WHO Lyon Office: a key component under the new WHO Health Emergencies Programme

65 countries across the globe supported, with 1000 public health professionals, 200 laboratories and 400 ports and airports officers targeted by Lyon Office learning and training activities.

On 26 April 2017 France signed a EUR 5M grant to support WHO Lyon Office activities on “Strengthening countries preparedness to health emergencies”

Under the new WHO Health Emergencies Programme, the WHO Lyon Office serves as a hub for support to the regions and country offices to strengthen critical public health capacities in vulnerable countries.

The World Health Assembly in May 2016 adopted the decision to establish a new Health Emergencies Programme (WHE)\(^1\). The new Programme, launched in October 2016 is designed to bring speed and predictability to WHO’s emergency work, following an all-hazards approach. WHE is headed by Executive Director Dr Peter Salama who joined WHO in August 2016.


In the context of this transition phase, 2016 closed on a high note for the WHO Lyon Office with the confirmation of the contribution of EUR 5 million by the Government of France in favour of critical capacity building activities carried out by the Office in vulnerable countries. This announcement was made during the annual meeting of the Lyon Office on 15 November 2016, gathering 30 international partners and the WHO Regional Offices for Africa, for the Eastern Mediterranean and for Europe. The active role of the WHO Lyon Office in supporting capacity building and preparedness to health emergencies was highlighted, with 65 vulnerable countries supported in 2016.

The grant agreement was signed on 26 April 2017 thus confirming the statement of President François Hollande during the High Level Conference on Global Health Security: Solutions for strengthening states’ capacities, held in Lyon from 22-23 March 2016\(^2\).

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2. See WHO Lyon Office Newsletter n.7, June 2016: www.who.int/ihr/publications/oms_lyon_newsletter_7.pdf?ua=1

* The WHO Lyon Office is the technical unit, Preparedness, Readiness & Core Capacity Building of the Department of Country Health Emergency Preparedness & IHR (CPI)
Capacity building and preparedness for health emergencies: Regional and country outreach. Highlights: July 2016–April 2017

All activities are carried out in close collaboration with the WHO regional and country offices and technical partners.

EARLY WARNING & NATIONAL SURVEILLANCE STRENGTHENING

- July 2016: Workshop in Gambia to develop a tailored plan of action for strengthening the country’s surveillance system following its in-depth assessment.
- August 2016: Interim evaluation in Togo of the Argus IT tool that uses SMS and internet to facilitate national public health surveillance in accordance with the Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response technical guidelines.
- March-April 2017: Interim evaluation in Togo of the Argus IT tool (see August 2016 above)
- 17-27 October 2016: Mission to pilot test guidance for the assessment and development of a national training plan for the surveillance workforce, Lilongwe, Malawi. This mission was the continuation of WHO support to the Malawi Ministry of Health to develop a surveillance training plan.

LABORATORY STRENGTHENING

- 4-9 September 2016: Participation in the 7th Advanced Course on Diagnostics, Les Pensières, Fondation Mérieux, Annecy, France.
- 12-16 September 2016: Organization of a table top simulation exercise to assess the ability of the public health laboratory sector to collect, ship and test specimens from suspected diseases of high public health importance, Accra, Ghana.
- 28-30 November 2016: Organization of a table top simulation exercise to assess the human and animal health laboratory capacities and collaboration during a zoonotic disease outbreak, Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire
- 29 November 2016 – 3 December 2016: Participation in the Joint WHO Regional Office for Europe Better Labs for Better Health and European TB Laboratory Initiative (ELI) meeting, Tbilisi, Georgia. This project follows a multisectoral approach and focusses on the development of national laboratory and strategic plans, improvement of national training programmes, implementation of quality systems and upgrading of critical infrastructures, such as external quality assessment programmes.
- 13-15 December 2016: Organization of the WHO Extended Biosafety Advisory Group meeting in Geneva, Switzerland to share the latest developments, trends and achievements in laboratory biosafety and biosecurity, and to review and advise on current and future WHO activities and priorities in this area.
- 8-10 February 2017: Attendance to the GHSA Workshop on Enhancing Joint Collaborative Efforts for Laboratory Preparedness, Bangkok, Thailand.
- 13-17 March 2017: Participation in the inspection of the High level containment BSL-4 laboratory of the Public Health Agency of Canada’s (PHAC), Ottawa, Canada

LEARNING AND TRAINING

- 31 January-1 February 2017: 2nd WHO Joint External Evaluation Team Lead Training hosted by WHO Lyon Office, with 26 future Team Leads from all the six WHO Regions.
- 13-17 February 2017: Regional OH-SMART training hosted by the One Health Central and Eastern Africa (OHCEA) University Network, Kampala, Uganda.
- 20-22 February 2017: EURO National IHR Focal Point Meeting, St. Petersbur, Russia.

TRAVEL, TRANSPORT, TOURISM AND MASS GATHERINGS

- 7-11 November 2016: Participation in mission to assess IHR (2005) core capacities at ports, airports and ground crossings, Ningbo, China, carried out in collaboration with the WHO Country Office in China. The objective was to provide technical support to the Chinese Government in its national assessment at one airport and two ports.
- 31 January – 1 February 2017: Technical Consultancy on Health Risk Assessment Tools for Mass Gathering Events, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, hosted by the Global Center for Mass Gatherings Medicine, Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in collaboration with WHO. The main objective was to review existing mass gatherings risk assessment tools, technical guidance and trainings that could be tailored specifically to meet risks in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region.

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