

Press Release

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For immediate release

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CDDEP’s report on “Infectious Diseases in the South-East Asia Region” highlights tremendous avertable burden related to infectious diseases

COVID-19 has set back progress on containing key infectious diseases, researchers say

Washington, DC / New Delhi, India – Researchers at CDDEP, in collaboration with leading experts in the field, have produced the ***Infectious Diseases in the South-East Asia Region*** report, which examines cross-boundary challenges in communicable disease control in countries in the South-and South-East Asia region. The report emphasizes infectious diseases related to other sources of disease burden in the region and communicates overall trends in the health and economic burden they impose.

Despite substantial progress in recent years, which has seen reductions in deaths from HIV and malaria and an increase in tuberculosis treatment coverage, the South-East Asia region continues to bear a significant proportion of the communicable disease burden worldwide. South Asia has the third largest HIV epidemic globally and the highest TB burden, accounting for more than a quarter of the global burden. The second highest incidence of malaria, amongst all WHO regions, occurs in the southeast Asia region, and India bears the third-highest proportion of malaria cases globally.

Malnutrition makes the South-East Asian population particularly vulnerable to neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) alongside emerging infectious diseases from arbovirus infections, dengue, chikungunya, Japanese encephalitis, and the continuing concern of a pandemic influenza outbreak. Furthermore, drug-resistant infections cause 58,000 deaths in newborns every year, in India alone, and continue to threaten the effectiveness of life-saving antibiotics across the region.

Covid-19 has disrupted the control of other infectious diseases in myriad ways, hindering routine vaccination programs, impeding the distribution of bed nets against malaria, and reducing TB services, among others. With the rollout of vaccines against the novel coronavirus and the ebbing of Covid-19, it will be essential to devote our full collective attention to the control of infectious diseases that have long plagued this region and continue to constitute a significant proportion of the avertable disease burden.

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“As the battle against the pandemic continues, so too must our progress against communicable diseases, for which WHO will continue to pull out all stops in support of our Member States, partners, and the Region’s near 2 billion people,” said Dr. Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director, WHO SEARO

Infectious Diseases in the South-East Asia Region is published on CDDEP’s website and is available for download here: <https://cddep.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Infectious-diseases-in-the-south-east-asia-region.pdf>

The report will be launched at a global webinar (<https://cddep.org/webinars/>) featuring Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Dr. Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Dr. Nim Pathy, Dr. Anita Kotwani, Dr. Subhash Hira, and Dr. Gagandeep Kang.

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About the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy Inc.

The Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy Inc. (CDDEP) (<https://cddep.org/>) produces independent, multidisciplinary research to advance the health and wellbeing of human populations around the world. CDDEP projects are global in scope, spanning Africa, Asia, and North America and include scientific studies and policy engagement. The CDDEP team is experienced in addressing country-specific and regional issues, as well as global challenges, such as antibiotic resistance and pandemic influenza. CDDEP research is notable for innovative approaches to design and analysis, which are shared widely through publications, presentations and web-based programs. CDDEP has offices in Washington, D.C. and New Delhi and relies on a distinguished team of scientists, public health experts and economists.