WHO programme for prevention of deafness and hearing loss and its initiative Make Listening Safe

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World Health Organization
WHO's Vision

A world in which no person experiences hearing loss due to preventable causes and those with unavoidable hearing loss can achieve their full potential through rehabilitation, education and empowerment.
Hearing loss: a public health issue

- High prevalence
- Significant impact on individual and society
- Prevention is possible
- Solutions exist
Millions live with the adverse consequences of unaddressed hearing loss.

- **360 million with disabling HL**
- **1-5/1000 children born deaf**
- **1 in 3 older adults has HL**
- **Up to 330 million have ear infections**
Hearing loss: the challenges

- Over 1 billion people are at risk of hearing loss due to exposure to loud sounds in recreational settings.

- Demographic shift and improved longevity: the percentage growth in the number of people aged 65 years and above will be between 18–50% from 2010–2020 in all regions.

- Continued lack of access to hearing care services in LMICs
Barriers

**Low awareness**
Lack of awareness regarding hearing loss among individuals, society and policymakers.
Stigma associated with HL and devices.

**Lack of EHC services**
Lack of human resources
Cost of devices
Lack of government policies
WHO’s approach

Advocacy
- to raise awareness about hearing loss and hearing care at all levels.

Technical support
- effective public health strategies for ear and hearing care at the grass-root level.
Political advocacy

World Health Assembly Resolution 1995: WHA 48.9

World Health Organization Resolution 2017.....?
Evidence-based advocacy

Need for action on hearing loss

Unaddressed hearing loss poses a high cost for the economy globally.

$750 billion\(^1\) annually

Millions of people in the world have hearing loss that can be treated or prevented

Millions of people in the world have hearing loss that can be treated or prevented

Make Listening Safe

KEY FACTS

1.1 billion people worldwide are at risk of hearing loss due to unsafe listening practices

Over 43 million people 12–35 years live with disabling hearing loss

Among young people 12–35 years in middle- and high-income countries:

- Nearly 50% listen to unsafe levels of sound through personal audio devices (MP3 players, smartphones, and others)
- Around 40% are exposed to potentially damaging levels of sound at nightclubs, bars and sporting events

32 million children live with disabling hearing loss

60% of childhood hearing loss is preventable

17% of birth-related causes

Infections 31%

Consequences, if not addressed

Distressed family and friends

Academic achievement

Social interaction

Higher risk of injuries

Increased poverty

Strategies for prevention and care

- Strengthen education and health systems, including information and referral services
- Reduce the number of people with hearing loss
- Train healthcare providers in early diagnosis
- Make accessible hearing assessment and rehabilitation services
- Raise awareness of the importance of hearing care

Childhood hearing loss

Act now. Here’s how!

www.who.int/phe/events/world-hearing-day
Over 360 mn people suffering hearing loss: WHO

A World Health Organisation (WHO) report has said there are an estimated 360 million people in the world who are suffering from hearing loss.
Global initiatives and campaigns

World Hearing Day: 3 March

2013: Hearing care for healthy ageing

2014: Ear care can avoid hearing loss

2015: Make Listening Safe

2016: Childhood hearing loss: act now, here is how!

2017: Action for hearing loss: make a sound investment

http://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/world-hearing-day/en/
Technical support for public health strategies:

- Development of evidence-based technical materials
- Toolkit for EHC
Public health strategies:

Technical support

- For development, implementation and monitoring of strategies:
  - Regional meetings
  - Country visits
  - Online support
Make Listening Safe initiative

Vision: to ensure that people of all ages can enjoy listening with full protection of their hearing.

http://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/activities/MLS/en/
Hearing loss can occur as a consequence of listening to loud volumes over prolonged periods of time.

The unsafe use of personal audio devices poses a threat to the hearing of millions.

Such hearing loss is permanent but it can largely be prevented through safe listening practices.

Appropriate technology can help to reduce the risk of unsafe listening.

Technology can help to raise awareness and catalyse behaviour change.
Approach

Raise awareness among listeners, manufacturers and policymakers about need for safe listening

Provide suitable products, devices and apps to facilitate safe listening
Focus areas

- Technology
- Health Communication
- Research & risk assessment
## Technology

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards for personal audio devices</th>
<th>Safe listening media player app</th>
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<tr>
<td>Standards which serve to minimise the users' risk of acquiring hearing loss, (as a consequence of its use).</td>
<td>Allows users to monitor their listening level, time and dose; provide information.</td>
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Health communication

- Overall communication strategy to raise awareness on risk of hearing loss and to disseminate the tools for safe listening
- Integrating health communication into standards.
- Development of targeted messages
## Research and exposure limits

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Exposure limits</th>
<th>Research protocol</th>
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<tr>
<td>Criteria for exposure and risk assessment</td>
<td>Standardized research protocol for assessment of hearing loss due to exposure to loud sounds in recreational settings</td>
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<td>Terminology</td>
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In future

Safe listening concerts
Approach

All stakeholders

ITU Standardization organizations

Advisory groups

Users

Collaborative approach
Thank you for your collaboration

\[\text{THE BEST WAY TO PREDICT THE FUTURE IS TO CREATE IT}\]

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