

Capacity Building in Dietary Monitoring and Public Health Nutrition in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

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Abstract : Similar to Western Countries, the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) also presents major public health issues associated with the increased consumption of sugar, fat, and salt. Therefore, one of the policies of the World Health Organization's (WHO) EMR is to reduce the intake of salt, sugar, and fat (Saturated fatty acids, trans fatty acids) to address the risk of non-communicable diseases (i.e. diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer) and obesity. The project objective is to assess status and provide training and capacity development in the use of improved standardized methodologies for updated food composition data, dietary intake methods, use of suitable biomarkers of nutritional value and determine health outcomes in low and middle-income countries (LMIC). Training exchanges have been developed with clusters of countries created resulting from regional needs including Sudan, Egypt and Jordan; Tunisia, Morocco, and Mauritania; and other Middle Eastern countries. This capacity building will lead to the development and sustainability of up-to-date national and regional food composition databases in LMIC for use in dietary monitoring assessment in food and nutrient intakes. Workshops were organized to provide training and capacity development in the use of improved standardized methodologies for food composition and food intake. Training needs identified and short-term scientific missions organized for LMIC researchers including (1) training and knowledge exchange workshops, (2) short-term exchange of researchers, (3) development and application of protocols and (4) development of strategies to reduce sugar and fat intake. An initial training workshop, Morocco 2018 was attended by 25 participants from 10 EMR countries to review status and support development of regional food composition. 4 training exchanges are in progress. The use of improved standardized methodologies for food composition and dietary intake will produce robust measurements that will reinforce dietary monitoring and policy in LMIC. The capacity building from this project will lead to the development and sustainability of up-to-date national and regional food composition databases in EMR countries. Supported by the UK Medical Research Council, Global Challenges Research Fund, (MR/R019576/1), and the World Health Organization's Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Keywords : dietary intake, food composition, low and middle-income countries, status.

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