

The Enigma Called Health for All

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It is 2026, and we have another World Health Day at our doorstep—with a slogan for the betterment of health and well-being of the world at large. This time, the WHO slogan for World Health Day 2026 (April 7) is “Together for health, stand with science.”

It is a clarion call for governments, health professionals, partners, and the public to stand with evidence-based guidance to protect the health of people, animals, plants, and the planet.

It is well established that the circle of life encompasses the interdependence of human health, the environment, and the zoonotic ecosystem.

The WHO is propagating the concept of “One Health,” which is an integrated approach aiming to sustainably balance and optimize the health of not only humans, but also the domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems).

Health is closely related to food and water safety, climate, and environmental alterations, which require interdisciplinary collaborations to deal with health challenges such as the emergence of infectious diseases, antimicrobial resistance, increasing neglected tropical diseases, and threatened ecosystems.

The One Health approach is designed to help address the entire spectrum of disease control—from prevention to detection, preparedness, response, and management—and contribute to global health security, and is to be applied at the community, national, and global levels. The success of this initiative, however, depends upon effective governance, communication, and coordination.

The decision to dedicate a specific day—April 7—to a global health theme was made in 1948 during the First World Health Assembly with a noble intention to address the pressing health needs of the conflict-ridden humanity and give hope and direction to optimal healthcare a few years after the conclusion of the second World War.

But the 28th of February 2026 saw the world experiencing the devastating effects of another conflict on humanity, the environment, and ecobiology.

Whatever has been achieved in terms of Health for All by 2030 will take a backseat as war and destruction take upper hand in the months to come. To date, over 1,444 people have been killed, over 18,551 people have been injured, and the UN has reported that up to 3.2 million people have been displaced, representing between 600,000 and 1 million households.

Let us have a look at how conflict disrupts health, security, and long-term wellbeing.

Explosive weapons and combat lead to high mortality rates and destruction of infrastructure, causing shortages of medical supplies, an exodus of health workers, and a total system collapse.

Malnutrition due to starvation and increased risk of outbreaks of communicable diseases as a result of disruption of water, sanitation, and hygiene are the inevitable consequences. Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) face overcrowding, lack of resources, and increased susceptibility to disease.¹

It has been reported that over 70% of epidemic-prone diseases and 60% of preventable maternal deaths occur in conflict-affected areas. The vulnerable population, such as women, children, and the elderly, are the worst affected by gender-based violence, reproductive health risks, and malnutrition.² Chronic disease neglect is also a grave consequence due to interrupted care for conditions such as cancer, diabetes, and hypertension.

WHAT IS THE LONG-TERM IMPACT?

The disruption of health services and infrastructure often causes a spike in mortality that lasts for years or decades beyond the active conflict.

It also important not to overlook the enormous burden on mental health culminating in depression, anxiety, and PTSD in war-torn zones that has immense socioeconomic implications.³

Devastating environmental contamination directly results from damage to industrial sites, oil refineries, and use of toxic weapons polluting air, water, soil, and

killing millions of aquatic and terrestrial animals and plants as well

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

The World Health Organization (WHO) takes the lead in mitigating the far-reaching consequences of conflict on health. It endeavors to restore and strengthen health systems in crisis zones by providing emergency medical supplies, supporting mobile clinics, and advocating for the safety of health workers.

However, it is the responsibility of the local, national, regional, and global authorities to implement joint responses to health threats.

Apart from health aids, monitoring and surveillance of health crises and tracking attacks on health services, as well as developing shared databases across different sectors, are of prime importance.

So how do we stand together on World Health Day?

How do we stand together in health and science if there is no harmony in this world?

How do we achieve Health for All if half of the world is dying, starving, fleeing in terror?

Humanity is in grave danger, and only peace, stability, and empathy can save it.

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