Biography

Dr Hajjeh is a senior public health leader with extensive experience in global health, health policy and diplomacy, especially in the Middle East region.

Dr Hajjeh is from Lebanon, and has witnessed first hand growing up during the civil war how armed conflict puts people's health at risk. This motivated her to make it her life's mission to strive to provide the best health services for the most vulnerable.

Currently, Dr Hajjeh is the director of the Department of Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control at WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO). In this capacity, she played a major role in supporting emergency response in the region, and in accelerating the agenda for prevention and control of vaccine preventable diseases, HIV, hepatitis, malaria, tuberculosis, neglected tropical diseases, and antimicrobial resistance. During her tenure at EMRO, she worked closely with the Global Fund to develop a special grant for emergency response in countries affected by conflict, and with the GAVI Alliance to support immunization programs. Prior to joining WHO EMRO in 2016, Dr Hajjeh was with the US Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) for 23 years, where she held many senior positions, and worked extensively in the Middle East .

Between 2005-2010, Dr Hajjeh was the director of the GAVI Hib vaccine Initiative, that introduced lifesaving vaccines for Hib meningitis and pneumonia to millions of children in limited resource countries around the world. Between 1996 and 2016, Dr Hajjeh led many responses to major epidemics across the world, including meningitis during Hajj in Saudi Arabia in 2000, cholera in Haiti in 2010, and recently MERS coronavirus in Saudi Arabia and Ebola in West Africa. She has considerable experience in health policies and supported development of various global policies for prevention of infectious diseases, such as for new vaccines and strategies for building laboratory and surveillance systems. Throughout her career, she managed increasingly complex departments and initiatives with large budgets.

She is a well known speaker, and advocate for strong public health capacity in the region.

She has broad health diplomacy skills working with ministries of health and governments in the Middle East and globally. She is fully fluent in Arabic (mother language), French and English.

Dr Hajjeh holds a Medical Doctor (M.D.) degree from the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, and has benefited from extensive training in medicine (American board certified in Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases) and public health (epidemiology training at the CDC). She has received many awards, including the prestigious Federal Employee of the Year Award in 2014 for her global vaccine work. Dr. Hajjeh has published over 150 peer-reviewed papers and book chapters, serves as a reviewer for multiple journals, and holds professor positions in medicine and public health at Emory and Johns Hopkins universities.