

Progress Report on Deafness and Hearing Loss
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E. PREVENTION OF DEAFNESS AND HEARING LOSS (resolution WHA70.13 (2017))

43. In May 2017, the Seventieth World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA70.13 on prevention of deafness and hearing loss and requested the Director-General: to prepare a world report on ear and hearing care; to develop a toolkit and provide technical support for Member States in collecting data and planning national strategies for ear and hearing care; to intensify collaboration with the aim of reducing hearing loss caused by recreational exposure to noise; and to undertake advocacy through World Hearing Day on 3 March each year.

44. The following key activities have been undertaken by the Secretariat in line with the resolution.

45. World report on hearing. The World report on hearing is under development and expected to be launched on 3 March 2020. The Secretariat is working with experts to review literature, develop background papers, analyse available data and identify priority interventions. Consultations are being organized with Member States in different regions to collect feedback on the draft content and prepare for its dissemination.

46. Toolkit for ear and hearing care. WHO has published a number of tools including Ear and hearing care situation analysis tool, Ear and hearing care: planning and monitoring of national strategies and Preferred profile for hearing-aid technology suitable for low- and middle-income countries. Other tools, including indicators for ear and hearing care and an ear and hearing survey handbook and training resources for primary health care workers, are under development and will be finalized in 2019–2020. At least two countries in each region have started to use these tools with support from the Secretariat.

47. Technical support to countries. The Secretariat has provided technical support to Member States in the development and implementation of national strategies for hearing care, conduct of training programmes and prevalence surveys, and planning of hearing screenings. In the past two years, the Secretariat has collaborated with Member States in all regions, namely China, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Philippines and Tajikistan.

48. Collaboration with stakeholders. WHO established the World Hearing Forum as a global network of stakeholders working in the field of hearing care. The Forum's objective is to raise awareness on hearing loss prevention, identification and management. The first Membership Assembly of the Forum will be held on 4–5 December 2019.

49. Steps to address hearing loss caused by recreational noise. WHO has launched the Make Listening Safe initiative with the aim of reducing the growing burden of preventable hearing loss caused by listening to loud sounds. In collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Secretariat is developing a global standard for safe listening devices to reduce hearing loss among users of personal audio devices, such as smartphones and MP3 players. Future plans include the development of a regulatory framework to promote safe listening in entertainment venues.

50. World Hearing Day. In preparation for 3 March every year, WHO develops and promotes evidence-based messages and materials to raise awareness on hearing loss and promote hearing care. In 2018, World Hearing Day was observed under the theme "Hear the future" and new data on hearing loss prevalence and projections for future growth were launched. In 2019, the Day was observed under the theme "Check your hearing" and a WHO software application for hearing testing, "HearWHO App", was launched for free download and use. On both occasions, the Secretariat supported awareness activities in more than 60 countries.

51. The Secretariat will continue to support Member States in their efforts to prevent, identify and address hearing loss through integrating ear and hearing care within their national health systems.

References

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