

Economic and Social Council

Implementing measures to stimulate economies affected by health epidemics



Forum:	Economic and Social Council
Issue:	Implementing measures to stimulate economies affected by health epidemics
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Introduction

Health epidemics have roamed the world since the beginnings of time, from smallpox to the flu of 1918, Cholera, Aids, and many more. Health epidemics have always been seen as epidemics that leave behind a lot of death and destruction. Some frequently occur over periods of times, others that have begun years ago are still occurring today. Even though economy played a huge part in history, some people believe that it could even be more important now. It plays a huge, if not the biggest, role in determining if a country is equipped and/or developed enough to offer the greatest standard of living to all the people within. Therefore a severe health epidemic in a certain country or region could be a consequence of a poor economy or a severe health epidemic could cause an average economy to slowly crumble. There are three recent outbreaks that serve as perfect and varying examples of how health epidemics affect economies. The Ebola epidemic of 2014, the MERS outbreak of 2014 in South Korea, and the Avian influenza A(H7N9) virus outbreak of 2013 in China. All three of these outbreaks have caused, and are causing, economical issues in their stricken countries. They also all show differences and similarities in the ways that a health epidemic can strike a nation's economy.

Definition of Key Terms

Economic Stimulus

The uses of monetary or fiscal policy changes recommence a struggling and/or hurt economy. These economic stimuli can range from lowering interest rates or increased government spending.



Health Epidemics

A case of illness, specific health-related behaviour and/or events that affect a specific region/community for a period of time. The presence of an epidemic can vary due to what the cases indicate.

LEDC

A Less Economically Developed Country is a country that usually has a very low score on the Human Development Index. They are the opposite of More Economically Developed Countries (MEDC). MEDCs usually have a much higher score on the Human Development Index.

World Health Organization (WHO)

The WHO is a specialized UN agency that focuses on the health and general wellbeing of the international public. It was established on the 7th of April 1948 in Geneva, Switzerland

UNMEER

The UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) is the first UN emergency health mission. It was established on the 19th of September 2014 in the unanimous adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/1, and the adoption of Security Council resolution 2177 (2014) on the Ebola outbreak. It was a temporary measure that was set up to grant urgent needs and aid to countries affected by the Ebola outbreak of 2014.

General Overview

As we know health epidemics are as serious as any epidemic can be. Usually, although not always health epidemics hit the more developing regions and nations around the world. Even though this is the case, there is always a risk that diseases can spread to other parts of the world. So firstly we would want to help eradicate the epidemic, and secondly we would want to make sure there will be no further epidemics. One reason why health epidemics usually strike LEDCs more often is because of their lack of sanitation and other issues that are caused by some of their economic disabilities.

2014 Ebola epidemic



The Ebola outbreak of 2014 is one of the most recent health epidemics. It began in Guinea in the beginning of 2014 and spread to Liberia and Sierra Leone during the next year. This specific Ebola outbreak has thought to have caused at least 5,000 deaths and is known to be around 17 times more lethal than the previous Ebola outbreak in DR Congo in the year 1976. With the 2014 Ebola outbreak it took a mere six months before other countries actually started helping the Ebola struck countries. One of the reasons was because at first, this outbreak did not seem like a threat; but as the outbreak got more serious, countries reconsidered their initial stance and started lending their help to the countries in need. The Ebola outbreak has also caused a lot of economic damage, as you can see in the image below, which illustrates the amount, in US dollar, of lost GDP due to the 2014 Ebola epidemic.

If possible prevention is what there is to strive for, then there should be more focus on stimulating the economies of these Ebola stricken countries.

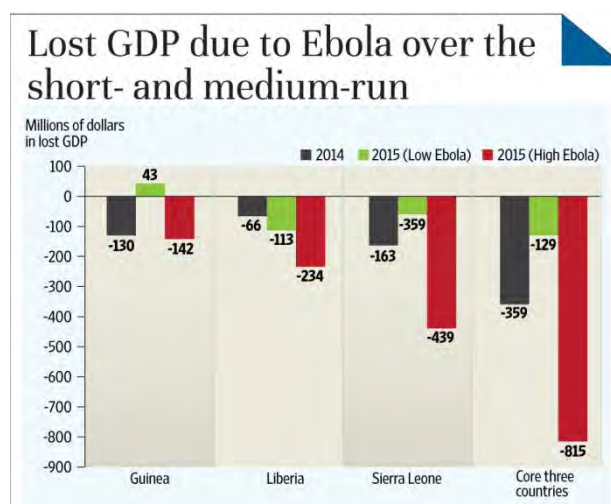


Figure 1 Loss of GDP Due to Ebola. Digital image. World Bank. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Aug. 2015. <<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/20592/9781464804380.pdf>>.

MERS

The Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is an illness that is fairly new. It was first reported in Saudi Arabia in 2012 and has spread to several other countries. However, since May of 2015 MERS has been reported in the Republic of Korea, and it is known now as the largest known outbreak of MERS outside of the Arabian Peninsula. A total of 165 people have been known to be infected with MERS in South Korea, and 23 have died. More than 6,700 people are now in quarantine at home or at designated health facilities. Even though this epidemic has not yet caused any significant economic damage some sources believe that MERS poses a serious risk to the South Korean economy. One of the reasons of this is its set back in touristic income. It has been reported that due to the outbreak more than 100,000 tourists cancelled their visit to the country.

Avian influenza A(H7N9) virus

The Avian influenza A(H7N9) virus is a sub-virus of influenza viruses that have been detected in birds. This specific type of influenza has not been seen before in either humans nor animals until it was first detected on March 2013 in China. It was believed to have come



from contaminated areas within China. Even though mild cases of this illness have been detected, the majority of cases it leads to severe respiratory problems where also one-third of the cases have resulted in death. It has also been known to affect birds and especially broilers, which are extremely important to the Chinese economy and their wellbeing.

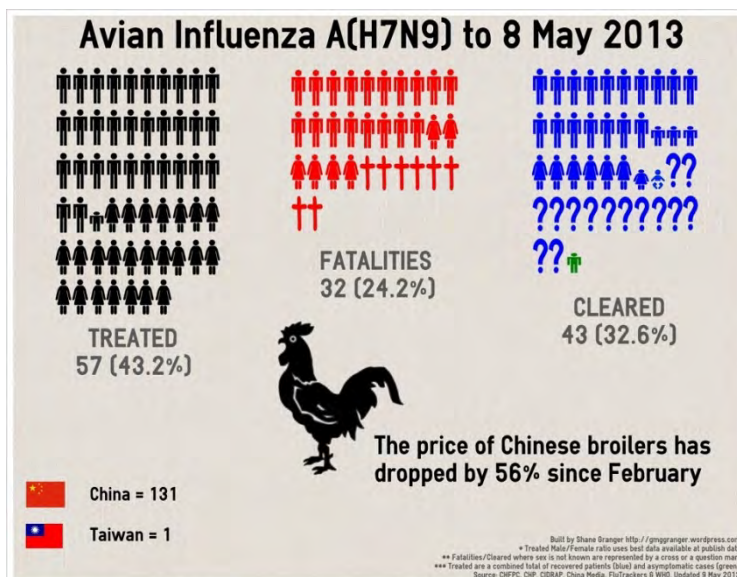


Figure 2 Avian Influenza Infographic. Digital image. GMGG Ranger. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Aug. 2015. <https://gmqranger.wordpress.com/2013/05/>.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

WHO

The WHO is greatly invested in this issue. Mainly because of the aid it could give to countries that are still safe-able. The WHO mainly focuses on trying to help the countries at the moment of their epidemic and afterwards, but as the World Health Organization they have little say in economic matters. They try to do as much as they can that is within their policy and also try to get other parties and countries involved and tries to get them to work together to ease the disastrous consequences that health epidemics can bring upon stricken countries.

UNMEER

The UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) tried to stop the Ebola outbreak, treat the infected, ensure essential services, preserve stability, and prevent further outbreaks. Even though UNMEER has significantly helped this particular Ebola outbreak it has done so at, what some believe, the slightest of its abilities.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1936	Yellow fever vaccine develops



1950	Polio vaccine developed
1952	Polio outbreak in the United States
4 May 2010	Rift Valley fever outbreak in South Africa
16 August 2011	West Nile Virus Infection (WNV) outbreak in Europe
3 February 2012	Yellow fever outbreak in Ghana
2013	Avian influenza A(H7N9) virus outbreak
March 2014	2014 Ebola outbreak
May 2015	MERS outbreak in South Korea

This timeline shows the events of important outbreaks over the past five years, other significantly destructive epidemics, and when the vaccines for those diseases were developed.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

With certain types of outbreaks and epidemics, such as the Ebola epidemic of 2014, the UN has tried to help the affected countries as much as possible. However, the UN sometimes only starts involving themselves when certain epidemics seem critical and potentially world threatening. Which either doesn't happen often, or happens too late. In the case of the 2014 Ebola epidemic, the UN started taking action in September of 2014, when there had been some reports of the disease spreading to other parts of the world. This was seen as a global warning for the spread of Ebola, and caused countries to want to react as soon as they could to avoid a worldwide epidemic. In response to this the UN set up an emergency response mission called UNMEER, which was established on after the unanimous adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/1, and the adoption of Security Council resolution 2177 (2014) on the Ebola outbreak. UNMEER tried to adopt regional approaches to the issue, provide clarification to the governments about what they can expect front he UN involvement, allow for a UN system-wide approach in response to the Ebola outbreak, and customize their response to the specific need of each country affected. As can be seen the UN has tried to contribute to aiding the countries affected by the 2014 Ebola outbreak, but not much can be said for other health epidemics such as the MERS outbreak.



Possible Solutions

A possible solution could be to hold yearly conferences, or set up a committee, that would deal with economically restoring and aiding countries struck by severe health epidemics as well as to try and find an economic solution for future prevention of these health epidemics. These conferences, or this committee, would also be able to call for emergency meetings for recent critical outbreaks. In such situations they could possibly also search the assistance of UNMEER and/or any other UN affiliated, or non-governmental organizations.

Another option would also be to try and convince governments to lower their interest rates and possibly also increasing government spending and quantitative easing. Hopefully this will not only slightly prepare a nation for the economic consequences that could arise from a health epidemic but could also insure minimal economic devastation after and/or during health epidemics. It is needless to say that most economic measures should be fiscal measures that not will not only benefit a countries economy, but that will be a sustainable solution for possible future health epidemics.

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Appendices

Appendix I

Official WHO website: <http://www.who.int/>

Appendix II

Official CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/>

