

Assignment 1

WHO Contributions to ;

1. Promoting maternal and infant health

WHO is supporting countries to deliver integrated, evidence-based and cost-effective care for mothers and babies during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. Investing in health systems, especially in training midwives and in making emergency obstetric care available round-the-clock – is key to reducing maternal mortality.

Millennium Development Goal 5, improve maternal health, set the targets of reducing maternal mortality by 75% (MDG 5a) and achieving universal access to reproductive health by 2015 (MDG 5b). Despite significant declines, MDG 5a was not met. Progress in reducing mortality in developing countries and providing contraceptive services was insufficient to meet the targets. Looking beyond 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals offer a renewed opportunity to see improvements in maternal health for all women, in all countries, under all circumstances.

Despite progress, societies are still failing women, most acutely in poor countries and among the poorest women in all settings. Gender-based discrimination leads to economic, social and health disadvantages for women, affecting their own and their families' well-being in complex

ways throughout the life course and into the next generation. Gender equality is vital to health and to development.

2.Prevention and control of communicable diseases

Although disease patterns change constantly, communicable diseases remain the leading cause of mortality and morbidity in least and less developed countries. Despite decades of economic growth and development in countries that belong to the World Health Organization (WHO) South-East Asia Region , most countries in this region still have a high burden of communicable diseases. This raises some urgent concerns. The first is that despite policies and interventions to prevent and control communicable diseases, most countries have failed to eradicate vaccine-preventable diseases. Second, sustainable financing to scale up interventions is lacking, especially for emerging and re-emerging diseases that can produce epidemics. Finally, in the present global economic and political context, it is important to understand how international aid agencies and donors prioritize their funding allocations for the prevention, control and treatment of communicable diseases. Prioritization is especially critical if one accepts the global public good character of communicable diseases.

According to WHO,⁵ low-income countries currently have a relatively higher share of deaths from: (i) HIV infection, TB and malaria, (ii) other

infectious diseases, and (iii) maternal, perinatal and nutritional causes compared with high- and middle-income countries. Although these three causes combined pose a lesser burden than non-communicable diseases, they will remain important causes of mortality in the next 25 years in low-income countries. In 2004, all countries of the region except for Indonesia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand were classified as low-income by The World Bank

Minimizing the transmission of infectious diseases is a core function of public health law. The

appropriate exercise of legal powers will vary according to the seriousness of the disease, the

means of transmission, and how easily the disease is transmitted.

Law can contribute to the prevention of infectious diseases by improving access to

vaccinations and contraceptives, and by facilitating screening, counseling and education of those

at risk of infection.

3. Achievement of sustainable development

The WHO *Thirteenth General Program of Work 2019–2023*, has

introduced an impact framework to measure country results and progress

in achieving the health-related targets of the SDGs. This framework can

assist in ensuring that Member States are able to collect, monitor and report on such progress. The United Nations and its specialized agencies, should work collaboratively to address social, commercial, economic and environmental determinants of health and to strengthen health systems, contributing to the attainment of all SDGs.

4. Improvement of Healthcare services and facilities

Providing quality health services is key to achieving universal health coverage . Measuring and improving access alone is insufficient to ensure that people receive quality care and to monitor progress towards universal health coverage.

In 2018, three publications have significantly increased knowledge on the importance of the quality of health services. The World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the National Academies of Sciences in the United States of America and the Lancet Global Health Commission all covered aspects of the quality of health systems in context of Universal health coverage and the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Authors of the reports call for quality to be a core Universal health coverage consideration, with attention to the measurement of quality at local, national and international levels. As

summarized by WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, without quality, universal health coverage remains an empty promise. WHO concurs with recommendations that health authorities develop a clear national direction for improving the quality of health services and establish mechanisms to measure progress.

To support Member States in this process, WHO has launched a global effort to promote and improve national quality policies and strategies. This initiative has published the Handbook for national quality policy and strategy, which has been developed with national quality directorates and technical experts and is designed to support national efforts, recognizing the varied expertise of national health authorities.

As the form and content of specific policies will vary with each country's context, WHO outlines a sequential approach that can be adapted to each situation. Policies on quality-improvement must be linked with existing national health priorities to help meet the most pressing demands of the population and to ensure that the quality-improvement agenda is aligned to these priorities. The definition of quality must be developed locally, through a shared understanding of challenges and ambitions.

Stakeholders from across the health system need to be identified and engaged. The current state of health service quality is assessed to identify

key gaps that can be strengthened. Interventions are needed across all levels of the health system, along with clarification of governance arrangements, organizational structures and the information systems necessary for measurement, performance feedback and reporting. Finally, a set of indicators have to be agreed and tracked to measure the extent to which activities are producing a higher quality of care and leading to improved health outcomes. These elements are the foundation upon which to organize national efforts to improve the quality of healthcare services, avoiding the pitfall of creating a silo around the quality-improvement agenda. WHO's handbook emphasizes the importance of integration with existing national health policies and with relevant population- and disease-specific programmed that address quality.
