

World Health Organization

Organization: World Health Organization

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Description On 7 April 1948, the United Nations established a specialized agency for health called the World Health Organization, or WHO. WHO's mission is to ensure that all people attain a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being." Examples of current programs include the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity, and Health and "3 by 5," a program with the goal of treating 3 million people with HIV and AIDS in the developing world by 2005. WHO's headquarters are in Geneva, with an additional six regional offices throughout the world. The decision-making body for the organization is the World Health Assembly, which consists of 192 member states with its main purpose being to determine organizational policies. Any United Nations member may join WHO, provided they accept the Constitution. Additional states may join, provided they are approved by the majority of members in a vote.

The World Health Assembly appoints a Director-General. The Assembly also has an Executive Board that consists of thirty-two members who are elected for a three-year term. They advise the Health Assembly and deal with administrative matters. The Secretariat of WHO is also an important component of the organization. It is staffed by approximately 3,500 health experts and support staff. WHO works with non-governmental organizations and civil society throughout the world to achieve its objectives, as these groups are often on the front line of the fight for a healthier humanity. WHO also has an international shared network called WHO Collaborating Centres. Designated by the Director-General, these centres carry out valuable research and training, helping to implement WHO's programs and strengthening institutional capacities.

With globalization has come the increased movement of people from one country to another through tourism and business travel, more expansive migration, and the continuing creation of refugees due to wars and civil conflict. In addition, there is continuing and perhaps increasing poverty of peoples associated with globalization. These phenomena and others have heightened the need for global coordination in countering the movement of infectious diseases like influenza and AIDS and in dealing with the health difficulties of those living in poverty. In this environment, the WHO has been called upon to play an increasing governance role in the world system. To do so, it must work closely with nation-states, but most of these states realize that they cannot address global health issues without a body like the WHO where avenues for cooperation can be discussed and agreed upon.

Suggested Reading: **World Health Organization website.** www.who.int (accessed 22 June 2005).

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