

The World Health Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations. Founded in 1948, it works for the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. Its constitution came into force on 7 April 1948, which is celebrated every year as the World health Day.

The collaboration between WHO and I.R.Iran started in 1955 through an agreement of cooperation. However, the collaboration was increased when the country office has become operational in 1984. Its main counterpart in Iran is the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, and the primary objective of this partnership is to provide technical support to the country, within the overall scope of WHO's global, regional and country priorities.

Definition and scope of health

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. WHO recognizes that the health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon fullest cooperation of individuals and states. The constitution of WHO states that "the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition".

WHO has six core function's built into its mandate:

- 1) Providing leadership on matters critical to health and engaging in partnerships where joint action is needed;
- 2) Shaping the research agenda and stimulating the generation, translation and dissemination of valuable knowledge;
- 3) Setting norms and standards and promoting and monitoring their implementation;
- 4) Articulating ethical and evidence-based policy options;
- 5) Providing technical support, catalyzing change, and building sustainable institutional capacity, and
- 6) Monitoring the health situation and assessing health needs.

Health in a changing global environment

The target year for achieving the improvements set out in the Millennium Development Goals is 2015, but the trends for goals relating to health are not encouraging. The missing elements can be summarized as:

- Gaps in social justices;
- Gaps in responsibility;
- Gaps in implementation; and
- Gaps in knowledge

The strategic directions of WHO's work in Iran (2010-2014) are as follows:

- 1) Improving Health Equity and Social Determinants;
- 2) Strengthening Primary Health Care;
- 3) Achieving universal coverage and improving equity in health care financing;
- 4) Enhancing capacities for improving leadership and governance;
- 5) Strengthening health security;
- 6) Managing the demographic and the epidemiological transition.
- 7) Strengthening partnership for development.

Highlights of WHO's current work in the country:

WHO current work is focussed on Development of Health Policy and Health Systems, Social Determinants of Health, Environmental Health, HIV/AIDS and Communicable Disease, Health Protection and Promotion, Emergency and Humanitarian Action and Advocacy and Knowledge Management.

Challenges:

- Risk of compromising the effectiveness of the welfare system due to policies influencing the country's socio-economical status and need of innovation according to demographic and epidemiological transition;
- Regional disparities in certain critical health indicators such as under five mortality and maternal mortality rates;
- Risk of importation of certain communicable diseases from neighboring countries that have been controlled in Iran;
- Coping with harmful effects of the epidemiological transition and rapid urbanization;
- Need to upgrade the PHC system to meet the expectations and needs of the communities in view of their evolving social and economic situation;
- Reform of health care financing to make it more equitable and efficient, improving the leadership and governance function of the health sector;
- Need to develop links and lines of communications with countries in the region and in the rest of the world;
- Promoting international human rights standards and principles and advocating for human rights as a common UN value in dialogue and interactions with national actors.