

**Title: *FETP Informatics Curriculum Launch in Sierra Leone Marks a Major Milestone in Public Health Capacity Building***

The Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) has trained 22,000 public health professionals in over 90 countries, equipping them with epidemiology skills for addressing public health emergencies. As data become more digitized and accessible, FETP trainees need informatics competencies to handle health data efficiently. Sierra Leone hosted a workshop for the first global FETP health informatics curriculum, aimed at providing critical informatics skills to public health professionals. The launch of the FETP Informatics curriculum in Sierra Leone on December 2, 2024, marked a significant milestone in enhancing the country's public health capacity. This achievement was possible through collaboration involving the Ministry of Health, the National Public Health Agency (NPHA), the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC), University of Washington and California San Francisco and African Field Epidemiology Network (AFENET).

The new curriculum aims to:

- Empower public health professionals with advanced data collection, analysis, and visualization skills.
- Prepare trainees to manage and use digital platforms for disease surveillance and response.

- Bridge existing gaps in the FETP Curriculum to address emerging technological challenges.

A five-day training was held, covering various modules like introduction to informatics principles, systems, & tools for surveillance, using informatics for detection & diagnosis, standards and data dictionaries, detecting and fixing data quality issues, using software to compile & analyze surveillance data, incorporating informatics into your outbreak investigation plan, assessing software applications use of data standards, and data security features, using Informatics for data collection, compilation, analysis and visualization, applying informatics to improve interpretation, using informatics to enhance communication and dissemination etc. A total of 30 participants (15 trainees of FETP intermediate cohort 8, 13 FETP graduates and 2 health informatics staff) were selected from programs, directorates, and DHMTs of the ministries of health, agriculture, and environment. The workshop was facilitated by experts from the US CDC, AFENET, and the NPHA. The curriculum was carefully designed to provide participants with practical knowledge and tools to enhance their understanding of informatics in the context of public health surveillance, outbreak response, and program evaluation.

The training sessions were interactive, involving hands on exercises, case studies, and group discussions to reinforce learning outcomes.

The successful completion of the FETP Informatics curriculum training manifested a significant milestone in the professional development of participants. By the end of the five days program, participants had acquired a solid foundation in informatics principles and techniques, enabling them to effectively utilize data for evidence based decision making in their public health roles. The collaborative efforts of the Ministry of Health, the NPHA, the US CDC, and AFENET resulted in a cohort of skilled professionals equipped to tackle complex public health challenges using informatics tools and methodologies.

The FETP Informatics curriculum extended beyond the training itself. Participants from various programs, DHMTs and directorates came out with exceptional confidence and expertise in leveraging data to inform public health interventions and policies. This enhanced capacity in informatics is expected to lead to improved disease surveillance, outbreak detection, and response efforts in the country, ultimately contributing to better health outcomes for the population of Sierra Leone. Furthermore, the curriculum will

improve the Joint External Evaluation (JEE) indicators including: Early warning surveillance, event verification and investigation, data analysis and information sharing as well as workforce training. The event also fostered strong partnerships and knowledge sharing among the collaborating organizations, paving the way for future joint initiatives to strengthen public health systems and build resilient communities in the country.



*Group photo*



*Presentation of opening statement by members of the high table*



*A cross section of the FETP informatics participants*