World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization (WHO) was established on April 7, 1948, with its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. As a specialized agency of the UN, it coordinates global health policies related to prevention, promotion, and intervention. The WHO defines health as a "state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease."[1]

Today, the organization consists of 194 Member States and employs over 7000 people in 150 offices worldwide. Its work is divided among six regional offices: Africa, Europe, Southeast Asia, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Western Pacific, and the Americas. Additionally, the WHO maintains effective multilingual communication through social networks, advertisements, and other informational resources.

The WHO leads critical global health initiatives, partnering with various health organizations and conducting essential research on health-related issues. It also sets new health standards and monitors compliance to ensure the effective management of global health crises. It also introduces new policy principles to merge scientific development with responsibility and ethical principles and oversees the global health situation to prevent any threats.

A key limitation of the organization is its heavy reliance on voluntary contributions from Member States and private donors, which make up most of its funding. Additionally, its decisions and resolutions are generally non-binding, meaning they do not carry legal enforcement power and rely on the willingness of Member States to implement them. Decision-making within the WHO is managed by the World Health Assembly, where each of the 194 Member States has one vote, and most decisions are made by a two-thirds majority. However, building consensus among such many diverse countries with varying political and public health agendas can be a lengthy and challenging process.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the WHO worked toward achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) around health, which included combating HIV/AIDS

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[1] World Health Organization. (2024). Constitution. https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution

and other diseases, reducing child mortality in children under five, and improving conditions for prenatal care and maternity. Additionally, the organization has increased the amount of information available on reproductive health and gender equality, and it remains a key player in fulfilling the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Moreover, the WHO strives to prevent and stop the spread of deadly infections and pandemics. As a result, in 1980, for example, smallpox was certified as eradicated. Similarly, in 2020, the near-total elimination of polio and dracunculiasis, among other diseases, was achieved.

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