

## Accelerating Global Disease Eradication

Disease elimination describes the stop of transmission of a disease in one geographic region, while eradication describes the stop of transmission of a disease globally. To date, only one disease has been successfully eradicated – smallpox, declared so in 1980. Almost forty years have passed, and the world has made great strides in science, medicine, and technology; however, smallpox still stands alone on the short list of success stories. The international community is actively working on eradication campaigns for diseases like polio, Guinea worm disease, lymphatic filariasis, trachoma, and yaws. Political, financial, social, medical, and technological issues are all involved in a complex network of challenges that is unique to each of these disease eradication efforts. Specific factors like perceived burden, which describes how burdensome the disease seems to society, can affect how motivated healthcare workers and communities are in their eradication efforts. Perceived burden can also strongly influence funding; for example, a well-known disease like polio will often receive more international attention and funding than a neglected tropical disease like yaws receives.

Even though chronic diseases are on the rise, infectious disease is still a major cause of health problems and mortality around the world. Many effective strategies and resources already exist to combat the issue; the key is utilizing them properly to improve health, and therefore lives, political stability, and social equality. This topic was chosen because of its ability to encourage critical analysis of the international community's actions thus far. Every nation will have important input based on its own endemic diseases, experiences in regional elimination, and various public health policies; the opinions of developed nations will be no more important than those of developing nations. In your research, you will have the chance to understand the details of what has made previous elimination and eradication efforts successful and to apply that knowledge to present-day challenges. Through reading, you may find encouraging statistics - India, a country of a billion people, has been declared polio-free; Guinea worm disease is now down to the single-digits of new cases; and smallpox was the cause of death of 300 to 500 million people in the 1900s, but now, it infects no one. Disease eradication is undoubtedly a complex problem, but these successes show that we are more than capable of tackling it.

## Rehabilitation of Health Structures in Conflict-Affected Zones

Armed conflict from territorial, political, religious, or other disputes has affected regions across the globe. These upheavals can cause great political, social, and economic turmoil through loss of life, lack of food, internal displacement, forced migration, and destruction of infrastructure – more specifically, health infrastructure. Health infrastructure involves the distribution of public health services through a system that relies on healthcare workers and facilities. During times of conflict, this pipeline of services becomes damaged because healthcare workers flee the area, hospitals face and



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structural damage, and medical resources run low. After times of conflict, health structures remain damaged for similar reasons. Additionally, the low number of healthcare workers who remain may have a difficult time training a fleet of new students; this often leads to inadequate medical education that can affect health care for a long period. Poorly planned emergency response, inefficient use of funds, and mistakes from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) during active conflict can also exacerbate the rebuilding process for years or decades to come.

On the scale of the individual, health greatly affects quality of life; on the scale of communities, nations, and the world, health is often at the root of important issues like poverty and development. Improving the framework for rebuilding health structures, then, is an essential goal for the international community to work towards. In your research, you may find that what often seems helpful, like mass deployment of NGO workforces, may not actually be helpful. This topic can facilitate debate about why common components of MUN solutions may actually be ineffective and counterproductive. Different nations will have different proven strategies and successes that can be tailored and applied to other regions, with considerations regarding the political, social, and economic climate of the region taken into account. Though the task may seem daunting with its many facets, the international community has been successful in the past with its efforts in Croatia, Kosovo, and East Timor. With the same collective effort, reconstruction can be possible in numerous other regions.

