

July 2020

Welcome...

to our latest news update, with a focus on the response of our member networks to the COVID-19 pandemic. CORDS is a program of Ending Pandemics, comprised of six regional networks, working to reduce and prevent the spread of diseases by exchanging information and best practice. Our vision is a world united against infectious diseases. Early detection of outbreaks helps keep disease transmission to its area of origin, which, in our increasingly mobile world, is vital to stopping life threatening diseases such as Zika, Ebola and Yellow Fever. The collective expertise of the CORDS networks and their close relationships with local communities facilitate timely detection and response to outbreaks.



photo: Mr. Sok Samnang, MBDS Country Coordinator, Cambodia

Regional responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

The six member networks that make up CORDS have continued to be at the forefront of the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prof. Amin Soebandrio, the Chair of the Asia Partnership on Emerging Infectious Diseases Research ([APEIR](#)) steering committee, also serves as the Chair of the Eijkman Institute for Molecular Biology, one of the national reference laboratories for COVID-19 in Indonesia. The Institute provides COVID-19 molecular tests at a rate of approximately 1,000 per day, improves capacity and technology for the tests and is the lead in a COVID-19 vaccine development consortium as well as a consortium on convalescence plasma treatments. Prof. Amin Soebandrio and the Institute team identified Covid-19 Plaque Reduction Neutralization Tests (PRNT) and Whole Genome Sequence of Indonesia's SARS-CoV-2 isolates to support vaccine development and molecular epidemiology. They are also working closely with the Indonesian government and others to help mitigate the pandemic nationwide.

Prof. Wiku Adisasmito, the Coordinator of APEIR, is the Chair of the Expert National Task Force for the

Acceleration of COVID-19 Mitigation in Indonesia, where they support the government to manage the pandemic. Prof. Wiku Adisasmito and his team have successfully developed an integrated outbreak response information system, 'Bersatu Lawan' COVID-19 (BLC), which enables the Indonesian Government to gather real time information from various health care facilities and monitor the pandemic's movement through contact tracing. BLC has become a governmental tool to help decide future policy and strategy. On 24 June 2020, Prof. Wiku Adisasmito and one of the expert team members assisted the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, to declare the categories of a zoning system for revised regulations and to develop the health protocols for each zone. In addition, in April 2020, the President set a target of 20,000 tests a day. By 26 June, this had been achieved with 22,819 tests. Prof. Wiku Adisasmito and his team supported the government to reach this target by providing the real-time information necessary.

The East African Integrated Disease Surveillance Network ([EAIDSNet](#)) has been working hand in hand with the East African Community (EAC) with meetings focusing on cross-border problems. The borders between Kenya and Tanzania as well as those between Uganda and Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and South Sudan are experiencing huge queues of miles of trucks. EAIDSNet member countries are holding regular discussions on how they can work together at border posts to reduce the problem given that these truck drivers have been identified as the major transmitters of the COVID-19 disease from one East African country to another. The member countries have provided their requirements for the purchase of COVID-19 testing kits to target cross-borders and these will be distributed through The East Africa Public Health Laboratory Networking Project (EAPHLN) a co-EAC partnership with EAIDSNet. EAIDSNet and South African member network SACIDS are also looking at the COVID-19 situation worldwide to garner experience and learnings to help mitigate the effects of the virus in Africa. EAIDSNET has since last week been invited to participate in the Africa Taskforce for Coronavirus Preparedness and Response (AFTCOR) meetings and activities.

The member countries of the Mekong Basin Disease Surveillance Foundation ([MBDS](#)) are continuing their work to try and contain the pandemic through National Action Plans, infectious disease laws, collaboration with WHO and work with social networks, partners and the public. The MBDS network has been working on public health and risk communication with a focus on panic reduction. Communication channels including panel discussions, television shows, IEC social media distribution and regular government announcements have been used to try and ensure that the correct health messages about the pandemic reach the public.

Since April 2020, The Middle East Consortium on Infectious Disease Surveillance ([MECIDS](#)) has been working with Palestinian public health officials and Ma'an the Palestinian broadcast network on a public awareness campaign that includes four COVID-19 information videos and interviews to be shown on Palestinian television this month. The network is also planning a series of COVID-19 webinars to target health providers (public, private, NGO's and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East) final year medical students, first responders and governments. Webinar topics will include: an introductory course on preparedness, use of WHO exercises, general epidemiology, the importance of social distancing, testing types, how to manage cases, mental health and risk communication. The webinars will be aired on the Ma'an network.

The Southeast European Center for Surveillance and Control of Infectious Diseases ([SECID](#)) have held three webinars in collaboration with the South-eastern European Health Network on the general response to COVID-19, COVID-19 surveillance and further collaboration. Their member countries have a whats-app group to share day to day COVID-19 updates as well as any unusual activity and Albania and Macedonia have identified cross- border cases. The network has been working on a draft project looking at the relationship between COVID-19 and influenza including the circulation that took place before the virus was discovered. The team is calculating the laboratory needs and liaising with the CDC. They have a database of ILI (influenza-like illness) and SARI (severe acute respiratory infections) cases. SECID will hold several influenza themed webinars in July to consider the effect of COVID-19 and pandemic preparedness.

The Southern African member network [SACIDS](#) Foundation for One Health has been finalising a COVID-19 surveillance manual, in conjunction with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), designed to train African community health workers. The network has also been working on inter-laboratory quality assurance in coordination with the Uganda Virus Research Institute and EAIDSNet and training laboratory technicians in Zambia. SACIDS and EAIDSNet partner institutions have conducted the

sequencing of complete SARS Cov-2 genomes for Tanzania, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The genome sequences have indicated importation of different viral clades into these countries and large numbers of related viral sequences suggesting evidence of local transmissions. Colleagues in Mozambique are being supported to work on testing and surveillance at cross border sites and overall testing in the network member countries DR Congo, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia has increased fourfold following the Skoll Foundation grant funding. The next step in Mozambique will be to conduct SARS CoV-2 genome sequencing and the training of community health workers in how to use SACIDS' participatory surveillance tool 'Afyadata'. The network is also focusing on protocols for assessing COVID-19 risk factors, which they hope to have ready to roll out in the next few weeks and are exploring the use of artificial intelligence for COVID-19 surveillance in partnership with the International Development Research Centre. Simon Antera, Director of the African Field Epidemiology Network (AFENET), is currently representing SACIDS at the surveillance sub-group of the Africa CDC COVID-19 Task Force.



MECIDS Workshop and Trilateral Action Plan on Leishmaniasis

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) and Al Quds Public Health Society (AQPHS) organized a desktop exercise workshop on Leishmaniasis in Athens, Greece with 15 participants from 11-14 November 2018. Leishmaniasis is a disease that affects neglected or marginalized people and is the second most prevalent parasitic infection after malaria. The workshop was facilitated by Dr. Robert C. Spencer, a Medical Microbiologist consultant with over 45 years of experience in public health. Dr Spencer worked with SFCG, AQPHS, and the team leaders from each country - Dr Ziad Abdeen, Palestine; Dr Sami Sheikh Ali, Jordan; and Dr Ruti Yishai, Israel, from CORDS member network [MECIDS](#) – the Middle Eastern Consortium on Infectious Disease Surveillance. MECIDS, founded in 2003, uses its administrative base in Jerusalem and scientific secretariat in Amman, to connect and collaborate with a wide range of regional academic institutions, national centers for disease control, and health ministries. The team leaders, all prominent public health professionals, identified participants and prepared and designed the exercise, alongside SFCG and AQPHS, ensuring it met their regional needs whilst including recent research and case studies. Nine Leishmaniasis experts, three per country, were selected to participate based on their previous participation in Leishmaniasis trainings, and range of expertise. Two observers from CORDS attended as external contributors.

The goal of the workshop was to produce a public health manual to improve the standardization of approaches and methodologies for Cutaneous Leishmaniasis response in all three countries, based on the 'Common Ground Approach'. Currently, each country uses a wide range of different public health

approaches for Leishmaniasis diagnosis, treatment, and environmental control. Given the alarming outbreaks in summer 2018 and previous years, the workshop was designed to bring together the top medical and scientific experts and develop a long-term plan for improved trilateral cooperation and response. Despite visa problems for the Jordanians, and some instability due to protests in Palestinian communities, the workshop was deemed a success. The [manual](#) produced forms one of the tenets of 'People for Peaceful Change' funded by DFID, the UK Department for International Development.

During workshop sessions, Dr. Spencer facilitated conversations about major trends in the evolution of the disease and its effects; existing successes and challenges of different diagnostic, epidemiological, treatment, and prevention methods; and the critical needs across all three countries and the surrounding region. To frame these conversations participants reviewed two of the most important recent scientific articles on Leishmaniasis responses. These discussions led to breakthroughs in understanding their shared and comparative challenges, as well as what methods and practices are working in certain areas, and which need to be put in place in others. Participants drafted proposals on cost-effective and comprehensive public health response plans.

In summary, the most significant proposals included:

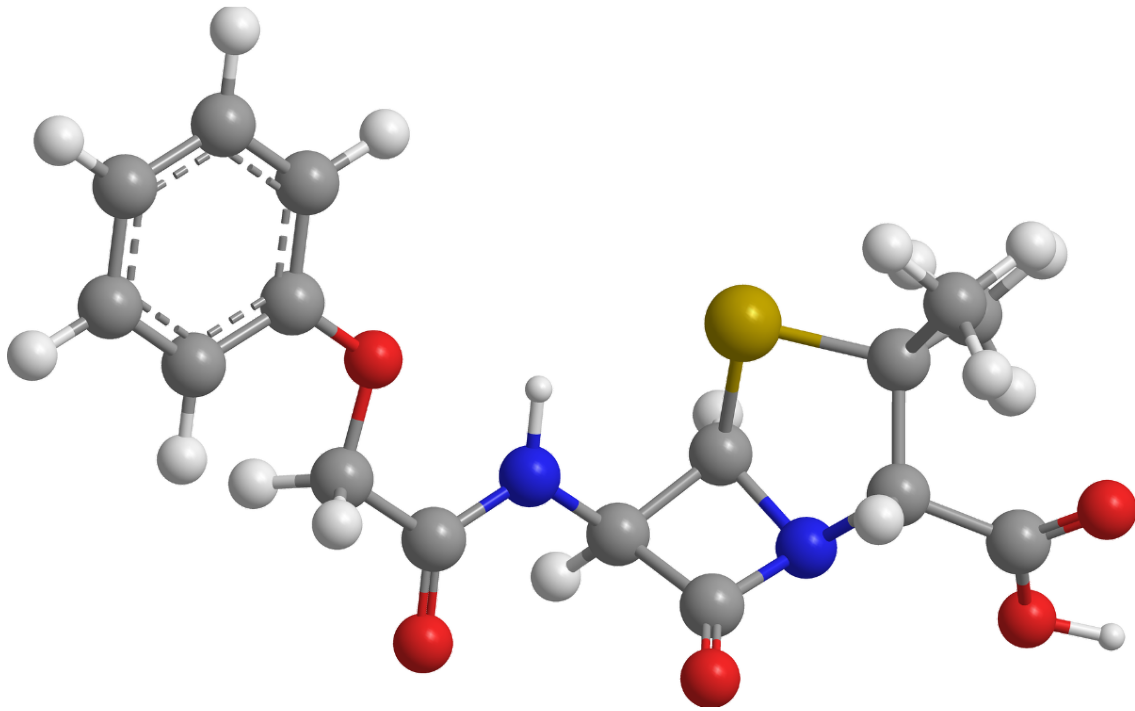
- Common protocols for diagnosis and treatment of medical cases for all types of Leishmaniasis
- Standardized training of technical and scientific personnel in all three health sectors
- Establishment of national and/or regional committees in/between all three countries
- Vector and reservoir control with cooperation between ministries of health, environment, agriculture, and local municipalities
- Cross-border risk assessment, disease mapping, and surveillance
- Synchronized control and prevention practices (insecticide use, vaccination, window screens, bed nets, reservoir/vector control, etc.)
- Public awareness campaigns
- Increased cross-border research on all levels of public health response
- Creation of a shared database between the three ministries
- Advocating for greater government funding

The workshop particularly identified key emerging areas for advancing the field of Leishmaniasis research, including the need for greater understanding of the factors affecting the transmission of the disease, response to the growing role of new urban constructions in populated areas, development of effective control measures, increased awareness by all healthcare professionals, and creation of a public education program in Leishmaniasis hotspots.

Read the Leishmaniasis Manual [here](#)

For more information on the project contact [Sari Hussein](#)

Find out more about MECIDS [here](#)



New PROMED-AMR compliments CORDS Fleming Fund regional grant activities

- Dr. Tin Tin Myang (Myanmar) of the Mekong Basin Disease Surveillance Foundation (MBDS) is appointed as an expert on newly announced PROMED Antimicrobial Resistance Network: PROMED-AMR.

On 4 June 2020, Larry Madoff announced the Program for Monitoring Emerging Diseases (ProMED) and the International Society for Infectious Diseases (ISID) new surveillance network: PROMED ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE NETWORK; PROMED-AMR.

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been difficult to focus on the myriad of other emerging disease threats that we at ProMED bring to your attention each day. Another pandemic, moldering for decades and perhaps worsened by the onslaught of COVID-19, are the illnesses caused by antimicrobial resistant (AMR) pathogens. Antimicrobial resistance -- the ability of bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites to thrive even in the presence of medications that would normally destroy them or inhibit their growth -- is a global challenge. The inappropriate use of antimicrobials, including their overuse in agriculture, animals, and humans, low-quality or raudulent medicines, poor infection prevention and control, and inadequate disease surveillance, diminishes our arsenal of tools that treat and prevent infectious disease. AMR puts at great risk the advances made in preventing and treating infectious diseases during the past century.” (Larry Madoff, <https://isid.org/promed-antimicrobial-resistance-network-promed-amr/>)

“This network will collect information on resistance trends, newly identified cases and clusters of AMR using digital disease detection methods and non-traditional information sources in all World Health Organization regions. Reports communicated via ProMED-AMR will be vetted, analyzed, and commented upon by a global team of AMR specialists. Given ProMED’s longstanding commitment to the One Health principle and information transparency, this new surveillance platform will collect reports on resistant pathogens that propagate both in, and between, humans, animals and the environment. Reports will be disseminated electronically in near real-time to an international audience of subscribers on a continuous basis. Importantly, all information will be available free of charge. This initiative will complement the Fleming Fund which also aims to support LMICs to generate, share and use antimicrobial resistance data to improve global understanding of the scale and scope of AMR.” <https://isid.org/promed-partners-with-phe-amr/>

If AMR is of interest to you, please sign up for a free subscription to Pro-MED-AMR here

UN - Strengthening animal health systems to accelerate progress towards SDG's

- Virtual side event at the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
- Friday, 10 July 2020, 8 am – 9 am (EST)/ 1 pm – 2 pm (BST)

Organised by: Brooke in collaboration with The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Senegal to the United Nations.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has revealed both the vital importance of animal health systems along with major weaknesses in those systems. With the pandemic originating in wet markets that largely escape veterinary surveillance, it is clear that animal health is currently the weakest pillar of One Health – a collaborative and multisectoral approach which aims to achieve optimal health outcomes recognising the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment. This event will profile the interdependence of animals and humans, detailing both the threat from zoonotic diseases and the benefits that animals have on human development. It will expose the lack of investment in animal health systems at the same time as pointing to promising developments in the field of One Health.

Speakers:

- [Dr Monique Eloit](#), Director General, World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) (tbc)
- [Pr. Sarah Cleaveland](#), Professor of Comparative Epidemiology, University of Glasgow
- Dr Papa Seck, Technical Advisor to the President of Senegal on Animal Health, Livestock and Fisheries; Focal Point, Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA)
- Dr Raymond Briscoe, Executive Director, Veterinary Surgeon, DCA Livestock Programs, Afghanistan
- Laura Kavata, Community Development Officer, Brooke East Africa

Registration: www.thebrooke.org/animal-health-for-sdgs

Resources

OpenWHO is a new online learning tool from the World Health Organization that offers resources including online training in health emergencies such as COVID-19 and Ebola.

<https://openwho.org>

COVID-19 Resources

For COVID-19 resources including the WHO Situation reports, the John Hopkins University virus map and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention visit the Ending Pandemics [website](#)

[Twitter](#)[Website](#)[Email](#)

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