



## Health Issues

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by Anup Shah | This Page Last Updated Thursday, September 22, 2011

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Despite incredible improvements in health since 1950, there are still a number of challenges, which *should* have been easy to solve. Consider the following:

- One billion people lack access to health care systems.
- 36 million deaths each year are caused by noncommunicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and chronic lung diseases. This is almost two-thirds of the estimated 56 million deaths each year worldwide. (A quarter of these take place before the age of 60.)
- Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the number one group of conditions causing death globally. An estimated 17.5 million people died from CVDs in 2005, representing 30% of all global deaths. Over 80% of CVD deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.
- Over 7.5 million children under the age of 5 die from malnutrition and mostly preventable diseases, each year.
- In 2008, some 6.7 million people died of infectious diseases alone, far more than the number killed in the natural or man-made catastrophes that make headlines. (These are the latest figures presented by the World Health Organization.)
- AIDS/HIV has spread rapidly. *UNAIDS* estimates for 2008 that there are roughly:
  - 33.4 million living with HIV
  - 2.7 million new infections of HIV
  - 2 million deaths from AIDS
- Tuberculosis kills 1.7 million people each year, with 9.4 million new cases a year.
- 1.6 million people still die from pneumococcal diseases every year, making it the number one vaccine-preventable cause of death worldwide. More than half of the victims are children. (The pneumococcus is a bacterium that causes serious infections like meningitis, pneumonia and sepsis. In developing countries, even half of those children who receive medical treatment will die. Every second surviving child will have some kind of disability.)
- Malaria causes some 225 million acute illnesses and over 780,000 deaths, annually.
- 164,000 people, mostly children under 5, died from measles in 2008 even though effective immunization costs less than 1 US dollars and has been available for more than 40 years.

These and other diseases kill more people each year than conflict alone.

## Sources:

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Mostly World Health Organization. See articles below for sources and references.

Why so many needless deaths? The collection of articles below, hope to help shed light on this tragedy.

## Global Health Overview

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/588/global-health-overview>

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This article looks at some global aspects of health issues, such as the impact of poverty and inequality, the nature of patent rules at the WTO, pharmaceutical company interests, as well as some global health initiatives and the changing nature of the global health problems being faced.

Read “[Global Health Overview](#)” to learn more.

## Health Care Around the World

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/774/health-care-around-the-world>

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This article provides a high level overview of the various ways health services are provided around the world, as well as accompanying issues and challenges. Topics introduced include health as a human right, universal health care, and primary health care.

Read “[Health Care Around the World](#)” to learn more.

## Diseases—Ignored Global Killers

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/218/diseases-ignored-global-killers>

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Last updated Saturday, October 02, 2010.

This article looks into a number of issues of global diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis, AIDS/HIV, and the global response to them. For example, many people cannot afford medicines for these or other diseases, even though some are easily treatable.

Read “[Diseases—Ignored Global Killers](#)” to learn more.

## AIDS around the world

Last updated Sunday, November 29, 2009.



This article looks specifically at AIDS, and the global reaction to it. It seems to have only become a global interest when some rich countries were threatened by it.

Global initiatives have been welcome but slow to get off the ground, while access to drugs and medicines is proving difficult, and, political. Recent years have shown lives being saved, but one can't help wonder how many more lives could be saved.

Read "[AIDS around the world](#)" to learn more.

## Pharmaceutical Corporations and Medical Research

Last updated Saturday, October 02, 2010.



For a while now, pharmaceutical companies have been criticized about their priorities. It seems the profit motive has led to emphasis on research that is aimed more at things like baldness and impotence, rather than various tropical diseases that affect millions of people in developing countries.

Unfortunately, while a large market therefore exists, most of these people are poor and unable to afford treatments, so the pharmaceutical companies develop products that can sell and hence target wealthier consumers.

In addition, there is concern at how some pharmaceutical companies have been operating: from poor research and trial practice to distorting results, and politically lobbying and pressuring developing countries who try to produce generics or try to get cheaper medicines for their citizens.

Read "[Pharmaceutical Corporations and Medical Research](#)" to learn more.

## Health in the Media

Last updated Tuesday, September 28, 2010.



Health information is often sensationalized in the media, with various promises of quick fixes and miracle cures. Yet, that is rarely reality. How has it come to this?

Read "[Health in the Media](#)" to learn more.

## Pharmaceutical Corporations and AIDS

Last updated Sunday, June 02, 2002.

The AIDS crisis is one example that highlights the motives of some of the larger pharmaceutical corporations. When South Africa wanted to try and produce cheaper drugs to help its own people, by producing more generic and cheaper drugs, these companies actually lobbied the US government to impose sanctions on them!

Read "[Pharmaceutical Corporations and AIDS](#)" to learn more.

## AIDS in Africa

Last updated Sunday, November 29, 2009.



AIDS in Africa is said to be killing more people than conflicts.

It causes social disruption as children become orphaned and it affects many already-struggling economies as workforces are reduced.

As an enormous continent, various regions are seeing different results as they attempt to tackle the problem. Numerous local, regional and global initiatives are slowly helping, despite significant obstacles (such as poverty, local social and cultural norms/taboo, concerns from drug companies about providing affordable medicines, and limited health resources of many countries that are now also caught up in the global financial crisis).

Read "[AIDS in Africa](#)" to learn more.

## Tobacco

Last updated Wednesday, July 02, 2008.

In this section, we look at the example of tobacco consumption. Smoking kills millions. Furthermore, it exacerbates poverty, damages the environment, and (through diversion of land resources away from food production) contributes to world hunger.

Read "[Tobacco](#)" to learn more.

## Obesity

Last updated Sunday, November 21, 2010.



Obesity typically results from over-eating (especially an unhealthy diet) and lack of enough exercise.

In our modern world with increasingly cheap, high calorie food (example, fast food – or "junk food"), prepared foods that are high in things like salt, sugars or

fat, combined with our increasingly sedentary lifestyles, increasing urbanization and changing modes of transportation, it is no wonder that obesity has rapidly increased in the last few decades, around the world.

The number of people overweight or obese is now rivaling the number of people suffering from hunger around the world. Obese people were thought to be mainly from richer countries or wealthier segments of society, but poor people can also suffer as the food industry supplies cheaper food of poorer quality.

Environmental, societal and life-style factors all have an impact on obesity and health. While individuals are responsible for their choices, other actors such as the food industry are also part of the problem, and solution. Unfortunately, the food industry appears reluctant to take too many measures that could affect their bottom line, preferring to solely blame individuals instead.

Read "[Obesity](#)" to learn more.

## Sugar

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/239/sugar>

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Last updated Friday, April 25, 2003.

In this section, we look at the example of sugar consumption; how it has arisen (as it was once a luxury, now turned into a "necessity"). We look at things like how it affects the environment; the political and economic drivers in producing sugar (for example, historically, sugar plantations encouraged slavery); its health effects today; its relation to world hunger (as land used to grow sugar and related support, for export, could be used to grow food for local consumption); and so on. As we will also see, it is an example of a "wasteful" industry. That is, so many resources go into this industry compared to what might be needed. This wastes labor, wastes capital and uses up many resources.

Read "[Sugar](#)" to learn more.

## Beef

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/240/beef>

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Last updated Sunday, August 22, 2010.

Beef, like sugar, is another vivid example of using resources wastefully, degrading the environment, contributing to hunger, poor health and more.

More than one third of the world's grain harvest is used to feed livestock. Some 70 to 80% of grain produced



in the United States is fed to livestock. A lot of rainforest in the Amazon and elsewhere are cleared for raising cattle — not so much for local consumption, but for fast food restaurants elsewhere.

There are enormous related costs of what is an "inefficient" process when considered as a whole. Subsidies in farming in the US and elsewhere end up encouraging unhealthy foods to be cheaper than healthy foods. Just factoring in the cost of water alone, a more realistic estimate of the real cost of common hamburger meat would be \$35 a pound!

As with sugar, beef was a luxury turned into an everyday item. Like sugar, it is also an example of how people's tastes are influenced and how "demands" can be created (or very much expanded), rather than meeting some "natural" demand.

Read "[Beef](#)" to learn more.

## Water and Development

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/601/water-and-development>

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Last updated Sunday, June 06, 2010.

Issues such as water privatization are important in the developing world especially as it goes right to the heart of water rights, profits over people, and so on. This article looks into these issues and the impacts it has on people around the world.

Read "[Water and Development](#)" to learn more.

## Illicit Drugs

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/755/illicit-drugs>

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Posted Sunday, March 30, 2008.

The global illicit drugs market is enormous, estimated at some \$320 billion. This makes it one of the largest businesses in the world. Some believe in strong prohibition enforcement. Others argue for decriminalization to minimize the crime and health effects associated with the market being controlled by criminals. Are there merits to each approach?

Read "[Illicit Drugs](#)" to learn more.

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by Anup Shah

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“When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a

communist.” — *Dom Hélder Câmara*

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