



Topic: Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate. Disaster and disaster management.

Role of WHO in Global Health Efforts

Introduction

- The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that is concerned with international public health.
- The WHO's stated aim is "to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable".

Role played by WHO

- Providing leadership on global health.
- **Initiatives like triple billion goals for better health, convention on tobacco control, TB elimination, campaign and awareness on Anti-microbial resistance are some examples.**
- However, it has no power to impose health policies on national governments.
- It acts as an adviser and offers guidance on best practice in disease prevention and health improvement.

Successes:

- The WHO is widely credited with leading a **10-year campaign to eradicate smallpox in the 1970s and has also led global efforts to end polio.**
- In the past few years, the WHO has also coordinated battles against viral epidemics of Ebola in Congo and Zika in Brazil.
- The WHO has also mounted increasing efforts against cancer, which now takes as many lives in the developing countries as in the affluent ones.

- The fight against tobacco, the largest single cause of preventable death in both men and women, is part of WHO effort in every country.
- In 1997, WHO (in collaboration with Canada) rolled out the Global Public Health Intelligence Network (GPHIN), which took advantage of information on the Internet to function as an early warning system for potential epidemics.
- The WHO's condemnation of the promotion of artificial infant-formula products in developing countries also attracted widespread attention.
- The worldwide control of infantile diarrhea with oral rehydration therapy was another great advance, based on very simple principles.

Failures:

- In the current COVID-19 disease outbreak, while many have praised the WHO's leadership, Trump had accused it of being China-centric and giving bad advice about the emerging pandemic.
- Despite initially declaring that Malaria would be eradicated, the WHO has had to concede that the disease has proved more persistent and resistant to drugs than it originally realized.
- There is also the depressing fact that Cholera, Diarrhea and Tuberculosis are still killing thousands of children and adults each year in the developing world despite cures being available.
- In the case of TB, misuse of antibiotics has caused severe problems with the disease becoming resistant to the initial treatments.

Challenges faced by WHO:

- **Donor dependency:** with only 30 percent of its budget under WHO control, the organization's agenda is guided by donor priorities. This goes against the principle of equity, which requires all countries' requirements to be included in its agenda.
 - **Eg.: With USA suspending its WHO contribution**, especially during global pandemic it becomes even more important to ensure WHO has a stable financial resource.
- **Unable to respond effectively** to existing and anticipated global health challenges-
 - **Eg.** faulted response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak. It also failed in insisting more transparency by China regarding Coronavirus and the morbidity attached.
- **WHO cannot enforce accountability** for nations' actions.
- **Widening gap between the agency's mandate and capabilities:** A report by independent experts concluded that WHO lacks the capacity to deliver a full emergency public health response.
- **Emergence of new global institutions:** which have challenged the WHO's leadership in global health such as Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, GAVI Alliance, and Unitaid etc.

Measures to empower WHO

- **Increase the WHO's technical capacities and capabilities**
 - Creating new departments focused on science, antimicrobial resistance and digital health will also broaden the WHO's range of expertise and keep up with the latest public health challenges and opportunities.
- **Coordinate with other global health players—like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Doctors Without Borders.**
- **Mobilize more resources.**
- WHO requires a systematic overhaul of its structure and practices to build its capacity.