



## India in Global Health Diplomacy

### Why in news?

\n\n

Soumya Swaminathan, an Indian Clinical Scientist, has recently been appointed the Deputy Director-General for Programmes at the WHO.

\n\n

### What is the significance?

\n\n

\n

- She has turned out to be the first Indian to be elevated to the post.

\n

\n\n

\n

- More importantly, it gives representation to India in the WHO, the highest decision-making body in public health.

\n

- It also signifies the growing importance of India in global health diplomacy.

\n

- The Indian representation and the DG being from Ethiopia together is seen to give a place for developing countries in WHO.

\n

\n\n

### What should be done to improve Public Health Care?

\n\n

\n

- **People's participation** - Involving community and civil society for ensuring public health gains is important.

\n

- e.g Dengue, where eliminating breeding sources of mosquitoes was essential

beyond the government's efforts.

\n

- **Innovations** - It is essential to bring various innovations that are happening mostly in the private sector into public health.

\n

- Beyond a new drug or a vaccine, the innovations in devices, diagnostics, sensors, and drug delivery systems can also aid in public health delivery.

\n

- **Intellectual property** - There should be balance between the needs and demands of intellectual property protection as against access and equity in health.

\n

- WHO should invoke its pivotal role in this regard.

\n

- There have been successes like the Medicines Patent Pool, but a lot more needs to be done.

\n

- **Emerging epidemics** - There is a rising concern with vector-borne diseases like chikungunya, zika, dengue, etc.

\n

- The potential of science and public health management in addressing the rise of ever-adapting vectors should be exploited.

\n

- **India** - More attention should be diverted to the lesser known tropical diseases like kala-azar, filariasis, measles, etc.

\n

- Snake bite causes an estimated 50,000 deaths in India.

\n

- There is a need for regulations on snake venom manufacturing to ensure access to the right venom at the right time.

\n

- Also, soil-transmitted helminths, or intestinal worms, have an impact on morbidity-causing anaemia and nutritional deficiencies.

\n

- Government should consider expanding the deworming programmes to the entire population and not just to children.

\n

- **Role of WHO** - Not all agreements under WHO are binding; but countries that take them seriously and implement are seeing good results.

\n

- E.g. Successes in tobacco control, HIV treatment, etc.

\n

- So on similar lines followings regulations should be implemented

\n

\n\n

\n

- i. labelling of food for high salt, sugar, and fat content.  
\n
- ii. higher taxes on these products.  
\n
- iii. package labelling to indicate whether it is a healthy choice or not.  
\n
- iv. micronutrient fortification.  
\n

\n\n

### **Quick Fact**

\n\n

### **Medicines Patent Pool (MPP)**

\n\n

\n

- MPP is a United Nations backed organisation founded in 2010, and based in Geneva.  
\n
- It offers a public health-driven business model that aims to lower the prices of HIV, tuberculosis and hepatitis C medicines.  
\n
- It also facilitates the development of better treatments through voluntary licensing and patent pooling.  
\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n



**IAS PARLIAMENT**  
*Information is Empowering*  
A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative