

World Health Organization Topic Summaries

Topic A: Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines non-communicable diseases (NCDs) as diseases of long duration and generally slow progression with four main types: cardiovascular, cancer, chronic respiratory, and diabetes.¹ NCDs attribute to 70 percent of all deaths worldwide and, of those deaths, 82 percent occur in low- and middle-income countries. WHO has found an increase in NCD related deaths from tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol, and unhealthy diets.² Prevention, management, and surveillance are the principle factors that WHO has identified to help curb the number of deaths from NCDs. WHO has many programs and departments focused on prevention, including the Tobacco Free Initiative, the Chronic Diseases and Health Promotion Department, and mHealth, each of which have different targets and objectives to help lessen the number NCDs.³ WHO works to provide screenings and treatment, which are the most costly aspects of combating NCDs.⁴ Surveillance of NCDs has shown that childhood obesity has risen exponentially over the past four decades as unhealthy diets in low to moderate income countries increase.⁵ WHO continues to combat the effects of NCDs in line with the *Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs 2013-2020* and relevant resolutions, including *A/RES/66/2*.⁶

Topic B: Sexually Transmitted Infections

Sustainable Development Goal 3 is dedicated to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages, including by combatting the spread and effects of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).⁷ WHO's *Global Health Sector Strategy on Sexually Transmitted Infections, 2016-2021* lays out a vision of zero new infections, zero STI-related complications and deaths, and a world where everyone has free and easy access to sexually transmitted infection prevention and treatment services; however, achieving such a vision would require massive global action.⁸ Chlamydia, syphilis, and trichomoniasis are among the most prevalent global STIs, but gonorrhoeae, *Treponema pallidum*, and human papillomavirus are currently being prioritized for control and monitoring due to their relatively cost-effect interventions.⁹ HIV/AIDS also continues to be a global issue; many United Nations bodies work to combat HIV/AIDS under the auspices of UNAIDS, a joint program of eleven bodies that work together to coordinate action and provide support services to combat and treat HIV.¹⁰ UNAIDS offers programming to help with both treatment and medical care, as well as educational and prevention materials. Some Member States have prioritized education regarding sexual and reproductive health care but changing behaviors through intervention has proven to be difficult, especially as curbing the spread of STIs often means pushing back against sociocultural norms.¹¹

¹ http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/noncommunicable_diseases/en/

² <http://www.who.int/ncds/en/>

³ <http://www.who.int/ncds/prevention/introduction/en/>

⁴ <http://www.who.int/ncds/management/en/>

⁵ <http://www.who.int/ncds/surveillance/en/>

⁶ http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA66/A66_R10-en.pdf?ua=1

⁷ <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/246296/WHO-RHR-16.09-eng.pdf;jsessionid=CD0AB2ACAA1A1D53DE85182735C36314?sequence=1>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <http://www.unaids.org/en/whoweare/about>

¹¹ <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/246296/WHO-RHR-16.09-eng.pdf;jsessionid=CD0AB2ACAA1A1D53DE85182735C36314?sequence=1>

Topic B: International Preparedness for Pandemics

Preparedness for potential pandemics at the national, regional, and international levels has become a topic of increasing concern as the threats posed by contagious diseases have increased. WHO has identified several pandemic or epidemic diseases, including Ebola virus disease, influenza, meningitis, sudden acute respiratory syndrome, and smallpox, among others. The effects of outbreaks can be reduced by being well prepared and having comprehensive, flexible, and responsive plans that are well-tested and engage actors at all levels of society.¹² WHO has created checklists for pandemic risk and impact management to assist national authorities in developing or updating their own preparedness plans.¹³ There are also United Nations entities that exist specifically to assist with preparing for and responding to pandemics, such as the United Nations System Influenza Coordination (UNSIC) Office and WHO's Contingency Fund for Emergencies.¹⁴ Response during pandemic events relies highly upon coordination; WHO has developed guidelines to provide consistent coordinated medical response internationally, but most responses rely on Member States continuing to provide essential services, including health, defense, law and order, finance, transport, telecommunications, energy, food and water services.¹⁵ In 2010, the World Health Assembly adopted *WHA63.1* to address pandemic influenza preparedness specifically, and WHO has since published several reports and findings, but several challenges remain in ensuring international preparedness for pandemics and outbreaks.¹⁶

¹² <http://www.who.int/influenza/preparedness/en/>

¹³ http://www.who.int/influenza/preparedness/pandemic/influenza_risk_management_checklist_2018/en/

¹⁴ <http://www.un-influenza.org/?q=content/pandemic-preparedness-guidelines>

¹⁵ <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/259893/WHO-WHE-IHM-GIP-2017.1-eng.pdf;jsessionid=94FA7D0F5FB95E2C0F80C13CE1CED33E?sequence=1>

¹⁶ http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA63-REC1/WHA63_REC1-P2-en.pdf