

**Committee: World Health Organization**

**Topic: The question of the reconstruction of the World Health Organization**

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## Introduction

Since the establishment of the World Health Organization on 7 April 1948, more than 7000 people associated with WHO are working in 150 country offices, in 6 regional offices and at the headquarters in Geneva. Under its established purpose, WHO has been working hard to ensure universal health coverage and provide people with better health and well-being. WHO has made its name by successfully defeating smallpox, combating tuberculosis and polio, and supporting countries with insufficient health infrastructures. Especially, in case of smallpox eradication, WHO have shown its ability to combat against global disease by leading vaccination campaigns, surveillance and prevention measures aimed to contain epidemic hotspots and to better support people from the disease. With all these achievements, WHO could rise as the center of world health. WHO is currently playing a crucial role in providing post-war treatments, constructing health systems, and protecting people from health emergencies.

However, in 2014, when the Ebola outbreak occurred, WHO was criticized due to their failure to minimize the infections and deaths. After the COVID-19 outbreak occurred in 2019, WHO is facing the same criticisms it did in 2014.

Currently, condemnations toward WHO's actions dealing with the COVID-19 are stronger than at any other times. WHO failed to prevent the pandemic at the beginning and caused numerous infections and deaths, although it was not the first time to deal with global pandemics. As damage from the pandemic is increasing, opinions doubting the trustworthiness of the current WHO are also increasing.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Reconstruction**

The process of building or creating something again that has been damaged or destroyed.

### **Ebola**

An infectious and frequently fatal disease marked by fever and severe internal bleeding, spread through contact with infected body fluids by a filovirus - Ebola virus -, whose normal host species is known as bats.

### **COVID-19**

An infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus in 2019, which has symptoms such as dry cough, fever, diarrhoea, and chest pains.

### **Hydroxychloroquine**

A drug usually used in the prevention and treatment of malaria. It is also used in the treatment of certain inflammatory diseases, such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis.

### **Internal Auditing**

An independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organization's operations by using a systematic, disciplined approach.

### **Vaccine**

A substance, which contains a dead or weakened version of microbe, that helps protect against certain diseases. It helps immune system to recognize and destroy the microbe during a future infection

### **Health Care System**

An organized plan of health services. The term usually is used to refer to the system or program by which healthcare is made available to the population and financed by government, private enterprise, or both.

## **Background Information**

### **Ebola**

In 2009, an Ebola outbreak occurred, specifically in west Africa. It was considered as the largest Ebola outbreak in history since Ebola was discovered in 1976. Many experts nominate WHO's delayed action as the main factor of the failure to prevent and minimize casualties. There were many factors that caused the Ebola outbreak. The first factor was about cultural practices related to bodies of the deceased. Local staff failed to explain the reasons why the practice can not be continued, and WHO could not find the way to stop those cultural practices. Furthermore, the government of Sierra Leone underestimated the situation, and other countries and WHO viewed the situation as an african problem. According to the people who attended the meetings on the Ebola threat, WHO staff always

agreed to the minister that it was a local difficulty. Additionally, low financial aids, poor health systems, and staffing problems were also condemned. Finally, it led WHO headquarters to fail to act soon enough to prevent the outbreak and caused over 11000 deaths in west Africa.

## **COVID-19**

Officially, the COVID-19 emerged in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, at the end of 2019, and WHO began its investigation on 4th January 2020. on January 21, WHO first visited Wuhan and observed and checked Wuhan Tianhe airport, Zhongnan hospital and its related fever clinics, and the laboratory facilities. At the end of the visit, WHO and Chinese experts shared information and devices. After that, WHO began to make protocols, visit other countries, educate people, provide protective equipment to countries, and provide information for the COVID-19. Although it might seem that WHO is doing a great job in this pandemic, there are criticisms against WHO more than in any other cases. The criticisms can be divided into 2: WHO being biased toward China and providing confusing and contradictory information.

The first criticism is that WHO is showing a biased attitude toward China. WHO's announcement shows great similarity with China's announcement. This is a huge problem since it is considered to be that China is concealing information. For example, on January 14, the WHO said, "preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the novel coronavirus." The same day, the Wuhan Health Commission declared the same thing. Furthermore, WHO called for not closing borders with China. On January 23, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director general of the WHO, said "For the moment, WHO does not recommend any border restrictions on travel or trade. We recommend exit screening at airports as part of a comprehensive set of containment measures. After a week later, the WHO declared a public health emergency of international concern over the global outbreak of COVID-19. However, "The main reason for this declaration is not because of what is happening in China, but because of what is happening in other countries" said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, adding: "There is no reason for measures that unnecessarily interfere with international travel and trade." WHO continued to call on countries not to close borders to China, although many countries, such as Vietnam and DPRK, did not follow the call. However, COVID-19 was able to spread quickly due to some countries that didn't close borders to China, which include the UK, USA, and ROK.

The second criticism is that there were many cases for the WHO providing confusing and contradictory information. In the first days of the pandemic, the WHO has announced that healthy people do not need to wear a mask. On April 1, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that only patients and their caregivers should wear medical masks. However, on June 5, he changed his words through twitter and advised the general public to wear a mask. His words caused great backlash from many people for misleading the public for months. WHO also made contradictory claims related to hydroxychloroquine. Although WHO temporarily halted a clinical trial of hydroxychloroquine for the COVID-19 patients in May, the UN health agency resumed the trial in June. After that, WHO stopped the usage of hydroxychloroquine to treat COVID-19 patients again in July.

With those two factors, WHO ultimately failed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It not only resulted in numerous deaths and infections but also caused great damage in daily lives and economy.

## Possible Solution

For the purpose of the reconstruction of WHO, there should be at least 2 factors: improvement of the mutual relationship between local branches and the headquarters and recovering unbiased attitude to certain countries. Since each one is considered as a factor of failure in the case of Ebola outbreak and COVID-19, solving these factors could lead to a better health system and faster response toward health problems and diseases.

### Internal Auditing

One possible option to accomplish the reconstruction of the WHO is the internal auditing. The internal auditing team could be organized by many countries, UN headquarters or both. Their goal should be checking the efficiency and the fairness of the WHO by investigating the reports submitted from local branches and important meetings and the flow and the usage of the finance. It would help understand the current WHO's systems, identify problems, and reorganize the system. Furthermore it can decrease the power of the director general and other executive directors. It is a great advantage since two recent director generals - Margaret Chan and Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus - were criticized not only due to the failure to prevent the pandemic but also due to their own actions, such as being biased toward certain countries. However, it is important to be aware of the fact that extreme changes of the system at once or weakening the power of the headquarters too much might

be dangerous and lead to inefficiency in dealing with current COVID-19 and future pandemics.

### Education

Another possible option is educating the staff of the WHO. Although there were many workers in the WHO, they failed to prevent Ebola and COVID-19 rapidly. It is an undeniable fact that one of the causes of the global pandemic is due to inexperienced and uneducated workers. Therefore, education for workers, especially for local staff, is necessary. They should learn things that would help them to carry out their tasks, such as protocols. After that, they should be tested on their ability to perform their tasks. If they fail, they should be reeducated or fired. However, you should be careful since this education program would take a lot of time and cause a shortage of personnel.

### Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
7.4.1948	WHO was established by the UN for further international cooperation for improved public health conditions. WHO currently has 194 member states.
1980	Smallpox was officially declared to be eradicated due to the Global Smallpox Eradication Program led by WHO since 1959.
12.4.2009 ~ 10.4.2010	Swine flu emerged and spread quickly across the world. There were approximately 60.8 million cases and 12,000 deaths due to the virus. WHO was condemned by some experts due to their overestimation of the virus, causing millions of doses of vaccine unused
26.12.2013 ~ 9.6.2016	Ebola outbreak occurred in west Africa and WHO failed to prevent the crisis. More than 11,000 people died.
12.2019 ~ now	Covid-19 was identified for the first time in Wuhan, China. It spread worldwide and caused enormous casualties; recording 733,621 deaths until 10.8.2020. WHO is currently being slandered for their biased

	and slow actions.
11.3.2020	WHO declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic. However, international public health experts criticized WHO for its late decision, since over 4,500 deaths and over 120,000 cases were officially reported.

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