The Politics of Public Health Emergencies: When Do They Become International Concerns?

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World Health Organization: Public Health Emergencies of International Concerns (PHEIC)

- 2009:   H1N1

- 2014   Wildtype Polio Virus

- 2014   Ebola Virus Disease

- 2016   Zika

You have to ask, "How did we get to this level of deaths without international attention?" What happened between December 2013 and the first cases in Guinea, and March [2014], the first cases in Liberia? And then August, the height of the epidemic? Why was the WHO not responding? It is their major responsibility...They knew that we have weak health systems ... that we needed resources, human resources, financial resources.

(interview, hospital official, Monrovia, May 16, 2016)

Plan of Action

- Background: International Health Regulations (2007)

- Declarations of PHEIC & Global Health Governance

- Politics of Global Health- Explanations
  - Principal-Agent Problem
  - Framing the Issue

- So What?

International Health Regulations (IHR)

Revisions (2005)

--Not disease focus

--Nonstate actors & notification

--Decision making instrument

Decision-Making Instrument

Requires Action:

Smallpox, SARS, Influenza (new subtype), Poliomyelitis (wild poliovirus)

Decision-Making Instrument (2 of 4 criteria)

1) Is the public health impact of the event serious? (yes/no)
2) Is the event unusual or unexpected? (yes/no)
3) Is there significant risk of international spread? (yes/no)
4) Is there significant risk of international travel/ trade restrictions? (yes/no)

PHEIC– Impact

- Resources

- Media attention

- Coordination

- Unusual, exceptional event

Global Health Governance

- Multiple actors

- Variety of disciplines

- Various sectors

- Politics matters even more

Health Prioritization?
Principal Agent Problem

WHO: As the Agent
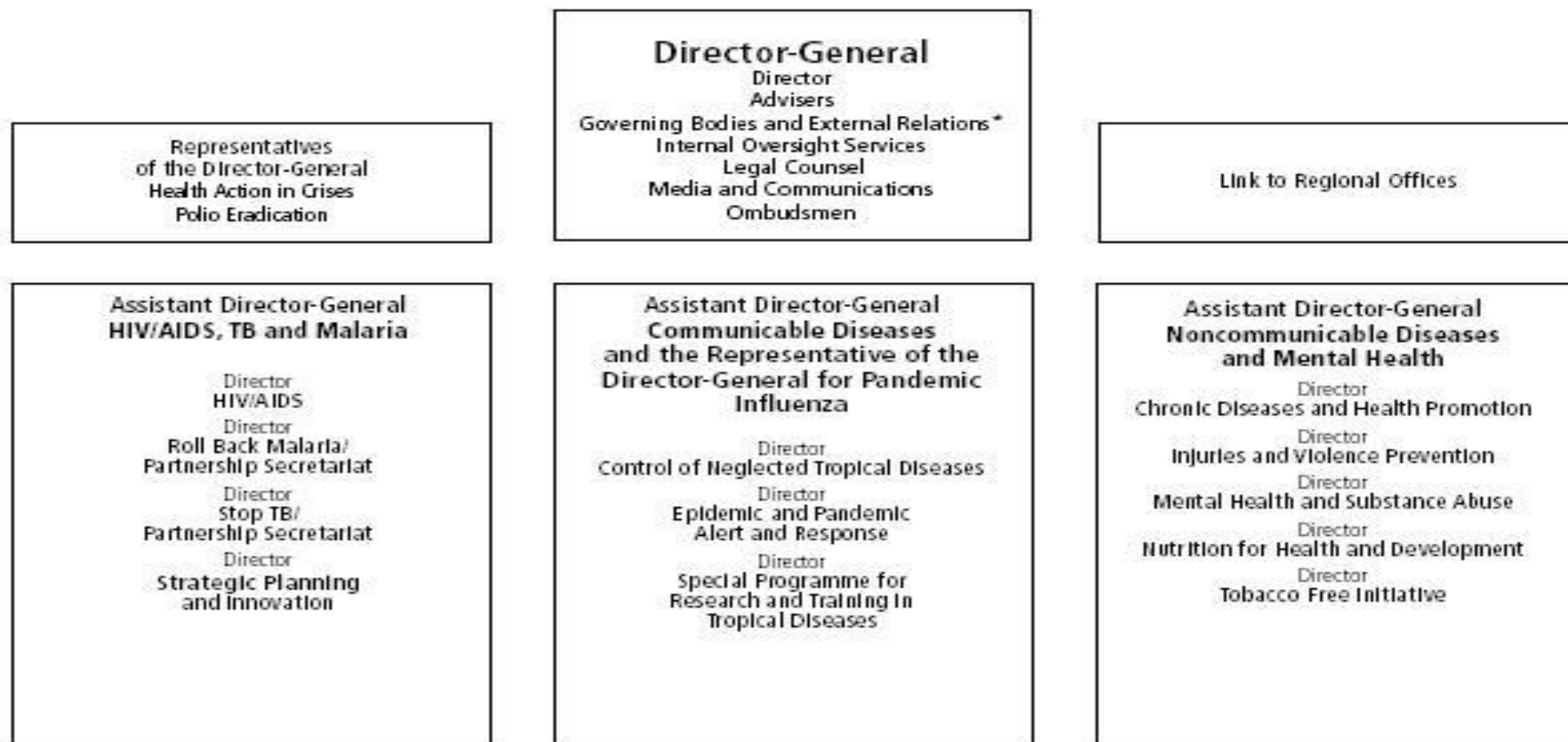
Member States: As the Principals

Control:

    Budget

    Autonomous Regional Offices

WHO Headquarters Structure

Director-General
Director
Advisers
Governing Bodies and External Relations*
Internal Oversight Services
Legal Counsel
Media and Communications
Ombudsmen

**Representatives
of the Director-General**
Health Action in Crises
Polio Eradication

Link to Regional Offices

**Assistant Director-General
HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria**

Director
HIV/AIDS

Director
Roll Back Malaria/
Partnership Secretariat

Director
Stop TB/
Partnership Secretariat

Director
Strategic Planning
and Innovation

**Assistant Director-General
Communicable Diseases
and the Representative of the
Director-General for Pandemic
Influenza**

Director
Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases

Director
Epidemic and Pandemic
Alert and Response

Director
Special Programme for
Research and Training in
Tropical Diseases

**Assistant Director-General
Noncommunicable Diseases
and Mental Health**

Director
Chronic Diseases and Health Promotion

Director
Injuries and Violence Prevention

Director
Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Director
Nutrition for Health and Development

Director
Tobacco Free Initiative

Principal Agent Problem– Impact on PHEIC

- PAHO versus AFRO

- WHO legitimacy long-term

The lack of local knowledge, training and legitimacy ultimately put us all at risk when the "Ebola experts" from WHO came to help.

(interview, Ebola Treatment Unit official, Monrovia, May 19, 2016)

Framing Matters

- Message resonates with audience

  - "Truthful"
  - "Salient"

- Who does the framing?

- The object of the frame?
  vulnerable, innocent versus culpable

Zika Framing

Truth

 Trusted Expert (CDC)

Salient

 "Seven new Zika cases in South Florida"
 (*USA Today*, September 6, 2016)

 "First baby with Zika-related microcephaly born in Florida"
 (*Local 10 News*, Miami, September 26, 2016)

Ebola Framing: "Truth"
Ebola Framing: Who delivers the message?

Ebola Framing: Salience?

Ebola in the air? A nightmare that could happen

By **Elizabeth Cohen**, Senior Medical Correspondent

updated 4:16 PM EDT, Mon October 6, 2014

Ebola Framing: Who Is Affected?

The infection of Kent Brantly and Nancy Writebol, two American health-care workers in Monrovia...signaled to comfortable Americans that this disease is going to follow you... it is not a national event but an international one.

(interview, government official 1, Monrovia, May 18, 2016)

Conclusion

- Institutional Cultures, Structures Matter for Global Health Decisions

- Arena of multiple, competing actors

- Issue Framing: Cutting through Cacophony

- High Uncertainty

- Information Essential

Thank you

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- Pathology is Global Conference Conveners

- Courageous, Tireless Health-Care Workers

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