergencies that some countries in the Region are facing and the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been progress, albeit slow, in implementing planned PIP activities in the nine countries. It was also noticed that a steady improvement in the sharing of epidemiological and virological data has happened in these countries. Data reporting from the Region to FluNet and EMFLU, the two surveillance platforms, has increased from 19 329 in 2012 to 134 990 in 2019 thanks to the push from PIP and follow up by the Regional Office. However, in 2020, and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, influenza data and virus sharing have declined in the Region, a trend seen globally as well.

Implementation status of PIP support in EMRO countries and utilization of funds in 2021



As a result of PIP investment in laboratory capacity and infrastructure enhancement, the performance of national influenza centres (NICs) and national influenza laboratories has seen improvement, which was noted in the results of the external quality assessment programme that is conducted annually by WHO.

NICs and other influenza laboratories in the Region supported by PIP played a crucial role at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, having developed the ability to rapidly detect SARS-CoV-2 by rt-PCR.

However, it has also been seen that a drop in the testing and reporting of influenza cases from 137 511 in 2019 to 65 121 in 2020 was recorded. But now sentinel sites, NICs and influenza laboratories are resuming their work and an increased number of countries are reporting influenza cases in FluNet and/or EMFLU as a result of the intensive advocacy and technical support being provided by the PIP team.

The meeting gave the PIP PC supported countries the chance to discuss achievements, the challenges they are facing and potential solutions to improve implementation through interactive working groups. It was also an opportunity to update the participants regarding activities on the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response system (GISRS) and the GISRS+ concept; the new EMFLU version 2 upgrade; and the PIP PC Preparedness High-level Implementation Plan II 2018–2023.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

COVID-19 in 22 EMR countries

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

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): 2019-2021

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Afghanistan | [155 072 (7200), 4.6%] |
| Bahrain | [274 745 (1389), 0.5%] |
| Djibouti | [12 324 (162), 1.3%] |
| Egypt | [300 945 (17 149), 5.7%] |
| Iran (Islamic Republic of) | [5 519 728 (119 072), 2.2%] |
| Iraq | [1 991 628 (22 072), 1.1%] |
| Jordan | [818 796 (10 669), 1.3%] |
| Kuwait | [411 447 (2445), 0.6%] |
| Lebanon | [621 735 (8277), 1.3%] |
| Libya | [336 980 (4606), 1.4%] |
| Morocco | [928 571 (14 132), 1.5%] |
| occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) | [426 033 (4286), 1%] |
| Oman | [303 613 (4093), 1.3%] |
| Pakistan | [1 238 668 (27 566), 2.2%] |
| Qatar | [236 231 (604), 0.3%] |
| Saudi Arabia | [546 882 (8694), 1.6%] |
| Somalia | [19 723 (1103), 5.6%] |
| Sudan | [38 201 (2841), 7.4%] |
| Syrian Arab Republic | [32 580 (2198), 6.7%] |
| Tunisia | [705 295 (24 788), 3.5%] |
| United Arab Emirates | [734 596 (2089), 0.3%] |
| Yemen | [8891 (1682), 18.9%] |