OpenWHO is marking a new milestone in its efforts to expand the global reach of life-saving knowledge for health emergencies: 6 million course enrolments!

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a surge in demand for WHO’s free online learning platform, which counted 160 000 enrolments at the start of 2020. OpenWHO has served as a growing source of knowledge for demographics that are typically underserved online, including women and the elderly as they actively seek information about COVID-19.

Learning reach has also extended beyond the online platform as countries and communities adapt materials to local contexts and offline demands to bypass technological and connectivity barriers, creating a multiplier effect that advances equity.

The platform currently hosts 39 COVID-19 courses and 81 courses on other key health topics, and has issued more than 3.2 million certificates.
Expanding surveillance and response capacity in the African Region

OpenWHO is collaborating with the WHO Regional Office for Africa (AFRO) on the production of an Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) 3rd Edition online training package, which will consist of 5 courses in English, French and Portuguese.

To date, all 5 courses in the English series, Courses 1 and 2 in the French series and Course 1 in the Portuguese series are available on OpenWHO. In total, the courses have more than 10,000 enrolments, with more than 3,900 Records of Achievement and 4,100 Confirmation of Participation certificates issued. We plan to launch all courses in French and Portuguese by early 2022.

The aims of the training package are to contribute to the implementation of the AFRO IDSR Strategy 2020–2030. This Strategy was adopted in 2019 during the 69th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa, by countries in the WHO African Region, for implementing comprehensive public health surveillance and response systems for priority diseases, conditions and events at all levels of health systems.

The IDSR online training package is part of a comprehensive AFRO IDSR capacity-building programme, which also includes Project ECHO virtual training sessions and webinars, and case-based and remote Communities of Practice.

Peer-reviewed paper highlights pandemic shifts in learner demographics

A peer-reviewed article analysing changes in OpenWHO user trends before and during the COVID-19 pandemic was published this month in IOS Press as part of the 2021 European Federation for Medical Informatics Special Topic Conference.

The paper concluded: "The pandemic has led to increased learner commitment and new learners from the general public and those vulnerable to the disease, thus expanding and equalizing public health education to previously underrepresented groups. Open online learning ensures the wide access to emergency knowledge for both professionals in public health and to the general public."

You can read the full open-access paper here.
Prioritizing access to learning has enabled OpenWHO to have tremendous reach in line with WHO’s mission to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable. Grounded in the principles of open access and equity, courses are free, self-paced, accessible in low-bandwidth and offline formats, and available in national and local languages.

In addition to these core features, OpenWHO also provides closed online training spaces to enable WHO experts to provide targeted learning to specific audiences. WHO colleagues who are interested can contact the OpenWHO team for additional details.