

## Current major event

### Leveraging and adapting PIP supported influenza surveillance and response systems for the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021

The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean provides support to ten countries in the Region through the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) mechanism aiming to improve pandemic preparedness and response capacity for potential pandemics caused by influenza and other viral respiratory viruses and achieve more equitable access to vaccine therapeutic and other supplies during pandemic.

#### Editorial note

Influenza viruses remain the circulating pathogens most likely to cause next pandemics. Each year, there are 3 to 5 million cases of influenza and up to 650 000 deaths globally. However, the emergence of SARS-CoV-2 in 2020 has demonstrated the ability of non-influenza viruses to cause a global pandemic. During the 2020-2021, over 20 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 and nearly 300 000 deaths were reported in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR).

The PIP Framework brings together Member States, industry, other stakeholders, and WHO to implement a global approach to improve the pandemic influenza preparedness and response. Thanks to the systems and capacities built under the [Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework \(PIP\)](#), countries were able to leverage response through surveillance, testing, genome sequencing, vaccination, and strengthen health systems' resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The existing influenza assets and structures provided a ready-to-use platform for the integrated surveillance of multiple respiratory pathogens with epidemic and pandemic potential. Some countries in the Region, have adopted and implemented multi-pathogen testing within existing influenza surveillance systems and some have developed, or are in the process of, developing protocols for multi respiratory pathogen surveillance using WHO guidance.

During the pandemic, 19 Member States in the Region leveraged the existing capacities of influenza surveillance systems to respond to COVID-19. To

## Countries supported by Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework in EMR



Source: WHO EMRO 2022

#### Key Recommendations

- Building upon existing influenza infrastructure to achieve integrated surveillance and response systems for influenza and other viral respiratory viruses with epidemic or pandemic potential is a key for an effective and timely response to future pandemics.
- Greater efforts are needed to institutionalize the concept of “One Health”, develop technical capacities and explore options for coordinating this mechanism at the national and regional levels.

detect and confirm cases, 16 National Influenza Laboratories and 4 Influenza Centres were used. Out of the 22 Member States in the Region 21 had real time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) capacity for the molecular detection of influenza and SARS-COV 2 viruses, by the end of 2021. The same 21 countries have invested in the development and improvement of their genome sequencing capacity and they continued to contribute to the global variant detection efforts, by June 2022. In addition, all influenza laboratories have access to multiplex RT-PCR test kits for influenza and SARS-CoV-2. All countries in the Region, also have trained and functioning multisectoral rapid response teams at the central level and started building capacities at subnational level. Countries also benefited from Eastern Mediterranean Flu (EMFLU) regional data collection and sharing electronic platform. 16 of the 22 Member States have been reporting to EMFLU and FluNet, up until June 2022. These data are used for informed public health decision-making.

#### 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): 2019-2022

Afghanistan	[178 981 (7684), 4.3%]
Bahrain	[572 082 (1477), 0.3%]
Djibouti	[15 631 (189), 1.2%]
Egypt	[513 846 (24 669), 4.8%]
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	[7 224 701 (141 165) 2%]
Iraq	[2 325 522 (25 213), 1.1%]
Jordan	[1 696 054 (14 066 ), 0.8%]
Kuwait	[631 929 (2555), 0.4%]
Lebanon	[1 097 429 (10398), 0.9%]
Libya	[501 919 (6430), 1.3%]
Morocco	[1 165 206 (16 070), 1.4%]
occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)	[657 193 (5657), 0.9%]
Oman	[389 273 (4626), 1.2%]
Pakistan	[1 528 738 (30 375), 2%]
Qatar	[365 058 (677), 0.2%]
Saudi Arabia	[755 076 (9099) 1.2%]
Somalia	[26 485 (1361), 5.1%]
Sudan	[62 161 (4936), 7.9%]
Syrian Arab Republic	[55 847 (3150), 5.6%]
Tunisia	[1 041 197 (28 575), 2.7%]
United Arab Emirates	[900 026 (2302), 0.3%]
Yemen	[11 819 (2149), 18.2%]