



# WEEKLY EPIDEMIOLOGICAL REPORT

A publication of the Epidemiology Unit  
Ministry of Health, Nutrition & Indigenous Medicine

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## Threats to global health in 2019

The world is facing multiple health challenges which range from outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases to increasing reports of drug-resistant pathogens to growing rates of obesity and physical inactivity to the health impacts of environmental pollution to climate change and multiple humanitarian crises.

Within the World Health Organization 5-year strategic plan, the 13<sup>th</sup> General Programme of Work was approved at the 71<sup>st</sup> World Health Assembly. This plan was formulated to address these threats with a focus on a triple billion target which ensures the following.

- 1 billion more people benefit from access to universal health coverage,
- 1 billion more people to be protected from health emergencies and
- 1 billion more people enjoy better health and well-being

### Air pollution and climate change

Air pollution is considered by WHO as the greatest environmental risk to health in 2019 with nine out of ten people breathe polluted air every day. Microscopic pollutants in the air can penetrate respiratory and circulatory systems, damaging the lungs, heart and brain, killing 7 million people prematurely every year from diseases such as cancer, stroke, heart and lung disease. Around 90% of these deaths take place in low- and middle-income countries. Due to high volumes of emissions from industry, transport, agriculture, as well as dirty cook stoves and

fuels in homes.

### Non communicable diseases

Non communicable diseases, such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease, are collectively responsible for over 70% of all deaths worldwide, or 41 million people. This includes people dying prematurely, aged between 30 and 69. These premature deaths mainly occur in low- and middle-income countries. The rise of these diseases has been driven by five major risk factors: tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and air pollution. These risk factors also exacerbate mental health issues that may originate from an early age however most cases go undetected and untreated.

### Global influenza pandemic

The world will face another influenza pandemic which is not known as when it will be and how severe it will be. Global defenses are effective only if the weakest link in any country's health emergency preparedness and response systems are up to date. WHO is constantly monitoring the circulation of influenza viruses to detect potential pandemic strains: 153 institutions in 114 countries are involved in global surveillance and response. Every year, WHO recommends which strains should be included in the flu vaccine to protect people from seasonal flu.

### Fragile and vulnerable settings

More than 1.6 billion people (22% of the global population) live in places where protracted crises

### Contents

	Page
1. Leading Article – Threats to global health in 2019	1
2. Summary of selected notifiable diseases reported (02 <sup>nd</sup> – 08 <sup>th</sup> March 2019)	3
3. Surveillance of vaccine preventable diseases & AFP (02 <sup>nd</sup> – 08 <sup>th</sup> March 2019)	4

WEBER SRI LANKA 2019

(through a combination of challenges such as drought, famine, conflict, and population displacement) and weak health services which leaves them without access to basic care.

Fragile settings exist in almost all regions of the world, and these are where half of the key targets are set in the sustainable development goals, including on child and maternal health, which remain unmet.

### **Antimicrobial resistance**

The ability of bacteria, parasites, viruses and fungi to resist medicines threatens to send us back to a time when we were unable to easily treat infections such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, and salmonellosis. The inability to prevent infections could seriously compromise surgery and procedures such as chemotherapy. Drug resistance is driven by the over-use of antimicrobials in people, also in animals, especially those used for food production, as well as in the environment.

### **Ebola and other high-threat pathogens**

An Epidemic of a high-threat pathogen such as Ebola erupts is critical. What occurred in rural outbreaks in the past does not always apply to densely populated urban areas or conflict-affected areas. WHO's R&D Blueprint identifies diseases and pathogens that have the potential to cause a public health emergency, however lacks effective treatments and vaccines. This watch list for priority research and development includes Ebola, several other haemorrhagic fevers, Zika, Nipah, Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and disease X, which represents the need to prepare for an unknown pathogen that could cause a serious epidemic.

### **Weak primary health care**

Primary health care is usually the first point of contact people have with their health care system, and ideally should provide comprehensive, affordable, community-based care throughout life.

Primary health care can meet the majority of a person's health needs during the course of their life. Health systems with strong primary health care are needed to achieve universal health coverage.

Many countries do not have adequate primary health care facilities. In October 2018, WHO co-hosted a major global conference in Astana, Kazakhstan where all countries committed to renew the commitment to primary health care made in the Alma-Ata declaration in 1978.

### **Vaccine hesitancy**

The reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccine-preventable diseases. The reasons why people choose not to vaccinate are complex; a vaccines advisory group to WHO identified complacency, inconvenience in accessing vaccines, and lack of confidence are key reasons underlying hesitancy. Health workers, especially in those communities, remain the most trusted advisor and influencer of vaccination decisions, and they must be supported to provide trusted, credible information on vaccines.

### **Dengue**

A mosquito-borne disease that causes flu-like symptoms and can be lethal and kill up to 20% of those with severe dengue, has been a growing threat for decades. A high number of cases occur in the rainy seasons of countries. Currently, the season in these countries is lengthening significantly and the disease is spreading to less tropical and more temperate countries that have not traditionally witnessed the disease. An estimated 40% of the world is at risk of dengue fever, and there are around 390 million infections a year. WHO's Dengue control strategy aims to reduce deaths by 50% by 2020.

### **HIV**

The epidemic continues to rage with nearly a million people every year dying of HIV/AIDS.. Today, around 37 million worldwide live with HIV. Reaching people such as sex workers, people in prison, gay, lesbian or transgender is immensely challenging in providing essential services. Often these groups are excluded from health services. The progress made against HIV has been enormous in terms of convincing people to get tested, providing them with antiretrovirals (22 million are on treatment), and giving them access to preventive measures such as pre-exposure prophylaxis.

### **Sources**

World Health Organization. Emergencies. Ten threats to global health in 2019

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/ten-threats-to-global-health-in-2019>

World Health Organization-Thirteenth general programme of work 2019–2023

<https://www.who.int/about/what-we-do/thirteenth-general-programme-of-work-2019-2023>

Table 1: Selected notifiable diseases reported by Medical Officers of Health 02<sup>nd</sup> - 08<sup>th</sup> March 2019 (10<sup>th</sup> Week)

RDHS Division	Dengue Fever		Dysentery		Encephalitis		Enteric Fever		Food Poisoning		Leptospirosis		Typhus Fever		Viral Hepatitis		Human Rabies		Chickenpox		Meningitis		Leishmaniasis		WRCD		
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	T*	C**	
Colombo	170	2340	0	12	0	1	1	4	0	7	4	33	0	7	0	3	0	0	22	111	0	12	0	2	45	100	
Gampaha	99	1378	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	11	6	21	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	82	0	6	0	24	55	95	
Kalutara	42	638	3	19	0	3	0	2	0	25	6	103	0	2	1	2	0	0	10	198	2	26	0	3	63	67	
Kandy	53	609	1	13	0	3	0	0	0	4	1	21	2	20	0	1	0	1	1	51	0	11	0	6	56	100	
Matale	15	154	2	11	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	19	2	2	0	2	0	1	1	19	0	3	7	74	56	95	
Nuwareliya	1	47	2	5	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	12	4	21	0	4	0	0	1	11	3	13	0	0	21	100	
Galle	44	327	0	12	0	4	0	1	0	0	8	63	1	16	1	2	0	0	9	94	3	20	0	1	61	100	
Hambantota	17	268	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	15	5	46	0	1	0	0	2	97	1	10	1	152	72	100	
Mataru	13	386	0	3	0	4	0	1	1	2	11	55	1	15	1	6	0	0	6	82	0	2	15	123	62	99	
Jaffna	49	1459	3	37	1	3	1	4	0	1	1	19	14	223	0	0	0	0	12	68	0	5	0	0	21	93	
Kilinochchi	4	66	0	4	0	1	2	8	0	0	0	13	4	15	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	4	38	100	
Mannar	4	46	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	88	
Vavuniya	14	111	0	2	0	2	0	13	1	3	5	23	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	21	1	5	0	1	43	100	
Mullaitivu	6	84	1	6	0	0	2	4	0	1	0	10	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	33	97
Batticaloa	44	474	3	28	0	0	1	7	0	1	3	12	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	37	0	3	0	0	53	99	
Ampara	3	55	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	11	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	40	0	2	0	2	49	100	
Trincomalee	39	309	1	2	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	7	46	0	1	0	0	29	79	
Kurunegala	43	417	3	17	0	5	0	3	0	3	7	54	0	8	0	10	0	0	9	150	2	13	19	198	56	98	
Puttalam	8	162	2	9	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	9	0	5	0	0	0	0	7	44	3	8	0	3	57	100	
Anuradhapura	9	142	0	6	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	53	1	15	0	5	0	0	9	135	2	25	13	107	40	98	
Polonnaruwa	4	72	0	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	27	0	1	0	2	0	0	4	80	2	9	10	56	60	100	
Badulla	12	170	0	11	0	1	0	4	0	55	3	52	7	28	1	7	0	0	6	62	8	47	0	7	64	100	
Monaragala	7	114	4	16	1	2	0	0	0	72	8	66	2	32	5	18	0	0	4	47	6	37	0	7	62	100	
Ratnapura	33	403	2	22	0	10	0	2	0	6	13	135	0	6	0	3	0	1	13	105	2	40	6	37	44	99	
Kegalle	19	297	0	9	0	6	0	0	2	19	2	33	1	10	0	1	0	0	11	114	0	9	1	7	59	100	
Kalmune	14	236	0	15	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	11	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	47	0	1	0	0	58	100	
<b>SRILANKA</b>	<b>766</b>	<b>10764</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>871</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>1743</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>98</b>	

Source: Weekly Returns of Communicable Diseases (WRCD).  
 \*T=Timeliness refers to returns received on or before 08<sup>th</sup> March, 2019 Total number of reporting units 353 Number of reporting units data provided for the current week: 336 C\*\*=Completeness  
 A = Cases reported during the current week. B = Cumulative cases for the year.

**Table 2: Vaccine-Preventable Diseases & AFP**

**02<sup>nd</sup> – 08<sup>th</sup> Mar 2019 (10<sup>th</sup> Week)**

Disease	No. of Cases by Province									Number of cases during current week in 2019	Number of cases during same week in 2018	Total number of cases to date in 2019	Total number of cases to date in 2018	Difference between the number of cases to date in 2019 & 2018
	W	C	S	N	E	NW	NC	U	Sab					
AFP*	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01	01	20	11	81.8%
Diphtheria	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	0 %
Mumps	02	00	00	00	00	01	01	00	00	05	10	72	59	22.0 %
Measles	01	02	00	01	00	00	00	00	00	04	02	38	21	80.9 %
Rubella	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	04	0 %
CRS**	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	06	0 %
Tetanus	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	04	06	- 33.3 %
Neonatal Tetanus	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	0 %
Japanese Encephalitis	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	02	11	- 81.8 %
Whooping Cough	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	16	07	128.5 %
Tuberculosis	65	29	02	12	09	11	06	35	00	159	150	1748	1450	20.5 %

**Key to Table 1 & 2**

**Provinces:** W: Western, C: Central, S: Southern, N: North, E: East, NC: North Central, NW: North Western, U: Uva, Sab: Sabaragamuwa.  
**RDHS Divisions:** CB: Colombo, GM: Gampaha, KL: Kalutara, KD: Kandy, ML: Matale, NE: Nuwara Eliya, GL: Galle, HB: Hambantota, MT: Matara, JF: Jaffna, KN: Killinochchi, MN: Mannar, VA: Vavuniya, MU: Mullaitivu, BT: Batticaloa, AM: Ampara, TR: Trincomalee, KM: Kalmunai, KR: Kurunegala, PU: Puttalam, AP: Anuradhapura, PO: Polonnaruwa, BD: Badulla, MO: Moneragala, RP: Ratnapura, KG: Kegalle.  
**Data Sources:**  
**Weekly Return of Communicable Diseases:** Diphtheria, Measles, Tetanus, Neonatal Tetanus, Whooping Cough, Chickenpox, Meningitis, Mumps., Rubella, CRS,  
**Special Surveillance:** AFP\* (Acute Flaccid Paralysis), Japanese Encephalitis  
**CRS\*\*** =Congenital Rubella Syndrome  
**NA** = Not Available

**Dengue Prevention and Control Health Messages**

**Look for plants such as bamboo, bohemia, rampe and banana in your surroundings and maintain them free of water collection.**

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**ON STATE SERVICE**

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