Noncommunicable Diseases

Conditions such as Mental Health, Violence, Injuries and Disabilities; Cardiovascular diseases; Diabetes; Cancer; Chronic respiratory diseases; Stroke; and diabetes are still major threats to health and well-being and are major contributors to DALYs. These diseases are responsible for 60% of deaths globally and 80% in Africa. The leading causes of death are noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

Promoting Health through the Life Cycle

WHO works in the following areas:

- Child Health and Development
- Adolescent, Youth and School Health
- Maternal and Newborn Health
- NCDs: Cardiovascular Diseases, Diabetes and Mental Health
- Women’s Health
- Women’s Health and Ageing
- Immunization Delivery Services
- Accelerated Immunization Initiatives
- Immunization Systems Support

Health Systems Strengthening

WHO contributes to the attainment of health for all by helping countries to develop responsive and resilient health systems that are centered on people’s needs and circumstances. We support countries in the region to strengthen their health systems in order to make them more equitable and sustainable, with the overarching goal of achieving Universal Health Coverage.

WHO also supports countries in completing the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and pursuing the post-2015 health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) goals and targets, and in developing resilient health systems, able to respond to shocks, adapt, retain performance and sustain gains during and after crises.

Health Security and Emergencies

WHO helps countries to reduce death, sickness, and societal disruption by managing outbreaks and the health-related aspects of human security, through prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery actions that build resilience and use a risk-informed approach.

WHO works in the following areas:

- Infectious hazard management
- Member State Preparedness
- Health risk communications
- Health Emergencies (All-hazards/Events
- External relations

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Communicable Diseases
(Infectious diseases)

Some of the major contributors to short lifespan in the region are communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, diarrhoeal diseases, acute respiratory infections and water-borne diseases. Most of these diseases can largely be prevented and their negative impact reduced if people adopt healthy lifestyles, have access to safe drinking water and adequate nutrition, live in well ventilated houses with improved sanitation facilities and have financial and geographic access to quality health care. WHO continues to promote policies and best practices that facilitate better health outcomes for all.

Who we are

The World Health Organization contributes to a better future for people everywhere. Good health lays the foundation for vibrant and productive communities, stronger economies, safer nations and a better world. Our work touches people’s lives around the world every day.

As the lead health authority within the United Nations system, we help to ensure the safety of the medicines and vaccines that save and protect us. We aim to provide the food we eat, and the water we drink. We aim to provide every child, woman and man with the best chance to lead a long, healthy and fulfilled life.

Health Challenges

The health challenges facing the WHO African Region include communicable and non-communicable diseases, high maternal and child deaths aggravated by epidemics, poverty and other natural and man-made disasters. Weak health systems mean coverage of health actions remains low, often interventions relating to leadership and governance, staffing, medical products, vaccines and technologies, information, financing, service delivery, etc.

Other challenges include ensuring universal access to health services and addressing the impact of the broad determinants of health, such as access to education, housing, clean water and sanitation, safe food, nutrition and health promotion. The strengthening of health systems based on the primary health care approach, increased investment in health as well as more efficient management of resources are the appropriate responses to address these challenges.