

Afghanistan



Capital: *Kabul*

Infant Mortality Rate: *119.41/1,000 live births*

Population: *31,108,077 (July 2013 est.)*



Overview

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) received funding from CDC in 2006 through the cooperative agreement "Surveillance and Response to Avian and Pandemic Influenza." Those funds were targeted for activities related to capacity building. Those funds supported the Afghan Public Health Institute (APHI), a division of the MOPH, in a number of activities including: planning and conducting pandemic preparedness and response activities, establishing surveillance for influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory illness (SARI), building laboratory capacity for the testing of influenza specimens, health education, and training activities. After successful completion of the first cooperative agreement, the second cooperative agreement "Sustainable Influenza Surveillance Network and Response to Seasonal and Pandemic Influenza by National Health Authorities outside the United States" was awarded in September 2011.

Highlights

- Conducted a simulation exercise for various stakeholders, including related ministries.
- Supplied National Influenza Centre (NIC) with required influenza reagents.
- Conducted financial audit of the influenza capacity building cooperative agreement.
- Conducted training on communicable disease surveillance and response, epidemiology, influenza and other priority health problems in Afghanistan.

Surveillance

The primary disease surveillance system in Afghanistan is the Disease Early Warning System (DEWS), established in 2006, with technical support from WHO and financial support of USAID. DEWS is a sentinel site based surveillance system for weekly reporting of infectious disease morbidity and mortality, operating in public and private health facilities. DEWS collects data for 15 reportable diseases, including influenza. DEWS has 330 sentinel sites in all 34 provinces of the country.

Surveillance Activities

- Routinely collected ILI and SARI surveillance data at ten sentinel sites located in eight regions of Afghanistan.
- Responded to and investigated one suspected avian influenza case.
- Investigated ten acute respiratory illness (ARI) outbreaks in Afghanistan.
- Investigated two SARI outbreaks, with specimens collected from patients both inside and outside the country.
- Reported 2,494,455 ARI cough-and-cold cases and 498,583 ARI pneumonia cases.

Laboratory

The Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL), NIC, supports the DEWS program in laboratory confirmation of influenza specimens collected both during routine surveillance and from nationwide outbreaks. In 2012, the laboratory performed a total of 4,940 tests on specimens received from all of the DEWS coverage regions. The NIC worked closely with DEWS/MOPH to establish state-of-the-art laboratories for influenza testing. With the support of our international partners, including WHO and NAMRU-3, NIC staff have been trained extensively on typing and subtyping viruses, PCR and real-time PCR detection, and other diagnostic testing techniques. Notable progress in laboratory surveillance capacity has been achieved over the past five years.

Laboratory Activities

The National Influenza Center performed the following tests on specimens received from 10 influenza sentinel sites.

- Performed 434 tests for ILI cases.
- Performed 221 tests for SARI cases.
- Tested samples from two SARI outbreaks.

Preparedness

Afghanistan has detected and responded to 457 disease outbreaks detected by DEWS, including several outbreaks of ARI cough-and-cold and ARI pneumonia. MOPH has also established more sentinel surveillance sites across the country. Through a Codan radio network communication system, daily morbidity and mortality reports for ARI, diarrhea, and injury are collected from all 34 provinces.

Preparedness Activities

- Conducted six DEWS coordination meetings, the aims of which were to enhance surveillance activities and improve action on outbreak detection and responses.
- Trained two people as International Health Regulations (IHR) focal points.
- Conducted outbreak investigation and response refresher training for DEWS provincial officers and CDC officers.
- Procured laboratory reagents for the NIC.

Training

- Conducted a simulation exercise in Kabul for various stakeholders, including other related ministries. The training focused on the importance of pandemic influenza.
- Supported two MOPH staff members who attended the Influenza Data Management Regional Training in Cairo, Egypt.
- Supported 12 DEWS staff members who completed an MPH course in Jodhpur, India.