

JANUARY 2022

# THE IHR PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Updates from UKHSA's  
International Health Regulations  
Strengthening Project

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Welcome! This publication provides updates for the project's internal colleagues and external partners. If you have any queries, feedback or contributions please contact:

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## Updates from the IHR Project

Access the latest news from the IHR Project and its partners on the "[News](#)" page of our online knowledge hub.

# A first step towards implementing IDSR in South Punjab

Since 2017, UKHSA has supported both federal and provincial governments to develop their capacity in Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR). The continued and perseverant efforts of the Pakistan UKHSA in-country team won the support and agreement of Pakistan's higher health officials to launch further IDSR training, and for the first time in the Southern region of Punjab. The team identified the opportunity for engagement and liaised with the Director General Health Services (DGHS) Office in South Punjab to establish a partnership and to introduce and implement IDSR in the region.



[Read more about the work on our Knowledge hub](#)

# EPRR's "Keep Pushing" learning review

The "Keep Pushing" (KP) Simulation Exercise Programme has been delivered in Nigeria on an annual basis since 2018 (excluding 2020) as part of the collaboration between Nigeria CDC (NCDC) and the IHR Emergency Preparedness Rapid Response (EPRR) team. The KP exercises support the evaluation of Nigeria's Public Health Emergency Operating Centres (PHEOC) existing responses at a national and subnational level and help assess the communication channels and working relationships between the PHEOCs. With the fourth KP exercise around the corner in March 2022, a half-day learning review workshop of the previous 3 exercises took place on 10th January.

[Read more about the workshop on the Knowledge Hub](#)



# Updates from the IHR Project

## Lab sample referral training provided to couriers in Ethiopia

One of the core capacities of IHR (2005) obligates WHO Member States to establish mechanisms for providing reliable and timely laboratory identification and characterization of infectious agents, including shipment of specimens to the appropriate laboratories. Based on that, Ethiopia has established a laboratory network and specimen referral system throughout the country's laboratories, providing accessibility of laboratory testing services. Laboratory services play a major role in all the key processes of the IHR, including detection, assessment, response, notification, and monitoring of events.

The referral system facilitates collecting specimens from health facilities to be transported by postal system to referral laboratories where the testing services are available. The results are then returned back to the referring laboratory through an appropriate transportation route. Proper packaging and transportation, safety concerns and the quality of the specimen are some of the issues that need to be critically considered during sample transportation. To ensure this, sample referral system training organized by Ethiopian Public Health Institute alongside UKHSA and Ohio State University was provided to sample couriers from December 30-31, 2021.

The training covered how to pack samples using triple packages, labelling, international sample transport regulations, and awareness on how to maintain the integrity of the sample and safety precautions during transportation.

[Read more about the training on the knowledge hub](#)



## Updates from the IHR Project

# Influenza sample collection training delivered to sample collectors and surveillance officers of SARI & ILI surveillance sites in Ethiopia



Influenza sample collection training was organized by EPHI alongside the IHR Ethiopia lab team and Ohio State University from January 12th - 14th. Training was provided to 33 influenza sample collectors and surveillance officers who came from severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) and influenza like illness (ILI) surveillance sites. The training covered an overview of SARI/ILI and Surveillance systems, biosafety precautions in influenza sample collection and handling, demonstration of swab sample collection, handling and packaging of samples, the Influenza specimen referral system and the roles and responsibilities of the involved parties. [\*\*Read more about the training on the Knowledge hub\*\*](#)

## African Volunteer Health Corps (AVoHC) Net member state rollout training

On September 2020, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) in collaboration with UKHSA introduced the African Volunteer Health Corps (AVoHC). AVHoC enables effective recruitment and deployment of experts to respond to various public health emergencies across Africa. This has included launching a web-based tool called AVoHC Net. AVoHC Net allows members to expand and grow their capacity in a systematic manner, contributing to the Africa CDC's public health emergency preparedness and response strategy. To strength IHR compliance and capacity building for Member States, the IHR strengthening project alongside Africa CDC's Emergency Preparedness and Response Division has rolled out AVoHC Net Tool training for rapid deployment in the United Republic of Tanzania.

A recent training aimed to train 17 Participants' capacity building in facilitating rapid deployment and better administration of standby expert responders to public health emergencies across the nation. AVoHC Net training assists in the administration and maintenance of roster member Professional Expert Profile (PEP) accounts both at Africa CDC and National Public Health Institute level. Through the 8 day training the participants engaged in user accounts creation; using the tool to recruit, orient and deploy rapid responder teams (RRTs) during emergencies; online continuous professional education; managing in country RRTs available on the platform.

# New Resources Available on The Knowledge Hub

Access the latest resources and publications from the IHR Project and its partners on the "[Resources](#)" page of [the knowledge hub](#).

## Reviewing Health Security Capacities in Nigeria Using the Updated WHO Joint External Evaluation and WHO Benchmarks Tool: Experience from a Country-Led Self-Assessment Exercise

**Nigeria Centre for Disease Control | Peer reviewed publication**

Abstract: Across the world, the level of pandemic preparedness varies and no country is fully prepared to respond to all public health events. The International Health Regulations 2005 require state parties to develop core capacities to prevent, detect, and respond to public health events of international concern. In addition to annual self-assessment, these capacities are peer reviewed once every 5 years through the voluntary Joint External Evaluation (JEE). In this article, we share Nigeria's experience of conducting a country-led midterm self-assessment using a slightly modified application of the second edition of the World Health Organization (WHO) JEE and the new WHO benchmarks tool. Despite more stringent scoring criteria in the revised JEE tool, average scoring showed modest capacity improvements in 2019 compared with 2017. Of the 19 technical areas assessed, 11 improved, 5 did not change, and 3 had lower scores. No technical area attained the highest-level scoring of 5. Understanding the level of, and gaps in, pandemic preparedness enables state parties to develop plans to improve health security: the outcome of the assessment included the development of a 12-month operational plan. Countries need to intentionally invest in preparedness by using existing frameworks (eg, JEE) to better understand the status of their preparedness. This will ensure ownership of developed plans with shared responsibilities by all key stakeholders across all levels of government.



## Civil Service Learning

Throughout the year, there are hundreds of digital tutorials and virtual workshops that learners from across the Civil Service can book themselves on to. The link containing more information and to book a place can be found at:

[https://www.civilservicelearning.uk/open-schedule.pdf?mc\\_cid=2ac632cc03&mc\\_eid=UNIQUID](https://www.civilservicelearning.uk/open-schedule.pdf?mc_cid=2ac632cc03&mc_eid=UNIQUID)



# Monthly Media Round Up

A selection of recent appearances of the IHR Project in the media. Please click the items to view the posts.

**Dr Sam Collins** @DrSamColl · 24 Jan  
 We don't just work on infectious diseases 🦠. We take an all Hazards approach to #IHR\_strengthening. Excited to start work on chemical events in 🇳🇮 with @NIPRD1 🇳🇮

**Abubakar DANRAKA, PhD** @PharmDas · 19 Jan  
 Glad to host @UKHSA Nigeria Country Lead @solaruna together with her team on IHR strengthening Project discussions with @NIPRD1 team focusing on Chemical Event interventions. DG NIPRD @DrAdigwe welcomed the team and assured of NIPRD's commitment going forward together. #NIPRDway



**Sola Aruna** @solaruna  
 DG @NCDCgov @IfedayoTiffy pleased to welcome participants from relevant #Nigeria MDAs to @UKHSA #IHR\_Strengthening Foundation Training on Chemical Hazards & Public Health



6:00 pm · 24 Jan 2022 · Twitter for Android

**Sola Aruna** @solaruna  
 @Elsieliori the #IHRNFP @NCDCgov welcoming participants to Day 1 of @UKHSA #IHR\_Strengthening Project Chemical Hazards & Public Health Foundation training. She emphasised the importance of this innovative training in building skills for health security in #Nigeria



**Sola Aruna** @solaruna  
 Consolidating learning on @UKHSA #IHR\_Strengthening Chemical Hazards & PH Training with site visit to sewage treatment plant on last day



**UK Health Security Agency** @UKHSA · 28 Jan  
 Our #IHR\_Strengthening team works with public health institutions in Africa and Asia to better prepare for & respond to public health emergencies. The UKHSA Radiation, Chemical & Environmental (RCE) hazards team works to strengthen surveillance & response to chemical incidents.

**UK Health Security Agency** @UKHSA · 21 Jan  
 Last week the EPRR #IHR\_Strengthening team co-hosted a "Keep Pushing" annual simulation exercise learning review workshop with @NCDCgov to identify areas for continued improvement in Nigeria's preparedness for and response to public health emergencies.



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**UK Health Security Agency** @UKHSA · 28 Jan  
 This week the team has been delivering training workshops in #Nigeria with @NCDCgov and stakeholders from relevant ministries and agencies to develop skills to better prevent, detect and respond to these kinds of emergencies.



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**Dr Sam Collins Retweeted**  
**Sola Aruna** @solaruna · 24 Jan  
 DG @NCDCgov says "we are committed to filling the gaps in core capacity on Chemical Events through the needed multisectoral collaboration" whilst looking forward to swift progress. @Fmohigeria @FMEnng @WHONigeria @DrSamColl



**NIH Pakistan** @NIH\_Pakistan · 14 Jan  
 Training on Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR), for 1st-batch, was facilitated by NIH and UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) at Bahawalpur.



## January Wellbeing Tip

During the remaining winter months, it is essential we take care of ourselves in the cold weather, especially when working from home. Be sure to wear enough layers, eat well, hydrate and make sure to get outside. It can be easy to spend more time at home but going for walks will give you exposure to natural light and is also good for mental wellbeing & COVID is less likely to spread outside.