



Health is a fundamental human right, a moral and social imperative, and the basis of equitable growth and sustainable development

Newsletter

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Health News

Beyond Ebola: a G7 agenda to help prevent future crises and enhance security in Africa

This [press release](#) presents the initiative undertaken by Ghana, Norway and Germany to “elaborate a comprehensive concept to strengthen national and multilateral systems to prevent and manage future health crises”. The G7 - in close cooperation with the African Union and other African regional organizations (EAC, ECOWAS, IGAD) – committed itself to enhancing security cooperation in Africa, focusing on the prevention of future epidemics and other newly emerging types of crises.

News from WHO

The [April 2015 bulletin](#) of the World Health Organization focuses on [food safety and security](#), the theme of this year’s World Health Day, linked to an interview with Antoine Andremont on [improving food safety and reducing antimicrobial resistance](#). Another editorial reviews the impact of the WHO’s first global health treaty, that is the [Framework Convention on Tobacco Control](#), and its impact on national policy and practice. It includes [research on health inequities](#), as illustrated by postnatal care. This review of the literature combined with meta-analysis reveals – though unsurprisingly – the extent that in low- and middle-income countries, use of postnatal care services remains highly inequitable and varies markedly with socioeconomic status and between urban and rural residents.

Of equal concern must be the poor level of [hygiene in many health facilities](#), as revealed in a March 2015 report from WHO and UNICEF covering 54 countries. Much of the guidance given to health workers on hygiene, for the sake of patients and themselves, is useless where there’s no running water - the case in 40% of 66, 000 health facilities. Over a third of facilities lacked soap and a fifth lacked toilets. In many countries, in facilities where water is available, there is no guarantee that it is safe for consumption.

[WHO calls for the use of ‘smart’ syringes](#)

Use of the same syringe or needle to give injections to more than one person is driving the spread of a number of deadly infectious diseases worldwide. ‘Smart’ syringes that break after one use should be used for all injections by 2020. This is the basis of WHO’s new policy on injection safety.

Cancer risk from petrochemicals

The petroleum industry has known for decades that benzene, one of its most important products, is a potent cause of cancer in humans but has spent millions on a cover-up, [the ITUC reveals](#) in a newly published evidence database.

Spending cuts in India

Deep cuts in health spending by the Indian government will lead to continued inadequate health services and delays in achieving universal healthcare, reports the [Science Daily](#). The Bharatiya Janata Party, elected to power in 2014, promised to increase access to health, improve quality and lower costs. But in 2014-2015, the central government spent 20% less than budgeted in current spending and as much as 50% less in capital spending.

Asbestos controversy in India

Dozens of prestigious scientific organisations and scientists from around the world have called on India to end its 'discredited' efforts to keep chrysotile asbestos outside the scope of a United Nations treaty on toxic exports, [reports the ITUC](#).

Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health

PMNCH has released [a new report](#), synthesizing the views of more than 4,550 organizations and individuals who contributed to the first round of consultations on updating the *Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health 2010-2015*. The UN Secretary-General has also released his report on [progress made](#) in the five years since the strategy was launched. Youth leaders in Uganda commented on the updated strategy, and called for [adolescent health](#) to be prioritized with resources and results. [See video clips](#). At the same time, health ministers of the East African Community [pledged increased budget](#) allocations for health, greater accountability and a focus on the reproductive health of adolescents.

Mental Health

Fake cures and global stem cell tourism

On 2 April 2015, World Autism Awareness Day, a side event was organized by Autistic Minority International during the 13th session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This aimed to raise awareness of medical experimentation on autistic children.

See [webcast](#) and also read the excellent [joint statement on the human rights of autistic persons](#) by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Mental illness and work

The Society for Human Resource Management has published related articles on mental health in the workplace. Mental illness leads to more lost workdays than arthritis and back pain—so why are employers reluctant to make similar workplace accommodations for it? See '[Accommodating Mental Illness](#)' Each year, more than 41 million Americans experience some type of mental illness, but it can be very difficult to know how to cope with this in the workplace—not only legally but also appropriately, while being respectful of privacy. See [Coping with Employees' Mental Illnesses Can Be Challenging](#). For the first time since 2006, stigma is not decreasing among employers and, in some cases, it is increasing, according to the Disability Management Employer Coalition's 2014 Behavioral Risk Survey report, [After Mental Health Absence, Some Face Stigma](#). Finally, in Europe it's the same picture, according to a report from Europe's leading agencies on worker safety and health, [25% of EU Workers Severely Stressed](#). One-quarter of European workers feel stressed all or most of the time while on the job, negatively affecting their health and productivity.

And see some items relevant to mental health under Human Rights and Announcements below.

Health and Human Rights

Independent Expert calls for end to secret negotiations of trade and investment agreements

The Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, Alfred de Zayas, was appointed in May 2012. He has now [expressed his alarm](#) at the general lack of awareness concerning the adverse effects of existing bilateral and multilateral free trade and investment agreements on the enjoyment of human rights in many countries, particularly in the developing world. He is concerned about the secrecy surrounding current negotiations for e treaties like the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA), which have excluded key stakeholder groups from the process, including labour unions, environmental protection groups, food-safety movements and health professionals. The expert maintains that *proactive disclosure by governments, genuine consultation and public participation in decision-making are indispensable to render such agreements democratically legitimate* [our emphasis – ed.].

Improving international accountability—a tool for protecting health as a basic human right

The [Health and Human Rights Journal](#) also calls for accountability in procurement of high-quality medicines to combat major causes of avoidable suffering in sub-Saharan Africa. Co-authored by Dr Agnes Binagwaho, Minister of Health in Rwanda, the report uses local case studies to demonstrate that delays in the WHO managed regulatory system for medical supplies seriously affect people's health and national health budgets.

Access to medicines and the right to health and life

Global Social Justice publishes this month [a statement](#) which Martin Khor, Executive Director of the South Centre, made to the 2015 Social Forum of the UN Human Rights Council. The Forum focused on access to medicines in the context of the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

Living under a cloak of invisibility: people with disabilities

“It is deplorable that needs of people with disabilities are rarely at the top of the public policy agenda and that they continue to suffer social and political exclusion”, [argues the article's author](#) Amir Murtaza. “Promoting political participation for people with disabilities is an important part of their empowerment process.”

Bangladesh: two years after Rana Plaza, workers still denied rights

Garment workers in Bangladesh face poor working conditions and anti-union tactics by employers including assaults on union organizers, *Human Rights Watch* said in a [report](#) released to mark the two years since more than 1,100 workers died in the [catastrophic collapse of the Rana Plaza factory](#). Efforts are underway to make Bangladesh factories safer, but the government and Western retailers can and should do more to enforce international labour standards to protect workers' rights, including their right to form unions and advocate for better conditions.

Criminalization of abortion in El Salvador

The Center for Reproductive Rights has worked for more than 12 years to expose the consequences that the blanket abortion ban in El Salvador has on the lives of women. Recently, the Center and CDFA co-authored the report [Marginalized, Persecuted and](#)

[Imprisoned: The Effects of El Salvador's Total Criminalization of Abortion](#) that documents the human rights consequences of the abortion ban, and includes the personal stories of five women who were unfairly prosecuted for illegal abortion after suffering obstetric emergencies without receiving medical attention.

Announcements

WHA side event on health in conflict situations

The 68th [World Health Assembly](#) takes place in Geneva from 18 to 26 May 2015. One side event is organized by the [Safeguarding Health in Conflict](#) coalition, and sponsored by the Netherlands and New Zealand with a range of co-sponsors including three WHO departments and a range of other UN agencies.

The event is organized in light of the unprecedented number of emergencies arising from armed conflicts, natural disasters and disease outbreaks facing the world. The number of refugees and internally displaced persons is the highest since the end of World War II. In addition, the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak has caused almost 10 000 reported deaths and has deeply undermined the functioning of health systems in the affected countries. What can be done in prevention and care?

When: Wednesday 20 May, 18:00 – 19:30

Where: Room 7 Palais des Nations

Global Mental Health Conference: Promoting positive mental health through a community development approach

The [conference](#) aims to promote awareness of the issues around mental health in low- and middle-income countries; to focus on issues relating to community development and capacity-building; and to present examples of best practice. Organizers include Sussex Global Health Network, BasicNeeds, and the UK Sri Lanka Trauma Group.

When: 20 May 2015 from 09.30 to 16.30

Where: Greynore Hall, University of Brighton, Eastbourne, UK

Admission is free – first come first served. Deadline for registration 4 May.

Nonviolent Communication - Connecting in Conflict

A weekend dedicated to communication skills and the art of dialogue with trainer [Yoram Mosenzon](#):

- * How to connect in conflict and transform conflicts into deeper trust
- * How to deal with misunderstandings and difference in opinions between people
- * The power of empathy
- * How to be fully honest but not judgmental
- * How to deal with inner conflicts

When: 20 - 21 June 2015 from 10.00 to 18.00

Where: [Centre John Knox](#), 27 chemin des Crêts de Pregny, 1218 Grand-Saconnex (Geneva), Salle Vienne.

Price: 300 CHF - the number of places is limited

Contact: Benedetta Barabino, benedetta.barabino@dance-with-me.org, +41 79 294 9828

Where are children's rights in the new Sustainable Development Goals?

The [annual meeting](#) of the International Society for Social Pediatrics and Child Health (ISSOP) will focus on whether the SDGs are likely to deliver what's needed in terms of children's right to health. When: 7 – 9 September 2015. Early bird deadline for registration 30 June. Where: UniMail, Geneva.

**Improving Young People's Mental Health in Europe: Transforming Lives,
Strengthening Prevention**

This [meeting](#) is organized in light of the fact, [as reported by WHO](#), that mental disorders in young people are on the rise with an estimated 10- 20% of young Europeans suffering from mental or behavioural disorders. On average, one out of five children and adolescents suffers from developmental, emotional or behavioural problems and approximately one-eighth have a clinically diagnosed mental disorder.

When: Tuesday 23 June 2015

Where: Thon Hotel, Brussels City Centre, Belgium

The Forum Newsletter aims to provide information to members and cooperating organizations and serve as a platform for sharing updates, ideas and experiences. Please send us material you want to share at: info@ngo-forum-health.ch

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