

Most Countries Aren't Prepared for the Next Epidemic

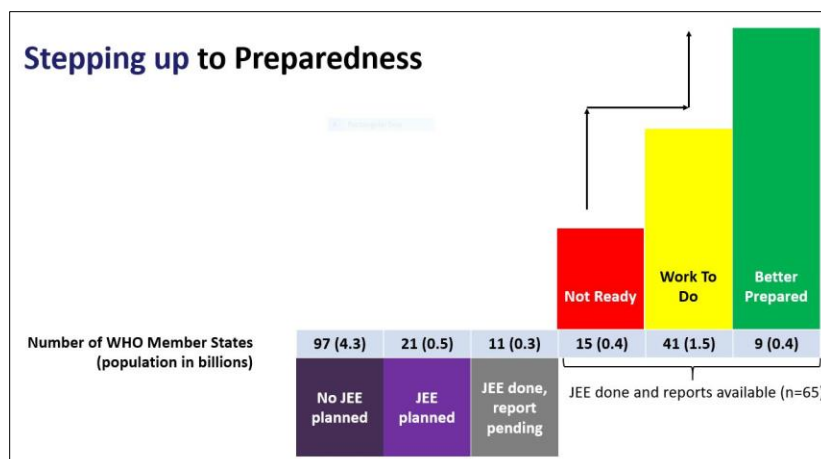
PreventEpidemics.org Highlights Gaps in Preparedness and Encourages Action to Save Lives

June 21, 2018, Aspen, CO, USA – The world will face another unpredictable epidemic, but most countries are not ready to find, stop, and prevent its spread. A new website, PreventEpidemics.org, spotlights gaps in preparedness and highlights actions countries, donors, activists, and organizations can take to fill them. An infectious disease can spread from one community to any country in the world in just 36 hours, but as PreventEpidemics.org shows, most countries have not yet taken the steps needed to prepare for this risk.

The website is being presented tomorrow at the annual [Aspen Ideas Spotlight Health Festival](#) by Dr. Tom Frieden, former US CDC Director and now President and CEO of [Resolve to Save Lives](#), an initiative of the global health organization [Vital Strategies](#), and Amanda McClelland, RN, MPH, its Senior Vice President, who coordinated frontline Ebola response during the 2014 Ebola epidemic. The website is the first to provide a single [ReadyScore](#) for every country based on their ability to find, stop and prevent epidemics; it also provides advocacy tools to help make health protection a priority.

“By the end of this year, nearly 100 countries will have completed a rigorous, transparent assessment of how prepared they are for an epidemic – but there has been too little support from the global community and countries to close life-threatening gaps,” says Dr. Tom Frieden. “It’s not a matter of *if* there will be another global epidemic, but *when*. It’s time for the global community and countries to step up and improve preparedness.”

“The world won’t be safe until we step up by mobilizing and effectively using global, country, and local resources – including money and trained, supported public health staff,” said Amanda McClelland, who served as the Team Lead of Global Epidemic Preparedness of the International Federation of the Red Cross before joining Resolve to Save Lives. “How can we prevent a child in Ukraine from contracting measles, or a nurse in Sub-Saharan Africa from getting Ebola? Our website not only communicates the risk of epidemics at the country level, but, most importantly, encourages action to reduce these risks.”



Resolve to Save Lives partners with countries to help step up preparedness, especially in four critical areas: strengthening disease tracking systems, training and staffing epidemiologists, supporting laboratory networks, and developing effective rapid response teams.

A key feature of PreventEpidemics.org is the [ReadyScore](#), a measure of country preparedness based on existing data from the Joint External Evaluation (JEE), an external assessment developed by the World Health Organization and partner organizations to help countries find and close gaps in epidemic preparedness. ReadyScore uses JEE data to calculate a numerical score – from 0 to 100 – representing a country’s ability to prepare for and respond to an epidemic. Countries with a ReadyScore above 80 are considered better prepared for an epidemic, countries between 40 and 79 have work to do, and countries 39 and below are not ready.

These scores can drive action at the country and global level by motivating countries to go up a step in preparedness, overall and by specific area.

PreventEpidemics.org provides advocacy tools, including detailed global and country-level data, highlights of country preparedness strengths and gaps, and action plans to engage with decision makers to improve epidemic preparedness. Advancing toward a world safe from epidemics is central to the new WHO general programme of work, which was approved at the 2018 World Health Assembly. One of three strategic priorities for 2019-2023 is ensuring that at least one billion more people are safer from health emergencies, including infectious disease outbreaks.

“Participating in the JEEs has shown true commitment by health ministries, but hasn’t been matched by a commitment from the global community and by commitment of budget and human resources,” said Amanda McClelland. “PreventEpidemics.org helps empower advocates to ask their leaders for the human and financial resources needed to fill the thousands of life-threatening gaps identified by the JEE.”

Additional information:

A Joint External Evaluation is a voluntary assessment initiated at the request of countries and conducted first by a team of domestic experts and then validated by a team of independent international experts. The evaluation assesses and rates capacity in 19 preparedness areas, such as whether countries have effective disease surveillance systems, laboratories, communications mechanisms and coordination centers.

Of the 65 countries that have conducted a Joint External Evaluation and released results, only nine countries (14%) scored over 80 in epidemic preparedness, indicating better prepared public health systems, but all still have gaps and effort is needed to improve and sustain their capacity. Fifty-six (86%) scored lower than 80, which means they have considerable gaps to fill to ensure their people are safer from infectious disease threats.

The ReadyScore recognizes that no country will ever be completely safe from the threat of epidemics, however, strong and robust systems to find and stop threats can minimize preventable illness and death in the event of new or emerging infectious diseases.

An additional 21 countries, out of a total of 194 countries, have either requested or started a Joint External Evaluation. The rest are either using different metrics to evaluate their epidemic readiness and have not published the results or are not yet engaged in assessing preparedness for health emergencies.

The ReadyScore consolidates 19 areas of epidemic preparedness assessed during a JEE. Within those areas, more than 50 factors are assessed, such as whether a country has a national laboratory system to diagnose diseases, and what is the capacity of its public health workforce to find, stop and prevent epidemics. The JEE rates each of the indicators on a scale of 1 – 5. One, is “no capacity” and is coded red. Two and three indicate the “need to build capacity” and are coded yellow. Four and five indicate “sustainable capacity” and are in the desired green band. The ReadyScore is the average score of the nineteen area scores, placed on a scale of 0 to 100.

About Resolve to Save Lives

Resolve to Save Lives is a five-year, \$225 million initiative funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It is led by Dr. Tom Frieden, former director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and housed at [Vital Strategies](https://www.vitalstrategies.org), which works in 60 countries with the vision of a world in which every person is protected by a strong public health system. To find out more visit: <https://www.resolvetosavelives.org> or Twitter @ResolveTSL

About Vital Strategies

Vital Strategies is a global health organization that seeks to accelerate progress on the world’s most pressing health problems. The Vital Strategies team combines evidence-based strategies with innovation to help develop and implement sound public health policies, manage programs efficiently, strengthen data systems, conduct research, and design strategic communication campaigns for policy and behavior change. To find out more, visit www.vitalstrategies.org or Twitter [@VitalStrat](https://twitter.com/VitalStrat).

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