

## Current major event

### The One Health Approach: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) - Surveillance, Preparedness, and Response Workshop

Under the theme of "Better preparedness, early detection, and rapid response for respiratory diseases," the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO), in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), organized technical workshop on the One Health Approach and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) surveillance, preparedness, and response during the 3rd Scientific Conference on Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI) in the Region (EMARIS) in Muscat, Oman on 13-15 March 2023.

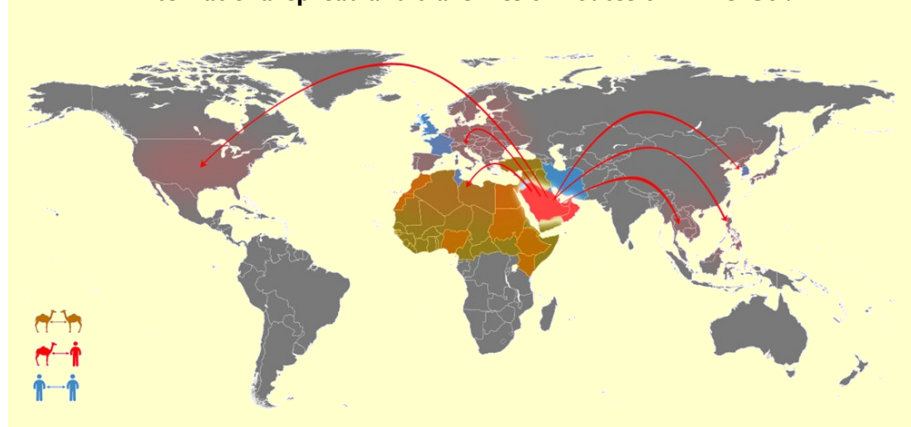
## Editorial note

The WHO EMRO and headquarters (HQ) teams arranged the workshop on the One Health Approach and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) surveillance, preparedness, and response, which was co-facilitated by the FAO, CDC, and the WHO MERS Collaborating Center (CC) in Saudi Arabia.

The objectives of the workshop were to 1) understanding global priorities in MERS prevention and control and how the quadripartite framework aids countries was one of the workshop's primary goals; 2) recognizing significant role in multisectoral or One Health coordination mechanisms, and comprehend the purpose of the WHO MERS CC; 3) determining the key actions that must be implemented at the national level for zoonotic disease preparedness, research, and response under the One Health banner; 4) gaining knowledge from the experiences of other countries with the implementation of multi-sectoral prevention and control initiatives for zoonotic illnesses like MERS-CoV; 5) discussing the best mechanisms for multisectoral coordination and communication within the One Health framework that should be used at the national and regional levels and outline important action points; and 6) identifying existing evidence and outstanding gaps in MERS-CoV knowledge, as well as recommendations for ways forward in MERS-CoV research.

Over 45 EMARIS attendees participated in the workshop through a tabletop exercise based on a scenario of a multi-country human MERS-CoV outbreak that originated from

## International spread and transmission routes of MERS-CoV



exposure to dromedaries at a live animal market. Participants were divided into groups, where injects were provided and discussed around round tables. Each inject was followed by a presentation of countries' experience with MERS-CoV.

This exercise highlighted many challenges in MERS prevention and control globally. Participants stressed on the lack of global MERS-CoV genomic data, especially since no whole genome sequencing (WGS) was shared with GenBank for the past 3 years; therefore, it was recommended to use peacetime to set up data-sharing agreements and information-sharing mechanisms to ensure timely genomic data exchange during outbreaks.

Participants also discussed the gap in surveillance of MERS in dromedary camels, hence it was recommended to enhance surveillance capacities in animal populations by conducting more research studies.

The One Health approach was highlighted, and participants recommended implementing this approach at subnational, national, and global levels to enable information exchange between different ministries and stakeholders at country level and facilitate cross-border collaboration among affected countries. Participants also discussed MERS risk communication and emphasized the importance of tailoring risk communication messages to target audiences with respect to their unique cultural contexts.

As a conclusion to the workshop, WHO highlighted the findings of the latest scoping review conducted that mapped the MERS-CoV-related research. Many research gaps that need further investigation were identified and presented. The scoping review also recommended accelerating the advancements for human vaccines and exerting more efforts for animal vaccine research.

## 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): 2019-2023

Afghanistan	[210 733 (7883), 3.7%]
Bahrain	[696 614 (1536), 0.2%]
Djibouti	[15 690 (189), 1.2%]
Egypt	[515 913 (24 823), 4.8%]
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	[7 591 621 (145 369) 1.9%]
Iraq	[2 465 545 (25 375), 1%]
Jordan	[1 746 997 (14 122), 0.8%]
Kuwait	[665 386 (2570), 0.4%]
Lebanon	[1 234 896 (10 870), 0.9%]
Libya	[507 229 (6437), 1.3%]
Morocco	[1 272 679 (16 296), 1.3%]
occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)	[703 228 (5708), 0.8%]
Oman	[399 449 (4628), 1.2%]
Pakistan	[1 579 759 (30 649), 1.9%]
Qatar	[499 851 (688), 0.1%]
Saudi Arabia	[834 067 (9631) 1.2%]
Somalia	[27 334 (1361), 5%]
Sudan	[63 922 (5034), 7.9%]
Syrian Arab Republic	[57 423 (3163), 5.5%]
Tunisia	[1 152 033 (29 363), 2.5%]
United Arab Emirates	[1 058 000 (2349), 0.2%]
Yemen	[11 945 (2159), 18.1%]