

## Current major event

### Revisiting sentinel surveillance systems in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: Using the lens of COVID-19 lessons learnt

Being an important part of the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS), the influenza sentinel surveillance system has been monitoring the influenza seasonality, epidemiology and virological characteristics of circulating viruses in a subset of patients with severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) or influenza-like illness (ILI) at selected sentinel hospitals and out-patient clinics.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 19 out of 22 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) had functional influenza sentinel surveillance systems.

#### Editorial note

Due to COVID-19, the influenza surveillance systems have been impacted, and in some instances, disrupted as most public health resources were allocated to respond to the pandemic.

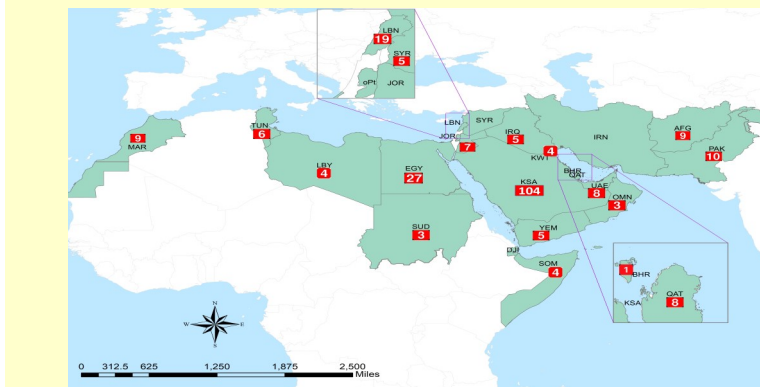
The Infectious Hazard Preparedness and Prevention (IHP) unit at the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has been working closely with countries of the Region to strengthen, scale up, revive or (re)establish a resilient sentinel surveillance system. A system that can monitor the circulation of influenza and other respiratory viruses (ORVs), including severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

Now more than ever, there is rising interest in investing in integrating multi-pathogen surveillance within existing or developing influenza sentinel surveillance systems since universal testing for SARS-CoV-2 is unlikely to be sustainable for prolonged periods. This global direction for integration is in line with the expansion of GISRS to GISRS+ to include respiratory viruses with epidemic and pandemic potential.

With the proper implementation of integrating influenza and ORVs, the influenza sentinel surveillance system can establish seasonal baselines for ORVs and detect unusual and expected events over time.

As COVID-19 pandemic cases decrease in many parts of the world, it is an opportune

## Influenza sentinel sites in Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR)



time to assess the sentinel influenza surveillance system in countries of the Region and its value and ability to capture epidemiological and virological data beyond influenza. In this regard, the IHP unit, in collaboration with WHO headquarters and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Influenza Division in Atlanta, conducted an assessment mission in Jordan in July 2022. The objectives of the assessment mission were to highlight strengths, identify areas for improvements and propose recommendations for a more resilient sentinel surveillance system that can act as a response foundation for any future respiratory pandemics. Other similar assessment missions are planned in the last quarter of 2022.

Effective sentinel surveillance is a cornerstone for pandemic preparedness, as it provides systematic, accurate and timely information that is necessary for effective response measures. National and global systems for laboratory and epidemiological surveillance need to be robust to capture data that support risk and severity assessment and inform response measures including vaccine composition and other public health measures.

The emergence of SARS-CoV-2 has demonstrated the ability of non-influenza viruses to cause a global pandemic and highlighted the need for broad and strengthened surveillance for non-influenza viruses with epidemic and pandemic potential. The integrated surveillance approach will form the backbone of laboratory and surveillance data to support public health decision-making for respiratory viruses of both epidemic and pandemic potential, hence establishing a global alert mechanism for novel respiratory viruses (respiratory virus X).

## 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	[200 412 (7806), 3.9%]
Bahrain	[683 242 (1520), 0.2%]
Djibouti	[15 690 (189), 1.2%]
Egypt	[515 388 (24 797), 4.8%]
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	[7 551 357 (144 478) 1.9%]
Iraq	[2 460 844 (25 356), 1%]
Jordan	[1 746 997 (14 122), 0.8%]
Kuwait	[660 667 (2564), 0.4%]
Lebanon	[1 216 638 (10 684), 0.9%]
Libya	[507 010 (6437), 1.3%]
Morocco	[1 265 086 (16 278), 1.3%]
occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)	[702 977 (5708), 0.8%]
Oman	[398 585 (4628), 1.2%]
Pakistan	[1 572 972 (30 623), 1.9%]
Qatar	[456 819 (682), 0.1%]
Saudi Arabia	[817 490 (9365) 1.1%]
Somalia	[27 225 (1361), 5%]
Sudan	[63 344 (4962), 7.8%]
Syrian Arab Republic	[57 322 (3163), 5.5%]
Tunisia	[1 145 930 (29 254), 2.6%]
United Arab Emirates	[1 030 478 (2346), 0.2%]
Yemen	[11 939 (2158), 18.1%]