Meeting Report

3rd Stakeholders’ Meeting for the WHO Programme on Prevention of Deafness and Hearing Loss

3-4 July 2018
EB Room, WHO headquarters,
Geneva, Switzerland
BACKGROUND

Over the past two years, the World Health Organization (WHO) has arranged Stakeholders’ meetings to further its programme on the prevention of deafness and hearing loss. These meetings have provided WHO an opportunity to share the current work done in the field of ear and hearing care as well as the World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution on prevention of deafness and hearing loss (WHA70.13). The meetings have also served to improve the understanding of global needs and perspectives of different stakeholders in order to have helped define a shared vision for global action on hearing loss.

The main purpose of such action is to promote the implementation of the WHA resolution in order to make ear and hearing care accessible to all people across the world.

In this context, the overall objectives of the 3rd Stakeholders’ meeting were:

Main objectives

- Review actions initiated/undertaken by WHO, its partners and Member States for implementation of the WHA 70.13;
- Share case-studies/examples that showcase the implementation of WHA 70.13;
- Announce the World Hearing Forum;
- Report activities from World Hearing Day 2018 and plan for 2019 activities.

The meeting was attended by 141 participants from 40 countries, including representatives of Member States, otolaryngologists, audiologists, public health experts, representatives of international and regional professional organizations, INGOs involved in ear and hearing care, civil society groups, WHO collaborating centers, UN agencies, private sector, bilateral organizations, research institutions, researchers and editors of scientific journals, health communication experts, WHO regional advisers for ear and hearing care, WHO country office representatives involved in ear and hearing care strategies, and other WHO departments.

The format of the 3rd stakeholders meeting was a two-day meeting consisting of plenary sessions, briefing sessions, a round table and group work.

The agenda of the meeting and the list of participants are attached as Annex 1 and 2 of this report.
Dr Etienne Krug, Director of Department for Management of Noncommunicable Diseases, Disability, Violence and Injury Prevention, WHO opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. He acknowledged the fast growth of the stakeholder group in only three years which demonstrates the growing commitment among this group towards WHO-led action for ear and hearing care. With the passing of the resolution last year, Dr Krug highlighted WHO’s commitment towards the goal of making ear and hearing care accessible for all. He emphasized WHO’s transformation, which focuses on increasing access to quality health services for all issues and for all people.

Dr Krug brought up the question of how the hearing community could collectively transform actions into concrete results at country level, in terms of prevention, services, and assistive technologies.

During this session, all participants had the opportunity to introduce themselves.

WHA resolution on prevention of deafness and hearing loss: one year on and making a difference at the country level

Dr Shelly Chadha, Technical Officer, Prevention of Deafness and Hearing Loss remarked that the ultimate goal of the WHA resolution on hearing is to make ear and hearing care accessible for all. Presenting the programme’s four strategies of work, Dr Chadha pointed out the global landscape on how the programme has been strengthened based on the mandate of the resolution. The four key strategies of work are summarized below:
1. **Undertake effective evidence-based advocacy for prioritization of ear and hearing care**
   - Observe World Hearing Day annually
   - Launch the World Report on Hearing
   - Develop a learning module on ear and hearing care for hearing care professionals
   - Maintain and update website and enhance social media outreach

2. **Gather and collate data to drive action for hearing loss**
   - Support conduct of epidemiological studies in selected countries across all regions: a ‘handbook on survey for prevalence of hearing loss and its causes’
   - Undertake a global survey on various aspects of hearing loss
   - Collect data on public health aspects of hearing
   - Develop a database of contacts within each country

3. **Support strategy development and implementation in WHO Member States**
   - Develop a ‘toolkit of comprehensive technical support’
   - Promote regional collaborations
   - Support country-level planning: through technical assistance

4. **Develop and promote the ‘Make Listening Safe’ initiative**
   - Develop and implement global standards for safe listening devices
   - Launch a public health campaign for listening behaviour change
   - Recommend a regulatory framework for the control of recreational sound exposure

Dr Chadha extended an invitation to all participants to take strong cohesive actions, that could facilitate the translation of global policy to action at local level.

**WHA resolution- making a difference at a country level**

Dr Juan Carlos Silva, Regional Advisor PAHO presented the experience from the Region of the Americas in working towards translating the global policies into regional objectives and concrete activities. He outlined the following strategies:

1. Creation of coalitions at regional and national levels.
2. Regional Forum: this is a group of experts from countries of the Region that provide overall direction, identify regional priorities and develop regional policies and plans. The Forum has established a partnership for knowledge generation and experience.
3. Propose specific actions to MOH (regional strategy) in line with the adopted WHA resolutions.
4. Promote evidence generation through population based studies and health systems assessments.
5. Support countries in the response to the resolution.

He mentioned that the challenge in the region is that ear and hearing care is not yet a priority for ministries of health.
Dr Maryam Mallick, WHO Country Office in Pakistan, shared her experiences regarding promotion of ear and hearing care in the country. She stated that Pakistan has an estimate of 15 million people (7.9% of the population) with some kind of hearing loss. Despite this, the health system does not provide the required services that cater to this high demand.

However, following the adoption of the WHA resolution on hearing in 2017 and a resolution on assistive technology in 2018, the government has committed to addressing the issue of hearing loss in the country. Dr Mallick showcased a wide range of actions undertaken by the government such as a national hearing screening program and a provisional consultation on developing a national sign language.

She also highlighted that Pakistan led the world in furthering the agenda of improving access to assistive technology at the global, regional and national level.

Dr Arun Agarwal from India, introduced two successful stories on the impact of the National Program of Control of Deafness in India. This programme was started by the government of India in 2006 and has improved access to ear and hearing care for many people across the country. He showed a video with testimonials of two families that benefitted from the improved access to ear and hearing care.
Dr Alarcos Cieza, Coordinator of the Prevention of Blindness and Deafness, Disability and Rehabilitation Unit emphasized the importance of advocacy for making ear and hearing care a political priority.

‘The need for ear and hearing care is huge but the demand remains low and supply extremely low’, she said. Dr Cieza gave a detailed description of several key points to keep in mind in order to raise the profile of ear and hearing care at global, regional and national level.

In continuation with her talk, Dr Cieza highlighted the need for a united global effort to realize the vision of making hearing health a priority. She shared WHO’s vision of a global advocacy initiative which would serve to bring together all stakeholders under a single banner. This initiative could translate global policy and directives to actions at a national and local level by creating a shared vision and furthering collaboration among stakeholders. The initiative which is expected to be launched in 2019 will be driven by the World Hearing Forum. The participants were then divided into six groups to discuss the following questions:

1. What advocacy and network activities can be undertaken as part of the Global Initiative?
2. What should the initiative be called?
3. How will the initiative be promoted?

The details of the group work can be accessed here.
**World Hearing Forum**

Dr Chadha presented the rationale for having a **World Hearing Forum** which would drive the global advocacy initiative for raising awareness on ear and hearing care at all levels.

She presented the vision, mission, proposed actions and governance structure of the Forum. It is expected that membership procedures will be finalized in the next three months. The Forum would give the field of global hearing health the opportunity to develop a global unified identity and voice; have greater visibility at global, regional and national levels; and increase stakeholder participation. The visual identity of the Forum was unveiled by Ms Michael Chowen, upon invitation of Dr Alarcos Cieza.


The day ended with a reception.

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**World Hearing Day 2018**

Dr Karen Reyes, consultant at WHO programme for hearing, presented a video highlighting the activities undertaken worldwide during the celebration of the 2018 World Hearing Day with the theme *Hear the future*. She also mentioned the changes made to the materials and timelines based on inputs received from stakeholders, including editable formats, an online event registration and a report form. The video can be accessed [here](http://www.who.int/deafness/world-hearing-forum/en/).
Collaborative actions for hearing care

A panel discussion was moderated by Dr Laragh Gollogly coordinator WHP - WHO Press, with participation of members from different WHO programmes and International Telecommunication Union. Panelists included:

Islene Araujo De Carvalho
Simao Campos
Ernesto Jaramillo
Chapal Khasnabis
Frank Pega
David Ross
Nuria Toro Polanco

Department of Ageing and Life Course
International Telecommunication Union
Laboratories, Diagnostics and Drug-Resistance Global TB programme
Global Cooperation on Assistive Technology (GATE)
Occupational and environmental health
Maternal newborn child and adolescent health department
Services Organization and Clinical Interventions

The panelists highlighted various actions being undertaken across the organization in collaboration with WHO’s programme on hearing. These include:

- Inclusion of hearing in WHO’s Nurturing care framework for early childhood development and in school health guidelines.
- Promoting hearing screening and access to hearing services for older adults as part of WHO’s recommendations for healthy ageing.
- Improving access to hearing aids through their inclusion in WHO’s list of priority assistive technologies and an ongoing market-shaping exercise.
- Estimation of burden of occupational noise-induced hearing loss and recommendations for its prevention.
• Recommendations for prevention and monitoring of ototoxic hearing loss that is caused due to treatment of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis.
• Development of global standards for safe listening personal audio devices (smartphones, MP3 players etc) through a WHO-ITU collaborative effort. The standards form a key strategy for the WHO Make Listening Safe initiative.

World Report on Hearing

Dr Shelly Chadha gave a brief summary on the background, rationale, target audience and aims of the World Report on Hearing. The report is expected to be global in its reach while keeping a special focus on low- and middle-income countries where the number of people with hearing loss is not matched by an equal availability of resources. She further described the report structure and preparation.

Target audiences for this report are policymakers, decision-makers in governments, international organizations, civil society and professional bodies. The aim of the report is to set hearing care as a global political priority in the public health field and to provide a cohesive and consistent narrative on ear and hearing care that is based on the best available evidence.

The report is expected to be launched 3 March 2020.

Ms Megan McCoy, Technical Officer, Blindness and Deafness Prevention, WHO mentioned the importance of a communication and dissemination plan to accomplish the aims of the report. Ms McCoy gave a brief overview of the dissemination strategy and stakeholders’ analysis of the World Report on Vision.

Dr Chadha facilitated a group activity to obtain a list of relevant stakeholders in order to undertake a more comprehensive and robust stakeholders’ analysis for promotion of the Report and its recommendation.
Closing session

Dr Soumya Swaminathan, WHO Deputy Director General, closed the meeting and encouraged participants to think about the most practical and pragmatic ways to advance the field quickly. She spoke about WHO’s ambitious 13th General Programme of Work to achieve the “triple billion” targets: one billion more people benefit from universal health coverage; one billion more people have better protection from health emergencies; and one billion more people enjoy better health and well-being.

She highlighted the importance of including ear and hearing care into the umbrella of universal health coverage so that it becomes part of package of the essential health services that countries are going to roll out.

Dr Swaminathan emphasized the need to raise awareness on Make Listening Safe and the need to scale-up affordable devices. A strong invitation to bring up evidence-based research to close gaps in knowledge was her final advice.

Conclusion and next steps

- Develop a global advocacy initiative on hearing loss. Use the feedback from the group work to determine the name and set the activities for the initiative in consultation with the foundation committee of the Forum. It is planned to be launched in 2019.
- World Hearing Forum: updates and guidance for membership will be published on the website.
- World Report on Hearing: once an initial draft is finalized, consultation webinars requesting feedback will be announced.
- World Hearing Day: The theme for 2019 will be announced in mid-August. Open invitation to actively engage in this effort through the organization of events at local, national and regional levels.
- Participants to contribute with visual storytelling portraying cross-cultural and all aspects of hearing interventions and impact to be used by WHO.
- A WHO Bulletin special issue on hearing is planned. A call for papers will be issued and all sectors will be invited to submit their scientific papers to the Bulletin for peer review on public health aspects of ear and hearing care.
**Pictures**
Pictures kindly taken by Michael Chowen can be accessed [here](#).

**Annex 1 Agenda**

### Day 1: Tuesday 3 July 2018

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Welcome, introductions and opening remarks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soumya Swaminathan, Deputy Director General for Programmes, WHO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Etienne Krug, Director NVI, WHO</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:30</td>
<td>WHA resolution on prevention of deafness and hearing loss: one year down-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>WHO actions</td>
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<td>Shelly Chadha, WHO</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:50</td>
<td>WHA resolution- making a difference at country level</td>
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<td>Regional level actions to support global policies: Juan Carlos Silva, WHO</td>
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<td>PAHO</td>
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<td>Translating global policies to country level action: Maryam Mallick, WHO</td>
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<td>Pakistan</td>
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<td>Video presentation from India: Policy implementation benefits people</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>Tea/coffee break</td>
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<td>11:00</td>
<td>Making hearing a public health priority</td>
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<td>Introduction: Alarcos Cieza, WHO</td>
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<td>Discussion</td>
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<td>12:00</td>
<td>Lunch (Lunchtime seminar on Country actions to address hearing loss: Salle C)</td>
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<td>13:30</td>
<td>Global campaign for prioritization of hearing care: introduction to group work</td>
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<td>Introduction to group work: Karen Reyes, WHO</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:30</td>
<td>Tea/coffee break</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:45</td>
<td>Presentation of group work and discussion</td>
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<td>17:00</td>
<td>World Hearing Forum</td>
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<td>Introduction and outline: Shelly Chadha, WHO</td>
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<td>18:00</td>
<td>Group photo and reception</td>
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### Day 2: Wednesday 4 July 2018

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Review and preview</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alarcos Cieza, WHO</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:50</td>
<td>World Hearing Day: recap and ideas for strengthening</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Karen Reyes, WHO</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Collaborative actions for hearing care</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Panel discussion on ‘Ear and hearing in the context of WHO strategies’</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>Tea/coffee break with marketplace on hearing</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:15</td>
<td>World Report on Hearing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Structure and preparation: Shelly Chadha, WHO</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.30</td>
<td>Next steps and wrap up</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:00</td>
<td>Meeting close</td>
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