



World Field Epidemiology Day

Once again, the World Field Epidemiology Day, celebrated annually on September 7, is here with us. We are presented with yet another opportunity to recognize and raise awareness about the critical role of field epidemiology in advancing global health security. Indeed, we have yet another opportunity to celebrate the gallant men and women who have been at the forefront of the fight to advance national, continental and global health security. Their sacrifices, which painfully sometimes include paying the ultimate prize with their lives, have contributed greatly towards ensuring a healthier, safer and a more secure world. Imbued with the right knowledge, skills, and right attitudes, they have made significant contributions to the prevention, early detection and response to public health threats. The value of their efforts towards creating healthy populations and a conducive environment for socio-economic progress cannot be overemphasized. To these field epidemiologists, heroes and heroines, I say congratulations! AFENET is very proud of your exploits in promoting health, responding to public health threats, and saving lives and livelihoods.

The world field epidemiology day calls for deep reflection on the work, challenges and investment in developing field epidemiology capacity with the view to charting a path to sustainability, quality improvement and optimal deployment of field epidemiology skills and competencies.

This year's theme '**Collaboration is Essential to Field Epidemiology**' is most apt and reflects the approach, nature and character of field epidemiology. Throughout history, collaboration has been the cornerstone for human progress. In health, the eradication of smallpox, the near eradication of guinea worm, the great progress made towards eradicating poliomyelitis, and many such efforts have leveraged the power and synergy of collaboration. The global response to the Covid-19

pandemic and the ongoing Mpox response efforts are underpinned by a complex network of collaborations. Investing in field epidemiology capacity development and effectively deploying the skills thereof to advance health security depends heavily on collaborations. Indeed, the success of any field epidemiology effort is contingent on solid collaboration. These collaborations are usually multi-disciplinary, and multi-sectorial involving communities, Ministries of Health, Ministries of Agriculture, Ministries of Water and Sanitation, National Public Health Institutes, universities and partners such as the World Health Organization, the World Bank, Global Fund, US CDC, Africa CDC, Foundations, the emerging Global Field Epidemiology Partnership, FETP networks such as the African Field Epidemiology Network, EMPHNET, TEPHINET and many more.

In the work of field epidemiologists, effective collaboration with communities is essential in guaranteeing successful prevention, detection and response to health threats.

In the face of dwindling funding for the development of field epidemiology capacity, it is important that every field epidemiology training program reflects on strengthening national ownership and forging stronger partnerships and collaborations to ensure sustainability. We must strengthen the collaboration with the private sector. We must define innovative resource mobilization approaches to avail resources to sustain the field epidemiology capacity development efforts.

We must also strengthen collaboration on the issue of continuous quality improvement. High quality programs that are impacting public health by contributing meaningfully to national, continental and global health security are programs likely to attract funding thereby enhancing sustainability.

In the spirit of being each other's keeper and noting that some countries are more endowed with field epidemiology capacity than others, we must also collaborate on cross-order deployment of available field epidemiology capacity. The AFENET Corps of Disease Detectives (ACoDD) is one such platform for such critical deployment collaboration.

Let all of us- individuals, communities, governmental and non-governmental partners, the private sector, Foundations, etc., strengthen our collaboration in the noble effort of developing field epidemiology capacity and deploying same to effectively respond to our health challenges.

Indeed, collaboration is essential to Field Epidemiology.

Once again, congratulations to all field epidemiologists!

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