

# MEET OUR FETP RESIDENT ADVISORS

## WHAT'S AN FETP RESIDENT ADVISOR?

In the fight against infectious diseases and other health threats, there is no substitute for boots-on-the-ground surveillance. This is why Field Epidemiology Training Programs (FETPs), which train disease detectives in core public health principles, are often cited as the most important thing CDC does overseas. The work would not be possible without Resident Advisors, who serve as expert mentors for FETP residents as they learn the fundamental skills of epidemiology.

## WHY DO FETPS NEED RESIDENT ADVISORS?

New FETPs are springing up in countries around the world, and mentors are urgently needed who can train FETP residents well. However, in many cases, countries don't yet have a sufficient number of experts available to do the job. This is where CDC can help provide an expert field epidemiologist and trainer to serve in the program as a Resident Advisor. CDC-supported Resident Advisors stay in place until enough residents have graduated and the program becomes sustainable in country.

IRAQ



*Photo: Faris Lami working with surveyors in the Aiziya district of Wasit Province, Iraq*



*Photo: Lucy Boulanger works alongside FETP residents in Ethiopia*



ETHIOPIA

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## ON THE JOB WITH IRAQ'S RESIDENT ADVISOR

Meet Faris Lami, who has been Resident Advisor for Iraq's FETP program for seven years. Iraq's FETP currently has two cohorts of residents, all of whom are medical doctors.

As part of their training, residents are tackling some of the region's most pressing health concerns, including outbreaks of cholera, measles, H1N1 influenza, mumps, pertussis, and cutaneous leishmaniasis, in addition to non-communicable diseases, mental health, and injuries. They have engaged in biorisk management, mass gathering preparedness, and helping internally displaced persons both in and outside the camps. "Our projects have tackled almost all areas of public health importance in Iraq," Faris says.

Faris is there to provide guidance as residents progress toward becoming seasoned field epidemiologists. Two recent efforts make him particularly proud. One, the Iraq Mass Gathering Project, addresses public health challenges that arise when millions of people from all over the world descend on a single area. The second, the National Registry of End Stage Renal Disease, has become a model for the Iraq Ministry of Health's other chronic disease registries.

Iraq's FETP has created a strong tradition of giving back. Of the program's 34 graduates, 33 are still inside the country working with the ministry. Over the past seven years, Faris has seen the results. "We have graduates in almost all of the Iraqi provinces now," he says. "In the end, there is real improvement and change in the public health system in Iraq."

*"Mentoring residents has exposed me to many different aspects of public health. It has widened my horizons."*

FARIS LAMI  
(Resident Advisor, Iraq)

## ETHIOPIA'S RESIDENT ADVISOR HELPS GROW AN IDEA

Meet Lucy Boulanger. Lucy has been Resident Advisor for Ethiopia's FETP since 2011, and she can't say enough about what residents are accomplishing in the country. Ethiopia is facing its worst drought situation in 50 years, and the program is stepping up to head off the crisis.

When Lucy came to Ethiopia, her main goal as Resident Advisor was to grow the program. And grow, it has. The Ethiopia Ministry of Health has "vigorously embraced" the FETP model, taking a single program with 18 residents in Addis Ababa and replicating it in seven other universities all across the country. CDC is assisting with shaping this expansion into a full FETP pyramid model. They now have 180 first- and second-year trainees in the field. The sheer number of residents and trainees is allowing them to address problems of malnutrition in ways they never could before.

*"The residents feel like they're changing Ethiopia. For the first time, Ethiopia has the expertise to identify and respond to public health emergencies. This makes the residents and trainees so proud."*

LUCY BOULANGER  
(Resident Advisor, Ethiopia)

All 180 trainees are currently deployed throughout the country to "hot spots" – communities with the highest levels of malnutrition. Surveillance for malnutrition was added to the Ethiopian system through FETP six years ago. Residents are doing active surveillance, then matching their data to logistics to get food where it is most urgently needed.

Lucy says Ethiopia has come a long way in the past decade, becoming more interconnected with the global health community. FETP has been integral to this process. "We're not just training people," says Lucy. "We're watching whole systems evolve."