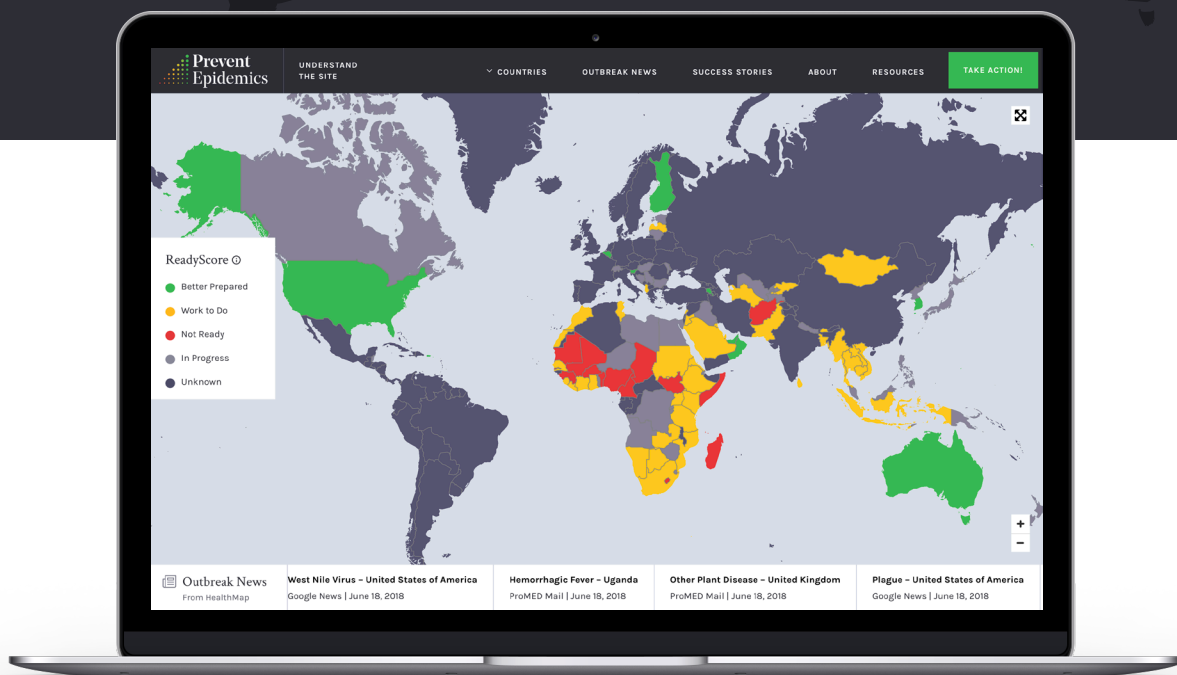


Preventing Epidemics How Communities, Countries and the World Can Step Up



Background

In 2016, the Joint External Evaluation (JEE) was launched to better assess a country's ability to find, stop, and prevent health threats, in compliance with the International Health Regulations (2005). By mid-2018, over 75 countries had volunteered and conducted a JEE, examining 19 areas of epidemic preparedness, and identifying more than 5,000 priority actions.

The enthusiasm for JEEs is commendable, unfortunately most countries have not yet closed the preparedness gaps identified.

What can be done to make sure that we continue to make progress?

International and Regional organizations can step up by supporting and coordinating IHR implementation:

The World Health Organization (WHO) guides countries through the JEE process. It has an important role in coordinating implementation and reporting and responding to global health threats. WHO can continue to develop clear guidance and support mechanisms for post-JEE activities that account for current country progress and barriers to action.

The World Bank is a critical partner for many countries, especially those with high risk for infectious disease outbreaks. They can continue to support national governments in translating costed and prioritized plans into detailed financing proposals, and reinforce incentives for national governments to invest in preparedness. One example of the international support for IHR core capacities is the Regional Disease Surveillance Systems Enhancement Program (REDISSE), which supports 15 countries in the ECOWAS region with nearly US \$400M to strengthen disease surveillance and epidemic preparedness.

Other important steps for stakeholders are discussed in the World Bank report "From Panic and Neglect to Investing in Health Security: Financing Pandemic Preparedness at a National Level", which examines roles and responsibilities for tackling pandemic preparedness. Regional organizations like the new Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (ACDC) can continue to support their countries to achieve IHR compliance.

Governments can step up by funding epidemic preparedness support:

Initiatives like the Global Health Security Agenda, the Australian Government's Indo-Pacific Health Security Initiative and Public Health England Global Health Strategy provide millions of dollars and robust technical assistance to support health security activities and IHR compliance.

These and other resources are at risk of massive declines in level of support, and governments should reinforce their financial and technical commitment to health security and coordinate their bilateral support to countries.

Countries can step up by prioritizing epidemic preparedness:

Countries that are better prepared can share their experience with their peers and assist them in achieving IHR compliance, as a gap in one country is a gap for the world.

Countries with identified gaps from the JEE and other assessments can commit to strengthening health security and progressing along the path toward IHR compliance. This includes engaging stakeholders and mobilizing domestic financing.

Countries with identified gaps can identify areas for external support, and any barriers to coordinating technical assistance or financial resources.

Countries that are yet to conduct an assessment can commit to do one, and implement priority actions to meet gaps identified in the process.

Communities can step up by encouraging their leaders to act to improve preparedness:

Learn about how prepared your country is. Engage your local leaders to mobilize the means required for your community to stay safe during the next outbreak.

Start a conversation on social media about how prepared your country is, and the choices your government could make today to be better prepared during the next epidemic.

Collect signatures and send letters to decision makers (e.g. Ministry of Health; Ministry of Finance; Presidency), to express support for decisive government actions to improve preparedness and protect your communities.

Write to newspapers and magazine editors to ask them to report on your country's risks and preparedness.

During the next outbreak, engage your community in learning and sharing appropriate safety measures, as well as supporting and monitoring your government's response.

Find out more at [PreventEpidemics.org](https://www.PreventEpidemics.org)