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# Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC)

Establishing International framework for  
disease crisis management and aid



**MODEL UNITED NATIONS**  
THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE HAGUE

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**Forum** Economic and Social Council

**Issue:** Establishing an international framework for disease crisis management and aid

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## Introduction

In 1918, the Spanish flu, more commonly known as the Influenza, caused a pandemic, and in 2013, the Ebola virus caused a global crisis. Both affected affected a millions of people, but the latter mostly focused in the continent of Africa. They resulted in the significant loss of life and social disruption.

The introduction of an international framework for disease crisis management would greatly aid nations to come together and have pre-existing protocols and strategies to fight many of the communicable and non-communicable diseases on earth. The Emergency Response Framework (ERF) recognizes and helps categorize crises among mass illnesses. The ERF includes emergencies, disaster planning and medical services in emergencies, which are all discussed at the World Health Organization. Crisis as a result of disease happens quickly, due to the violent and unique patterns of spreading that each disease creates. This is due to the effectiveness of it's pathogens to create diseased cells in different conditions. Coming up with the solution against these crises can take time and in these situations the international frameworks would be initiated and the standard protocol would be followed by the nations in question, improving the management of diseases significantly compared to what it is today. By having the ERF require whom to act upon with urgency when an emergency or crisis arises works best to serve children and adults who are affected every year with the public health consequences of emergencies.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Crisis management

The process by which a business or other organization deals with a sudden emergency situation. In this case it deals with the crisis management of a disease.

### Aid

Help, usually in a practical manner. In this case aid is provided to help countries out of a crisis situation.

### Communicable disease

Diseases that can be spread through direct contact or a form of indirect vector: they are contagious. Epidemics are most commonly in the form of communicable diseases.



## Pathogen

An agent of disease production on a cellular level.

## Outbreak

A sudden occurrence of something unwelcome. In this case an outbreak of a certain disease.

## Epidemic

A widespread occurrence of an infectious disease in a community at a particular time.

## Pandemic

A disease that is prevalent over a whole country or the world.

## General Overview

The World Health Organization is a specialised bureau that focuses on the global health of a country's population and its inhabitants. It was officially established on April 7, 1948 in Geneva, Switzerland with approximately more than 7,000 people working in 150 different country offices. The WHO is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), which operates and reports to the United Nations Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC). The WHO seeks not only the international health but it also has prioritized health systems to promote health throughout the course of life. Other than that, it is responsible for achieving the correct responses or preparedness for all types of unexpected health emergencies and the surveillance conducted during it, eradicating and eliminating non-communicable and communicable diseases through preventative action and emergency response to epidemic zones.

The concern of the large economic and environmental impact that a disease epidemic can have on nations is one of notable significance to the United Nations ECOSOC. Less economically developed countries (LEDC's) or low income countries that have crises concerning infectious diseases, usually have massive impacts which turn out to be disastrous and overwhelming to the economic situation of that nation as well its overall population. Direct effects of extreme cases of disease spread have proven to be a stagnation in economic growth and development due to the large decrease in work force size as large numbers of the population becomes temporarily or permanently incapable of carrying out labour in exchange for income due to their health situation. The survival rates of both adults and children effected by the spread of disease becomes another aspect that worries nations. It is a known fact that the survival rate of children will depreciate more than that of the adult equivalent. All these factors have been noted in More Economically developed countries (MEDC's) as well as LEDC's, it is noted that health and economic development begin dropping in both and become one of various large concerns and priorities for that nation to



tackle as soon as possible. The precautions that a nation takes as well as the methods they use to tackle the crisis is a large denominator that will determine the number of negative outcomes presented at the climax of the crisis situation. The response to a crisis should be immediate and not delayed as this is the way that further spread of the crisis can be controlled and diminished. The standard basic protocol system that nations implement when a disease crisis presents itself is split into two sections. The two sections consist of the management to keep the crisis from recurring and softening the blow that the crisis has when it occurs on the nations economic and social systems in place.

### The influenza epidemic (1918)

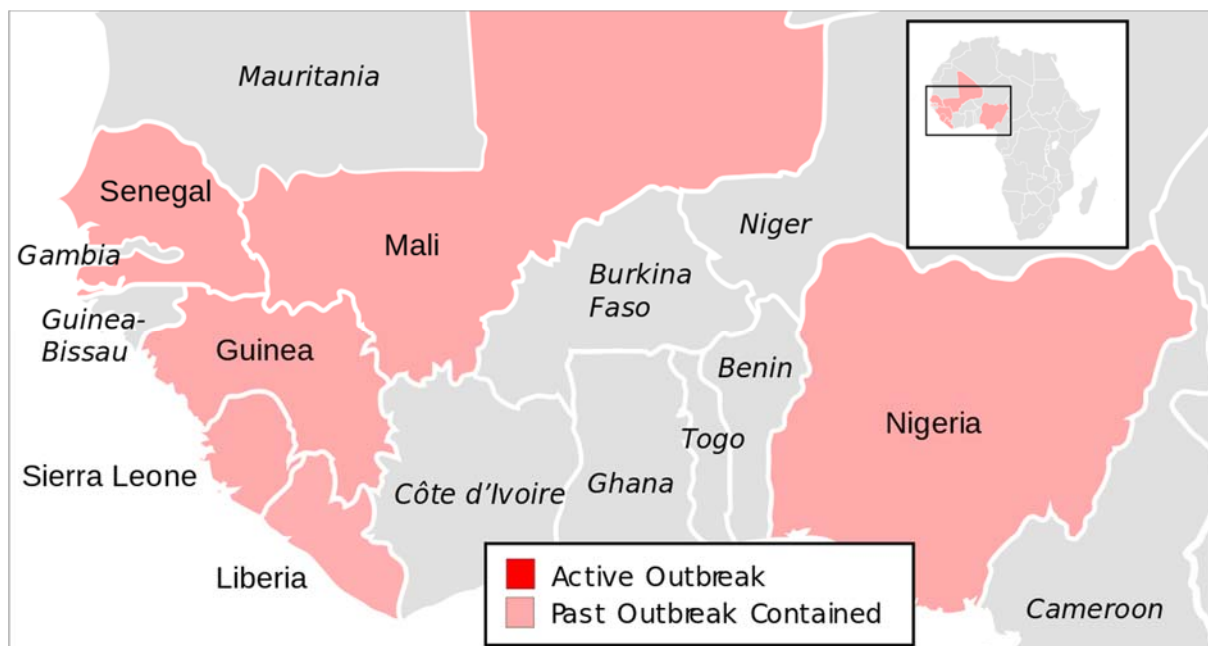
The influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 killed more people than the Great War, known today as World War One (WWI), at somewhere between 20 and 40 million people. It has been cited as the most devastating epidemic in recorded world history. More people died of influenza in a single year than in four-years of the Black Death Bubonic Plague from 1347 to 1351. Known commonly as the “Spanish Flu” or “La Grippe” the influenza of 1918-1919 was a global disaster of epic proportions” (Billings, 1997)

In 1918, the world saw the end of the First World War (WWI). With the introduction of American forces on the Western front it seemed that peace and prosperity had once again defeated the aggressive and oppressive nature of the ‘losing factions’. The conditions on the front lines of the war however were not as peachy as the description of post war peaceful Europe. The trenches of France and Belgium were brutal places to be. The sudden breakout of what seemed to be the common cold in small areas all over the globe including the trenches of the Western front and Europe. This outbreak was however quite far off the common cold. The influenza that year would be one that would go down in history. This influenza would course the entirety of the globe over the next two years, infecting a fifth of the world’s population throughout its existence. The flu was the most deadly to people between the ages of 20 to 40. Commonly the flu would be more deadly to people of younger or older age, however this was strangely not the case for this influenza.

### The Ebola epidemic (2014)

The first recorded emergence of the Ebola virus was in 1976. Since this solemn case it has been a constant threat for Sub-Saharan African states. Throughout its lifetime known to man, Ebola has claimed around 1548 deaths in 33 outbreaks (Center for Disease Control, 2016). In the case of all of these outbreaks the nation in questions social and economic spheres had been damaged to a degree, which was dangerous to the stability of that nation and the regions surrounding it. After the 38 years, these Sub-Saharan nations learnt to deal with the isolated cases, however the sudden spike of outbreaks in Western African nations were different from the 33 noted occasions before, this was due to the fact that the Western African nations had never been confronted with the disease and thus the preparedness level of the nations in question were minimal as the expectance of the disease spreading to the Western regions of Africa were minimal. Due to the expectance of the disease to be isolated to Eastern Africa, the public awareness of the disease and its symptoms in the Western African nations was also considered minimal, groups of people within these nations would not be convinced of the existence of the virus (National Public Radio Broadcasting group, 2014). The other difference that was noted in the spread of Ebola through western African nations was the numbers of victims, the virus was mutating large amounts of times, various examinations would show different forms of pathogens as well other mutations making the virus difficult to contain and control.





The current situation represented on a map of Ebola spread in Western Africa. (Wikipedia, 2016)

### **Guinea: Ebola outbreak (2014)**

Guinea: In 2014, the country of Guinea suffered from a large-scale outbreak of the disease called Ebola. Between the governments of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone working with the Outbreak Response Plan in West Africa they requested \$71,053,413 to work with prevention and treatment. The World Health Organization (WHO) received \$7,006,230 dollars from countries such as Italy, Japan, Estonia, Canada, Germany, to aid the funding for additional research, preventative action and implementation of precautions to ensure a second outbreak of the Ebola disease would never happen again.

### **Other diseases**

Though Ebola and the Influenza epidemic are the two most commonly known epidemics, there are many more present in today's society. Malaria and HIV/AIDS are two examples of current epidemics. Malaria is a very intense epidemic that is still very much prevalent in today's society. It first appeared in around 2000 and since then has killed around 430,000 people per year. It is more prevalent in Africa, where it accounts for 40% of all public health spending, as well as costing \$12-30 billion of Africa's GDP. However, 18 countries are estimated to have reduced malaria incidence by 50-75%. Thus, the target of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 6 "to have halted and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria" (target 6C) has been achieved.<sup>1</sup>

HIV/AIDS is seen as more of a pandemic. It remains one of the world's most significant public health challenges, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. As a result of recent advances in access to antiretroviral therapy (ART), HIV-positive people now live longer and healthier lives. In addition, it has been confirmed that ART prevents onward

<sup>1</sup> WHO



transmission of HIV.<sup>2</sup> UNAIDS estimates that as of December 2000, there were an estimated 36.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### World Health Organisation (WHO)

The WHO is a specialised agency of the UN that is concerned with international public health. They strive to combat diseases, infectious diseases like influenza and HIV and non-communicable ones like cancer and heart disease.

### Guinea

The nation of Guinea is situated on the Western Coast of the continent of Africa. The map (above) shows that it was one of six nations in the Western African region to fall victim to an outbreak of the Ebola epidemic. It would vast quantities of aid from the WHO in the form of financial assets as well as medical staff to help combat the spread and damage that the virus had on the nation's population and eco-social situation.

### Saudi Arabia, India, United Kingdom

3 of the largest funders of Emergency Response Funds (ERFs) to help aid countries in need and receiving help from the UN's WHO. (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2011)

### World Bank

The World Bank is heavily involved in international health. It loans money to poor countries on advantageous terms not available in commercial markets.

### United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF spends the majority of its program (non-administrative) budget on health care. UNICEF makes the world's most vulnerable children its top priority, so it devotes most of its resources to the poorest countries and to children younger than 5. So when children are involved in a outbreak, UNICEF comes to aid as much as possible.

## Timeline of Events

March 11 <sup>th</sup> , 1918	An Army private at Fort Riley, Kansas reports to the camp hospital complaining of fever, sore throat, and headache. Before the day is over, over 100 soldiers fall sick.
July, 1918	Public health officials in Philadelphia issue a warning about what they call the "Spanish influenza"
November 11 <sup>th</sup> , 1918	Armistice is announced and World War I comes to an end. Though much of the joy is weighed down by the epidemic, people around the world venture out into the streets for the first time in order to celebrate. Many go out without their masks for the first time, leading to a surge in influenza cases in many cities for weeks after the Armistice.
1927	It is estimated that 21.5 million people died during the 1918 epidemic. The number was calculated through studies conducted by the American Medical

<sup>2</sup> WHO



Association.

1976	Ebola first appeared in 1976 in 2 simultaneous outbreaks in Nzara and Sudan.
1976-2012	Ebola virus disease is estimated to have claimed lives of over 1590 people between 1976 and 2012
Early 2013	The World Health Organization releases its Emergency Response Frameworks Publication (ERF) creating an international framework to tackling of a disease related crisis.
March, 2014	The World Health Organizations African Regional Office reported an outbreak of Ebola virus disease in Guinea.
10 <sup>th</sup> June, 2016	The World Health Organization releases a situation report on the Ebola Virus in which it states that it has noted 28,616 cases of Ebola since 2014 of which resulted in the death of 11,310 people.

Sources: (Centers for Disease Control, 2006) (Twoop Inc., 2015) (World Health Organization, 2015) (World Health Organisation, 2015)

## UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- The IASC, established in 1991 under United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182 on the strengthening of humanitarian assistance.
- WHO's leading role in emergencies has been documented and strengthened by Article 2(d) of WHO's Constitution and World Health Assembly Resolutions: 34.26, 46.6, 48.2, 58.1, 59.22, 64.10, 65.20.
- Emergency Response Frameworks created by the WHO (World Health Organization, 2013)

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The WHO has already created a Emergency Response Framework (ERF). The point of the ERF is to clarify WHO's roles and responsibilities in this regard and to provide a common approach for its work in emergencies. (*Link in the Appendix*) Ultimately, the ERF requires WHO to act with urgency and predictability to best serve and be accountable to populations affected by emergencies. This framework is very detailed and leaves little room for error, meaning it is successful.

## Possible Solutions

The first task that the government of a nation undergoing or expecting to undergo a crisis situation due to the outbreak of a disease is try and eradicate the problem through the use of currently available scientific and medical knowledge of the noted disease. Due to this factor, the government must pay for any type of studies done to either find out what this type



of disease is or how to stop it from spreading itself. While the government should also focus on how the disease might be ending many lives and decreasing sizes of population inside the country, or even causing various types of side effects on the civilians. Also, the country must have a plan regarding what to do in case of a crisis and what measures should be done, taking in mind the size or magnitude of the disease. Concerning how deadly this disease outbreak might be and its magnitude, the time it takes the disease to spread and/or if this illness takes quite some time in developing and in being spread to others around. Though the government of one's country is taking action in this, other countries must help too. Not only because this disease might be ending lives or it's spreading, but because the disease might even reach another country which will also severely affect its population and its civilians. In case of the disease outbreak spreading around the Earth, many scientists are gathered around in different countries in order to try and stop illness, deaths, or side effects that might be brought alongside it. The central point however is trying to eradicate this crisis, find ways in which could be prevented, or to creating a solution to the disease.

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## Appendix

Link to the WHO's ERF:

[http://www.who.int/hac/about/erf\\_.pdf](http://www.who.int/hac/about/erf_.pdf)

