

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Top 10 public health challenges to track in 2023: Shifting focus beyond a global pandemic

**Don Eliseo Lucero-Prisno III<sup>1,2,3</sup>** | **Deborah Oluwaseun Shomuyiwa<sup>4,5</sup>** |  
**M. B. N. Kouwenhoven<sup>6</sup>** | **Thinley Dorji<sup>7</sup>** | **Goodness Ogeyi Odey<sup>8</sup>** |  
**Adriana Viola Miranda<sup>9</sup>** | **Isaac Olushola Ogunkola<sup>8</sup>** | **Yusuff Adebayo Adebisi<sup>10</sup>** |  
**Junjie Huang<sup>11</sup>** | **Lin Xu<sup>12</sup>** | **Joseph Christian Obnial<sup>13</sup>** | **Aminath Huda<sup>14</sup>** |  
**Sarawut Thepanondh<sup>3</sup>** | **Manuel Millar Dayrit<sup>15</sup>** | **Salvador B. Evardone<sup>16</sup>** |  
**M. D. Lamawansa<sup>17</sup>** | **Samrawit Solomon Ethiopia<sup>18</sup>** | **Lydia Aziato<sup>19</sup>** |  
**Philip Baba Adongo<sup>20</sup>** | **Mohamed Hindolo Samai<sup>21</sup>** | **Fernando B. Garcia Jr<sup>22</sup>** |  
**Joselito F. Villaruz<sup>23</sup>** | **Indika Mahesh Karunathilake<sup>24</sup>** | **Hao Li<sup>25</sup>** |  
**Patrick Alain Azanza<sup>26</sup>** | **Ian Findlay<sup>27</sup>** | **Martin C. S. Wong<sup>11</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Global Health and Development, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, UK

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Management and Development Studies, University of the Philippines Open University, Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria

<sup>5</sup>Global Health Focus Africa, Lagos, Nigeria

<sup>6</sup>Department of Physics, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, Suzhou, China

<sup>7</sup>Department of Internal Medicine, Central Regional Referral Hospital, Gelephu, Bhutan

<sup>8</sup>Department of Public Health, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

<sup>9</sup>Global Health Focus Asia, Bandung, Indonesia

<sup>10</sup>Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

<sup>11</sup>JC School of Public Health and Primary Care, Faculty of Medicine, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, SAR China

<sup>12</sup>Department of Thoracic Surgery, The First Affiliated Hospital, School of Medicine, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China

<sup>13</sup>East Avenue Medical Center, Quezon, Philippines

<sup>14</sup>School of Medicine, The Maldives National University, Malé, Maldives

<sup>15</sup>Ateneo School of Medicine and Public Health, Manila, Philippines

<sup>16</sup>Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center, Tacloban City, Philippines

<sup>17</sup>Department of Surgery, Teaching Hospital Peradeniya, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, Kandy, Sri Lanka

<sup>18</sup>School of Public Health, St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

<sup>19</sup>Department of Adult Health, School of Nursing, College of Health Sciences, University of Health and Allied Sciences, Volta Region, Ghana

<sup>20</sup>Department of Social and Behavioural Science, School of Public Health, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana

<sup>21</sup>College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences, Freetown, Sierra Leone

<sup>22</sup>College of Public Health, University of the Philippines, Manila, Philippines

<sup>23</sup>West Visayas State University, Iloilo City, Philippines

-----  
 This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2023 The Authors. *Public Health Challenges* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

<sup>24</sup>Department of Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Colombo, Sri Lanka

<sup>25</sup>Global Health Institute, Wuhan University, Wuhan, China

<sup>26</sup>Office of the University President, Catanduanes State University, Virac, Catanduanes, Philippines

<sup>27</sup>University of Puthisastra, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

#### Correspondence

Deborah Oluwaseun Shomuyiwa, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria.  
Email: [deborahshomuyiwa@gmail.com](mailto:deborahshomuyiwa@gmail.com)

#### Abstract

The year 2022 saw COVID-19 as the primary public health concern, with vaccine rollout and mandates at the forefront. Other viral infectious diseases, such as Monkeypox and Ebola, emerged as public health concerns. Climate change and political conflicts significantly impacted global health, increasing the demand for humanitarian assistance and protection. In 2023, it remains crucial to identify global and public health priority areas to coordinate and implement effective solutions. Through discussions with public health practitioners and researchers, we have identified key priority areas for 2023, namely, health systems, the mental health crisis, substance abuse, infectious diseases, malnutrition and food insecurity, sexual and reproductive health challenges, environmental pollution, the climate crisis, cancer, and diabetes. These priority areas highlight shared concerns that should be addressed to facilitate proactive and innovative health interventions and practices. To achieve universal healthcare targets for 2030, prioritization, financial investment, international cooperation, and collaboration in addressing these global health challenges are crucial. This requires coordination among public health decision-makers, the private health sector, and opinion leaders to implement country-specific healthcare financing and food security measures. Research, scientific knowledge, and technical capacities must be leveraged to produce sustainable interventions that effectively reduce health disparities and improve health system responsiveness to prevent these challenges from progressing to public health emergencies.

#### KEYWORDS

global health, health challenges, health priorities, public health

## INTRODUCTION

As the New Year begins, response measures to public health challenges are crucial for global human development. COVID-19 was the main focus in 2022, with the rollout of vaccines and vaccination mandates at the forefront. The potential for herd immunity in the light of emerging virus variants and the evaluation of the transmission-stopping capabilities of available vaccines was a major concern. Other viral infectious diseases such as Ebola and Monkeypox also represented significant global public health concerns [1]. Political conflicts, such as the Russia–Ukraine conflict, had global impacts, leading to soaring food and energy prices, migrant and refugee crises, inordinate health systems effects, and a potential nuclear disaster [2].

The 2022 list of global public health challenges [3] included COVID-19, human resources for health, health financing, conflict and humanitarian crises, mental health, poverty, climate change, child health, reproductive health, and the global infodemic. Responses to COVID-19 and emerging infectious diseases drove the concept of collaborative intelligence, optimizing disease surveillance and developing capacity for locally manufacturing vaccines. As

projected, the consequences of the climate crisis were notable in 2022, with countries in Europe experiencing their hottest summers [3], deadly floods in Pakistan and Nigeria, and widespread droughts across Africa [4]. Sexual and reproductive health rights were fiercely debated with the landmark ruling of the US Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. The 2022 list of global public health challenges also projected the already obvious high requirement for humanitarian assistance and protection due to political conflicts and natural disasters.

The world will continue to experience an influx of global health challenges in 2023. To proactively plan for and address these complex issues, it is crucial to identify global and public health priority areas. This allows the global community to coordinate, implement, and scale up local and international collaborative actions. Identifying these important challenges is integral to monitoring and developing policies to address these health risks, focusing on lessening the burden in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

In developing this study, we engaged public health practitioners, experts, and researchers across sectors in discussions to identify and prioritize global public health priorities for 2023. Corroborating the responses with existing literature, we provide analysis and evidence to support public health