WHO estimates that there are 360 million persons in the world with disabling hearing loss, which represents 5.3% of the world’s population. Many causes of hearing loss can be prevented and others can be treated. Despite this, there is an overall lack of attention to ear and hearing care at global and national levels. The International Ear Care Day (IECD) is an advocacy tool which aims to raise awareness and promote ear and hearing care across the world.

This year the theme for the International Ear Care Day was ‘Ear care can avoid hearing loss’. The purpose was to raise awareness and promote national and community-based activities for ear and hearing health. To mark this day, WHO undertook a global campaign focused on healthy ear care practices at all ages. Several activities were carried out by WHO at all levels. Member States and WHO collaborating centres were involved in the commemoration of the 2014 International Ear Care Day. Some activities are outlined below.

1. Press briefing

On 28 February 2014, WHOHQ held a press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, on the situation on hearing loss in Member States and WHO regions and on their capacity to provide ear and hearing care. A note for the media was released and can be accessed at: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2014/survey-hearing-loss/en/.

This was taken up by several news agencies and media houses generating many articles and news about ear care. Some examples and links are listed in section 7.
2. **Hearing Screening at WHO headquarters**

The PBD unit in collaboration with WHO Health and Medical Services provided free ear and hearing check-ups for WHO staff, former staff and their families at the WHO headquarters along with ear care education and advice. A total of 153 persons were screened of which 31 were referred for further investigations. A brochure was provided after the screening which further elaborated how to care for the ears, in the form of frequently asked questions.

3. **Launch of the “Multi-Country Assessment of National Capacity to Provide Hearing Care” report**

On 3 March, the report on “Multi-Country Assessment of National Capacity to Provide Hearing Care” was launched by Dr Etienne Krug, Director, Injuries and Violence Prevention, Disability and Rehabilitation. This report serves to identify gaps for provision of hearing care in WHO Member States and is an attempt to draw global attention to the rising prevalence of hearing loss. Dr Diego Santana, Senior Adviser, Ear and Hearing Care, CBM was the guest speaker. The report (in English, French and Spanish) can be accessed at

http://www.who.int/pbd/publications/en/

4. **Awareness campaign for ear and hearing care**

Awareness materials were developed for use by partners and Member States. These include:

- YouTube animation video (in English, French and Spanish):
  
  https://www.youtube.com/user/who
- Posters in Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish
- Banners in Chinese, English, French and Spanish
- Flyer handout on ear and hearing care
- Frequently Asked Questions on ear care: posted online
- Factsheet on deafness and hearing loss

These materials can be accessed online at: http://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/news/IECD/en/

5. Internet Campaign

5.1 WHO internet and intranet

Ear Care was the lead story on the WHO main website, as well as regional websites of:

- WHO Regional Office for Africa
- WHO Regional Office for the Americas
- WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean
- WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia
5.2 Social media

Facebook, Twitter, google plus, YouTube and LinkedIn were actively involved with International Ear Care Day and enhanced the visibility and awareness for Ear Care. Twitter registered engagements of 15.8 million exposures and over 3 million accounts reached through tweets and retweets from 27 February to 3 March 2014. Facebook registered a total of 1830 likes, 922 shares and 47 comments while YouTube had a total of over 12 500 viewers in English, French and Spanish. Google plus recorded 476 on the Ear Care Day posts.

A few social media interactions are captured below:
6. Country offices, collaborating centres and Member States

Several country offices and Member States also commemorated the International Ear Care Day at different levels ranging from schools, hospitals and communities to national levels under the same theme “ear care can avoid hearing loss”. Countries across all regions participated in the International Ear Care Day. Among them are: Bahrain, Bangladesh, China, Colombia, DRCongo, Guatemala, Guinea, Indonesia, Kuwait, Lesotho, Madagascar, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, Qatar, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Swaziland and Zanzibar, Tanzania.

Some events and reports from Member States are captured below:

**Bahrain**: the Ministry of Health organized an awareness campaign using television shows and community awareness sessions to promote the day. Hearing screening was organized for children and awareness materials provided.

**Bangladesh**: the National ENT and Head and Neck Foundation of Bangladesh led the organization of events, with participation from the WHO country office. Awareness activities were carried out and a free ear and hearing camp was organized. The Centre for Disability in Development, an NGO working in Bangladesh also held awareness camps to mark the day.

**China**: organized nationwide activities, with involvement of the China Disabled Persons’ Federation, National Health and Family Planning Commission and 13 other ministries. Numerous activities were held across the country reaching nearly 60% of the Chinese population. Activities ranged from community awareness camps, to a nationwide media campaign, free hearing screening, consultations as well as hearing aid fitting. Text messages
on ear care were sent to mobile phone users by all state-owned telecom companies. As with the previous years, a theme concert was organized in Beijing and attended by officials from 15 ministries and the WHO Representative to China. Concerts were also organized in four other cities of China.

The activities involved 6551 communities, towns and villages, 713 cities and counties. 4230 professionals and 273 expert teams throughout the country. 2624 promotional posters were put up and 9043152 pamphlets were mailed out as part of the educational campaign. 296 387 persons received free hearing screenings and consulting services. Donations from all the society included 4902 hearing aids and other daily living goods worth more than 0.93 million Yuan RMB. A media conference at national level was hosted by CRRCDC to announce the theme. 2310 media agencies got involved in the reporting of relevant activities. China Centre Television released news and reports of IECD, including the interview of WHO Representative in China. Special training courses on neonatal hearing screening were organized in the Lang-Zhou-Gansu province. All WHO materials were translated and used for advocacy.

The three WHO collaborating centres for prevention of deafness, China Research and Rehabilitation Centre for Deaf Children (CRRCDC), Beijing Tongren Hospital and Nanjing Hospital participated in the events. CRRCDC plays a lead role in planning and execution of Ear Care Day activities in the entire country.

**Colombia:** Under the leadership of the national coordinator for hearing health, awareness materials were developed and displayed on the occasion of the IECD.

Democratic Republic of Congo: District level activities were carried out with the involvement of the WHO district office. Community awareness sessions were organized in schools, short ear care messages were conveyed through local media and distribution of awareness materials done. Over 10 000 people were reached through the activities.

**Guatemala:** The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Disability programme, organized awareness sessions regarding ear care and problems of ear and hearing.

**India:** An awareness camp for schoolchildren was organized by the Society for Sound Hearing on 3 March.
Kuwait: The Ministry of Health, along with national professional bodies organized the ear care day campaign on 3 March. Over 15 000 people were reached through activities which included screening, service provision and community awareness. A two-week long advocacy campaign was carried out. Innovative materials on ear care were prepared and distributed.

Madagascar: The SALFA hospital in Madagascar organized the ear care activities with a free ear care camp in the capital city, Antananarivo, on 3 March, and a camp in Antsirabe the following week.

Nigeria: Ear care day activities were carried out in the 6 geopolitical zones of the country. An advocacy campaign involving local radio stations, health talks and community awareness sessions was carried out. Ear and hearing screening activities were undertaken at a number of places across the country. Local leaders and government officials were involved in the organization and conduct of activities.

Pakistan: Community awareness programmes were organized in Karachi during the month of March to mark the IECD, with the participation of the WHO country office. An awareness walk was organized on the Ear Care Day in Lahore, with participation of the leading otolaryngologists, academicians, students and media.

Peru: Activities for raising awareness on ear care were organized by the Hospital Nacional Dos de Mayo, Lima in Peru.

Rwanda: A number of activities were organized, including a peaceful march in the city of Kigali. Flyers on ear care were distributed and programmes aired over radio and television. A free ear check-up camp was conducted.

Seychelles: Activities were organized with the participation of the Ministry of Health in Seychelles. Hearing screening, distribution of leaflets and awareness sessions on ear care were carried out from 3 March. District clinics were also involved in these activities.

South Africa: IECD activities were organized in the rural areas of Elandsdoorn. A range of awareness activities took place over a 3-day period targeting students, teachers, parents and health professionals. A Facebook page www.facebook.com/hearinafrica was also launched on this day.
**Swaziland**: The IECD was marked by the participation of the Minister of Health of Swaziland and supported by the WHO country office. A slogan of ‘Make hearing matter’ was adopted. Advocacy events and community awareness activities were carried out between 24 February and 7 March. Rural camps for hearing screening were conducted and radio, TV shows and newspaper articles have been organized for the entire month of March. The advocacy events targeted policy makers, with participation of Minister of Health for Swaziland, WHO Representative to Swaziland, members of health services, parents and teachers.

**Qatar**: Four-day activities were carried out in Qatar focussing on the theme “**Mom and Dad, your Hearing is important for us**”. The National Program for Early Detection of Hearing loss in Elderly People was announced on the day. Awareness materials were developed and a number of activities were carried out including an awareness campaign through newspaper, radio and television. Awareness activities targeted elderly persons, schoolchildren and primary health care providers.

**Zanzibar, Tanzania**: Primary Ear and Hearing care day was celebrated on 4 March, under the leadership of the Zanzibar Outreach Programme and in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. Over the last one year, Zanzibar has developed 35 Primary Ear and Hearing Clinics and one referral hospital.
Some materials for Ear Care Day
7. Links to Ear Care Day news and publications

Africa:

• Citi 97.3 fm Ghana [http://www.citifmonline.com/?p=3539](http://www.citifmonline.com/?p=3539)
• Vibe Ghana [http://vibeghana.com/014/03/04/who-says-many-countries-lack-capacity/](http://vibeghana.com/014/03/04/who-says-many-countries-lack-capacity/)
• PM news Nigeria [http://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2014/03/03/360m-people-deaf-says-who/](http://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2014/03/03/360m-people-deaf-says-who/)

**Americas:**


**Europe:**

• Journal of Laryngology and Otolgy(2014) 122, 221-222
Editorial on the International Ear Care Day
• Wordpress.com Cambridge [http://cambridgemedicine.wordpress.com/2014/03/03/international-ear-care-day-2014/](http://cambridgemedicine.wordpress.com/2014/03/03/international-ear-care-day-2014/)
• Welfare Society Territory (WEST) http://www.west-info.eu/ear-care-day-2014-a-day-to-let-hear-our-voice/

Asia:
• National news agency http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v7/ge/newsgeneral.php?id=1018408
• Manila times http://manilatimes.net/who-over-5-of-worlds-population-suffer-from-disabling-hearing-loss/79265/
• Shanghai China http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article_xinhua.aspx?id=203881

UN:
• Humanitarian news http://humanitariannews.org/20140228/many-countries-lack-capacity-prevent-treat-hearing-loss
• UN health agency article and news http://article.wn.com/view/2014/02/28/UN_health_agency_calls_on_countries_to_invest_in_prevention/
• UN radio http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/2014/03/international-ear-care-day-highlights-hearing-loss-problem/
• Audiology world news http://www.audiology-worldnews.com/news