

## Step 2.4 International UN strategic response and WHO coordination

Dr Ibrahima Socé Fall, Assistant Director-General, Emergency Response, for the World Health Organization, describes the international strategic response and role of WHO in coordination (recording 27th February 2020). As you watch it, consider which of the national organizations in your country are coordinating the public health response to COVID-19.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has a specific site for resources on COVID-19 [here](#), covering, for example, public advice, country and technical guidance, situation reports, press conferences as well as strategies, plans and operations. We've included links to some of the key documents from WHO in the See Also section, including their "COVID-19 Strategy Update" published 14 April 2020, which updates and complements the strategies Dr Socé Fall describes in his talk. This document includes guidance for countries preparing for a phased transition from widespread transmission to a steady state of low-level or no transmission.

### Video transcript:

IBRAHIMA SOCE FALL: Today, I'm going to talk about how the WHO is leading the response to the global outbreak and how the United Nations and WHO are organised to coordinate this global response.

I think it's important to understand that we have many organisations within the United Nations, and the WHO is the specialised organisation working on our public health. So in this situation, the first role of the WHO is really to make sure that we have a proper situation analysis, reviewing the epidemiological situation and providing a risk assessment on it.

WHO is also the custodian of the international health regulation and bears on our risk assessment. We, the director-general confirmed what we call the emergency committee. That's why on the 30th of January, this outbreak was declared as a public health emergency of international concern.

The role of the WHO is important in leading preparedness and response to this type of event. That's why early enough, we worked to develop what we call a global preparedness and response strategy with three main objectives, the first one being to establish international coordination to deliver strategic, technical, and operational support through existing mechanisms and partnerships, and the second objective

being to scale up country preparedness and response operations, including strengthening readiness to rapidly identify, detect, and treat cases, identifying and follow-up of contact when feasible and also implementing infection prevention and control in health care settings and implementing all the necessary measures for travellers and awareness raising population.

And the third objective is really to accelerate priority research and innovation to support a clear and transparent global process to set research and innovation priorities, to fast-track and scale up research development and equitable availability of candidate therapeutics, vaccines, and diagnostics. And this will build on a common platform for standardised process, protocol, and tools to facilitate multidisciplinary and collaborative research integrated into the response.

In terms of coordination, when we have a crisis of this magnitude, we set up what we call the Integrated Incident Management System Team at the global level, meeting here in Geneva, in all the six WHO regions, and at country level. So for this, we have enlisted a management team led by an incident manager. And we have various pillars, also, under the Incident Management System focusing not only on surveillance but on everything we need in terms of technical expertise, medical expertise, in terms of operational support, logistics, and also partners coordination.

So at global level, we have what we call the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee that meets regulatory and decides to activate what we call the UN ScaleUp Protocol. And for this time, we have really focused on what we call the United Nations Crisis Management System. The key functional area is around communication of key information, analysis and prioritisation of key emerging issues at the global level, coordination of strategies, policy decisions, and plans, and joint action where synergies exist.

So this UN Crisis Management team was activated on the 11th of February. We don't only work at the global level because we have what we call the United Nation Country Teams. In every country, we have the UNCT, United Nations Country Teams. So through the resident coordinator, supported technically by the WHO representative, we work at country level to make sure that we have the right assessment, we have the right plan, and we help them, also, to mobilise resources and all products they need to be ready to respond when they have cases.

On a regional level, we have established, also, what we call incident management support teams under the leadership of the regional director. But at the global level, we also have, also, coordination mechanism. We have a Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network, where we have technical agencies, NGOs, the Red Cross, academics like the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Public Health England, and we work together to identify experts to be deployed to countries to provide specific technical expertise based on the need identified.

## See Also

WHO coronavirus strategic preparedness and response plan

<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/srp-04022020.pdf>

WHO technical interim guidance for novel coronavirus

[https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1)

COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Of International Concern (PHEIC) Global Research and Innovation Forum: towards a research roadmap

<https://www.who.int/teams/blueprint/covid-19>

The R&D blueprint is a global strategy and preparedness plan that allows the rapid activation of R&D activities during epidemics

<https://www.who.int/teams/blueprint/about>

WHO COVID-19 strategy update published 14 April 2020

[https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/covid-strategy-update-14april2020.pdf?sfvrsn=29da3ba0\\_19](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/covid-strategy-update-14april2020.pdf?sfvrsn=29da3ba0_19)