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## Ten Threats to Global Health in 2019: WHO

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The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** has released a list of “Ten threats to global health in 2019”.

### Ten Threats and India

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- **Air pollution, climate change**
  - **Nine out of 10** people are **breathing polluted air** across the world.
  - India, with 18% of the world’s population, sees 26% of the global premature deaths and disease burden due to air pollution.
- **Noncommunicable diseases**
  - Noncommunicable diseases, such as **diabetes, cancer, and heart disease**, are collectively responsible for over **70% of all deaths worldwide**, or 41 million people.
  - This includes 15 million people dying prematurely, aged between 30 and 69.
  - **India has been named as the “diabetes capital of the world”**. **India’s** current estimated **cancer burden** — **over 1.5 million new cases** — is predicted to nearly double in coming 20 years.
- **Global influenza pandemic**
  - WHO has said that the world may face **another influenza pandemic**. But, the only thing we don’t know is when it will hit and how severe it will be.
  - Until January 13, 1,694 cases of swine flu had been reported in India this year, with 49 deaths. In 2018, 14,992 cases and 1,103 deaths were reported countrywide.
- **Fragile, vulnerable settings**
  - More than **1.6 billion people (22% of the global population)** live in places **where challenges such as drought, famine, conflict, and population displacement and weak health services have left them without access to basic care**.
  - The massive distress in **India’s farm sector has engendered waves of internal migration for work**. This migrant **population often live in unhygienic**

- **conditions** with very little access to basic care.
- Natural calamities routinely bring health crises like the Kerala floods last year were followed by a leptospirosis outbreak.
- **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**
  - The **ability of bacteria, parasites, viruses, and fungi to resist antibiotics** threatens our ability to fight with them.
  - Drug resistance is driven by the **overuse of antimicrobials in people and in animals**, especially **those used for food production**, as well as in the environment.
  - AMR is also a result of the **rampant over-the-counter sale of medications** without the prescription of a registered medical practitioner.
  - India, China, and the Russian Federation accounted for 47% of the global incidence of MDR-TB (Multidrug-Resistant- Tuberculosis) in 2016. India has an AMR policy but the implementation is poor.
- **Weak primary healthcare**
  - **Primary health care is usually the first point of contact people** have with their health care system, and ideally should provide comprehensive, affordable, community-based care throughout life.
  - **Many countries do not have adequate primary health care facilities.** This neglect may be due to a lack of resources in low- or middle-income countries and possibly also due to focus on single disease programmes in the past few decades.
  - In India, the primary care arm of Ayushman Bharat, with a proposed 1,53,000 health and wellness centers, has received less attention than Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana(i.e. The insurance aspect of Ayushman Bharat).
  - Rural health statistics for 2017, in India, show around **8,000 posts of doctors in primary health centers are vacant** (against a requirement of almost 27,000), and almost **2000 of the total 25,000 Primary Health Centres' have no doctors at all.**
- **Vaccine hesitancy**
  - Vaccine hesitancy – **the reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines** – threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccine-preventable diseases.
  - Vaccination prevents 2-3 million deaths a year, and a further 1.5 million could be avoided if global coverage of vaccinations is improved.
- **Dengue**
  - Dengue, a mosquito-borne disease that causes flu-like symptoms and **is lethal and kills up to 20% of those with severe dengue.**
  - WHO estimates 40% of the world is at risk of dengue, with around 390 million infections annually.
  - **Dengue is endemic to India and its season is lengthening significantly.**

**Until November 25, 2018, India saw 89,974 dengue cases and 144 deaths.**

- **HIV**

- According to the WHO, **nearly a million people every year die due to HIV/AIDS**. Since the beginning of the epidemic, more than 70 million people have acquired the infection, and about 35 million people have died. Today, around 37 million worldwide live with HIV.
- India has launched a test and treat policy, made HIV treatment the right of every individual. India has also enacted the HIV/AIDS Act, 2018 which makes anti-retroviral therapy a legal right for Indians with HIV/AIDS.

- **Ebola, other high threat pathogens**

- WHO's identifies diseases and pathogens that have the potential to cause a public health emergency but lack effective treatments and vaccines.
- This list includes **Ebola, Zika, Nipah, Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)** and disease X, which represents the need to prepare for an unknown pathogen that could cause a serious epidemic.
- **While India saw no case of Ebola, but several Indian states battled Zika in October-November 2018, and at least 17 people died of Nipah infection Kerala over April and May.**