

**SRI LANKA
MODEL UNITED NATIONS**



WHA

STUDY GUIDE

Introduction

The World Health Organization is an organization established by the United Nations on April 7th, 1948 with the signing of its constitution by 61 member nations in 1946. The World Health Organization has devoted itself for the development of international public health and sanitation.

Each year, senior health officials from Member States of the **World Health Organization** (WHO) travel to Geneva to participate in the World Health Assembly (WHA).

The World Health Assembly (WHA) is the decision making body of the WHO and is responsible for the determination of the policies of the WHO, appointment of the Director General, supervision of the financial policies and reviewing and approving the programme budget.

At WHA, two main types of meetings are held, each with a different purpose:

1. **Committees** meet to debate technical and health matters (Committee A), and financial and management issues (Committee B), and approve the texts of resolutions, which are then submitted to the plenary meeting.
2. **Plenary** is the meeting of all delegates to the WHA. The WHA meets in plenary several times in order to listen to reports and adopt the resolutions transmitted by the committees. The Director-General and Member States also address the delegates at the plenary.

In addition, **technical briefings** are organized separately on specific public health topics to present new developments in the area, provide a forum for debate, and to allow for information sharing.

An **agenda** with the list of topics for discussion will be released prior to the Assembly. The agenda is not timed, and while the Chair generally proceeds through the list of topics in order, there may be changes to the agenda if so decided by the Chair. Each topic will be discussed for the amount of time it takes to get through it, which means that timing is very approximate during the proceedings.

Besides Member States, other stakeholders, such as **non-state actors in official relations with WHO**, are allowed to follow the WHA proceedings and participate in technical briefings and official side events.

The WHA working in tandem with the WHO has been able to successfully respond to the Cholera Outbreak in Syria, The Yellow Fever Outbreak in Brazil, preventing the spread of polio in Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon and Niger adding to the success story of the WHA and WHO in recent times proving to be an effective and capable organization.

Practice Debate:

1. Reaffirming the need for an alternative to antibiotic treatments, as a means of containing the rising global threat of superbugs.

Throughout history, from the earlier days of human evolution, humanity's survival has been greatly determined by the ability to counter and effectively take action against the violent spread of infectious diseases. Humanity has been able to progress to such an extent even going as far as to create effective antibiotics that treat a fairly large range of bacterial infections. However, it needs to be stated that the modern-day human's dependence on antibiotics (for even things such as the common cold and other less-impactful microbial infections) has significantly deteriorated the human immune system. The overuse of antibiotic drugs has become a common practice in modern days and this same overuse has led to the evolution of potentially dangerous antibiotic resistant microbes.

Superbugs are a bacterial variant that exhibits resistance to antibiotic treatments. If these modified variants of bacteria are not contained, the effects that their spreading may have on human and animal populations alike may be devastating.

For example, researchers have found that an estimated 33,000 people died from infections that were resistant to antibiotics in 2015, out of a total of 670,000 cases in Europe.

Policies Relating to AMR (Antimicrobial Resistance)

Antimicrobial resistance is not a new problem. In 1998, the World Health Assembly adopted a resolution urging Member States to take action against it. In 2001 WHO published the *WHO global strategy on containment of antimicrobial resistance* along with a series of recommendations aimed at enabling countries to define and implement national policies in response to antimicrobial resistance. In 2005 another World Health Assembly resolution on antimicrobial resistance cautioned about the slow progress and called for the rational use of antimicrobial agents by providers and consumers. Thus, the essential strategic interventions to control antimicrobial resistance have been known for some time. So far, however, national and global responses have been inadequate. In fact, few of the recommended policy changes have been pursued.

On World Health Day, WHO introduced a policy package to combat antimicrobial resistance (Box 1). This package reframes the critical actions to be taken by governments to stimulate change by all stakeholders.

Box 1. The World Health Organization's policy package to combat antimicrobial resistance

- Commit to a comprehensive, financed national plan with accountability and civil society engagement
- Strengthen surveillance and laboratory capacity
- Ensure uninterrupted access to essential medicines of assured quality
- Regulate and promote rational use of medicines, including in animal husbandry, and ensure proper patient care
- Enhance infection prevention and control
- Foster innovations and research and development for new tools

Points to Consider

To properly understand the impact of AMR and Superbugs, and the most effective ways with which they can be countered, one must

- **understand** the scope of use of common antibiotics in the day to day lives of humans.
- **identify** the shortcomings of modern antibiotic-centric health functions, along with the proper means by which to **provide innovative and creative solutions** that can be used as substitutes for antibiotics.
- **draw attention** to how these said alternate methods may be made accessible to a wider proportion of the population - especially to people living in rural areas who are more prone to being affected by infectious diseases.
- **focus** on how any present shortcomings of proposed methods may be identified and mitigated with careful consideration.

Only then will the committee have succeeded in providing a long term solution to the rising incompetence of antibiotics.

Useful Links

<https://ccforum.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13054-016-1549-1>

<https://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=38448>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/antibiotics/>

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/antimicrobial-resistance>

Conference Topic:

1. Tackling social issues relating to the global phenomenon of mental health, with special emphasis on the lack of understanding, social stigma and the lack of accessibility to treatment facilities.

One global phenomenon that humans have continued to falsely identify and misunderstand is the aspect of mental health.

Society has time and time again continued to

- portray a lack of understanding towards Mental Health
- provide limited accessibility to mental health treatment facilities
- surround the social issue with a plethora of stigma

Mental Health Disorders consist of a variety of illnesses that include alcoholism, depression, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), alzheimer's and many more. These conditions affect a person's day to day activities individually as well as socially, and the previously mentioned barriers to this social issue has become a widely discussed topic.

Accessibility to Mental Health Services

The accessibility to resources is considered by many individuals and researchers as the root cause of mental health being considered a social issue. Nations have not given enough consideration and attention towards mental health unlike other aspects of the health related services. Integration of mental health services into the general health service portfolio has been considered as a stepping stone into the improvement of public health and social services.

Lack of Understanding and Social Stigma

The lack of understanding towards mental health by society has been a key factor that provokes unnecessary social stigma towards those suffering from

mental illnesses. Research carried out in the UK and the United States of America show that many individuals consider people affected by mental health as “dangerous” and take precautions by avoiding them completely.

This lack of understanding causes the social stigma that is prevalent in society today, leading to those affected being

- unable to find proper work in institutions
- unable to commit to steady long-term relationships
- unable to live in decent housing facilities
- unable to be socially included in main-stream society.

Policies Relating to Mental Health

A **mental health policy** is an official statement by a government or health authority that provides the overall direction for mental health by defining a vision, values, principles and objectives and by establishing a broad model for action to achieve the vision.

A **mental health plan** details the strategies and activities that will be implemented to realise the vision and achieve the objectives of a mental health policy.

The mental health policy and plan are interrelated elements needed to improve the mental health in a country.

1. The WHO mental health policy and service guidance package

This package consists of a series of interrelated user-friendly modules that are designed to address the wide variety of needs and priorities in policy development and service planning.

https://www.who.int/mental_health/policy/essentialpackage1/en/

2. The WHO's comprehensive mental health action plan

The WHO's comprehensive mental health action plan 2013-2020 which was adopted by the 66th World Health Assembly focuses international attention on a long-neglected problem and is firmly rooted in the principles of human rights. The action plan calls for changes. It calls for a change in the attitudes that perpetuate stigma and discrimination that have isolated people since ancient times, and it calls for an expansion of services in order to promote greater efficiency in the use of resources.

The four major objectives of the action plan are to:

- strengthen effective leadership and governance for mental health.
- provide comprehensive, integrated and responsive mental health and social care services in community-based settings.
- implement strategies for promotion and prevention in mental health.
- strengthen information systems, evidence and research for mental health.

Points to Consider

At the WHA of SLMUN 2019 the head table believes that the delegates should draw attention to the following when engaging in research under the committee topic ;

- The barriers faced by mentally unwell individuals by society as well as the status of the current treatment facilities.
- Providing innovative solutions that are long term, practical and promotes accessibility over a wide demographic of society.
- The relationship between mental health and other aspects of health when it comes to an individual (eg : physical health).
- Coming up with foreign-policy abiding mental health policies and action plans to mitigate the social issues affiliated with mental health.

Useful links

https://www.who.int/mental_health/publications/en/

<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/recognizing-warning-signs>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4409431/>

<https://www.mhinnovation.net/innovations/integration-mental-health-general-health-services>

Closing Remarks

We as the chairs of the **World Health Assembly** of **SLMUN 2019** hope that the delegates of this prestigious committee will find this study guide comprehensive and use it's contents wisely when researching for the conference, as well as when determining their specific foreign policy statements, and come up with creative, practical solutions to the topics that have been addressed above.