

INTERNATIONAL EAR CARE DAY
3 March 2015
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Make Listening Safe



**World Health
Organization**



International Ear Care Day (IECD) is observed on 3 March every year. The aim of the day is to raise awareness and promote ear and hearing care at national and community levels across the world. Every year, this day addresses a specific theme and activities are carried out by WHO and its partners to reflect this.

This year the theme for the International Ear Care Day was Make Listening Safe. WHO Headquarters, Regional Offices, Member States and collaborating centres were involved in commemoration of this day.

Exposure to excessive noise is a major avoidable cause of permanent hearing loss worldwide. While occupational noise poses a significant challenge, there is an increasing risk posed by social and recreational noise, especially in young people. WHO estimates that 1.1 billion young people worldwide are at risk of hearing loss due to unsafe use of personal audio devices such as smartphones and MP3 players and exposure to damaging levels of sound at noisy entertainment venues including nightclubs, discotheques, bars, pubs and sporting events. The emerging pattern of listening regularly at a high volume for a long duration poses a serious threat to one's hearing. In view of this growing problem, the theme for IECD 2015 focused on raising awareness about the risks of noise-induced hearing loss due to recreational exposure and actions for its prevention. On this day, WHO developed and released a series of documents including:

- Make Listening Safe factsheet
- Posters and banners
- Handouts and an infographic

All materials were prepared in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish to improve accessibility.



¹ WHO report: Prevention of noise-induced hearing loss, Geneva, 1997. <http://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/en/noise.pdf>
Accessed 14-05-15.



Activities in WHO headquarters

On 27 February 2015, WHO-HQ held a press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, highlighting serious threats posed by exposure to recreational noise. A press release was issued and can be accessed at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2015/ear-care/en/>. This was widely covered by press and media across the world (see page 11).

A successful social media campaign was undertaken by WHO through Twitter, Facebook and Google+.



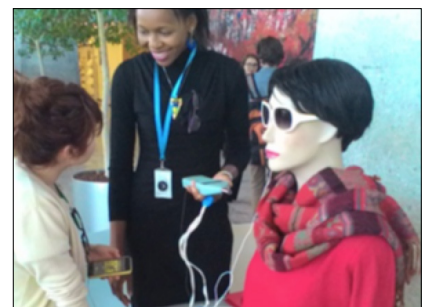
On 3 March 2015, a seminar was organized at the WHO office in Geneva to launch the **"Make Listening Safe"** initiative. Dr Etienne Krug, Director, NVI, WHO chaired the session. Key messages of the initiative were outlined and Mr Marc Coleman, an invited former artist, shared his experience with music and hearing loss. A panel discussion was held on the challenges encountered in dealing with preventable hearing loss and possible strategies to overcome these. Representatives of organizations working in the field of hearing loss participated in the panel including:

- **Marcel Bobeldijk**, International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, The Netherlands
- **Liu Tingting**, China Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Deaf Children, China
- **Deanna Kay Meinke**, Dangerous Decibels, United States of America
- **Pierre Anhoury**, Agir pour l'audition, France
- **Elena Torresani**, Hear the World Foundation, Switzerland

Among those attending the seminar were representatives of Cochlear Limited and Med-El. Banners and posters were displayed in WHO buildings. Awareness materials were distributed, free ear and hearing check-up was also provided and free ear plugs were provided to WHO-HQ staff.



Zoey, a mannequin installed with a sound measurement system which tests the sound output levels of audio devices was placed in the WHO lobby. Staff members brought their personal audio devices and tested their listening levels with Zoey. Information about safe listening and ear protection was provided.





Activities organized in countries

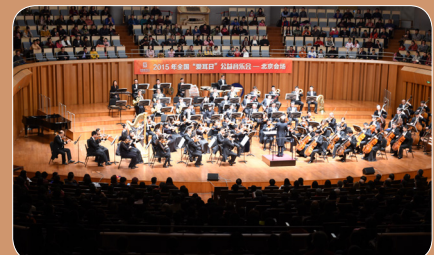
Australia: A number of organizations within the country collaborated to promote the IECD and its theme. These include HEARing Cooperative Research Centre, National Acoustic Laboratories, Australian Hearing Hub, The Deafness Forum Australia, Vicdeaf, Music Victoria and Audiology Australia. A media statement was released and a one-week long nationwide media campaign was undertaken through social media, TV, radio and newspaper articles.

Bangladesh: The Centre for Disability in Development and 24 partner organizations organized an awareness session and published a poster which was displayed in public places such as local government buildings, primary school premises, sub-district health complex and community clinics. Leaflets were also distributed and discussion sessions organized. Over 10,000 people were reached through awareness activities, including persons with disability (18%).



Columbia: The Ministry of Health developed a strategy termed “Audición Segura” in the context of noise exposure and hearing protection.

China: Fifteen government departments jointly promoted the Ear Care Day in China. The China Rehabilitation Research Centre for Deaf Children (CRRCDC), affiliated with China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) held a press conference in Beijing. Activities were conducted all around China reaching approximately 60% of the total population. A theme concert was organized in Beijing and attended by officials from 15 ministries. Other 4 cities also held concerts. Over two million pamphlets on the theme were distributed. Professional organizations, like the Audiology Committee of China, the ORL-HNS Association and the WHO collaborating centres for prevention of hearing loss organized clinical outreach activities. Over 350 teams of experts participated in the effort. Screening camps were organized by the Nanjing Medical University for schoolchildren and elderly persons. Nearly 5000 hearing aids were fitted across the country. Text messages were sent by mobile phones to over 0.25 billion users. The event was widely covered by print and electronic media.





Egypt: The Faculty of Medicine, Cairo University, Audiology unit carried out school-based hearing screening programmes in children (4-7 years old) in both private and public primary schools.

Guatemala: Information and prevention talks were given by hearing care teachers in a rural school. Hearing assessments were conducted for students. A workshop on primary ear and hearing care was organized by the Department of Public Health, Escuintla.



Indonesia: A number of activities were carried out across Indonesia organized by local Sound Hearing committees. They include activities to raise awareness about prevention of noise-induced hearing loss through social media, print media, TV interviews and use of a mannequin for sound measurement (Genta). Later in the month, activities were carried out with participation of the Ministry of Health including ear cleaning in the Nunukan district under the banner of Indonesia BBT.



Kenya: Activities were organized through a collaborative effort between the Nairobi County government, Operation Ear Drop Kenya and Starkey Hearing Foundation. Activities included an ear walk in the capital city, media campaign through electronic and print media as well as a screening camp for hearing loss identification.



Madagascar: The Ministry of Public Health together with WHO and partners organised three-day long activities. Outreach activities were carried out highlighting the prevention of hearing loss, included screening for ear diseases and hearing loss by ENT doctors and audiologists as well as distribution of free medicines for otitis media.



Mongolia: The Mongolian Society of ENT Doctors advised the community on preventable ear disease, noise-induced hearing loss and safe use of headphones music through the national radio and TV. General practitioners received training on primary ear and hearing care. WHO materials translated into the Mongolian language were distributed to General Practitioners and paediatricians. Leaflets and posters were distributed in public areas of hospitals and schools.

Morocco: The Ministry of Health, WHO and The Moroccan Society of Otorhinolaryngology and Cervicofacial Surgery organized activities on 3 March 2015. The pilot phase of a neonatal hearing screening programme was launched in the Oriental Region of the country. A workshop on the national strategic plan for hearing care was held. A training programme for health providers was initiated, and a nationwide awareness campaign was carried out through use of print and electronic media.

Nepal: The National Association of Hard of Hearing and Deafened Nepal (SHRUTI) organized an awareness programme in a local school targeting teenage students. Information leaflets were distributed and awareness talks organized.



Nigeria: The ORL Society of Nigeria and partners including the Kano Teaching Hospital, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology and the Coker Aguda LCDA Health Centre organized events in Lagos as well as in Oyo and Kano states. Advocacy was carried out through a radio FM station which hosted a programme about the International Ear Care Day. WHO materials were displayed, free check-ups using an otoscope and video-otoscope were done, audiometric tests were performed and general ear care advice was provided. At the level of the primary and secondary schools (both private and public), otological and audiological screenings were performed, ear muffs were distributed, hearing health talks were given and question and answer panels were conducted.



Oman: The Ministry of Health produced and disseminated awareness materials regarding the dangers of loud sounds. A workshop on evaluation and planning for strengthening ear health care was conducted later in the month to discuss the implementation of, and update to, the current hearing care strategy in Oman.



Pakistan: The International Ear Care day was observed in different parts of Pakistan including Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi. The different organizations involved in the effort include Danishkadah, University of Karachi, Fatima Jinnah Medical College, Lahore, Pakistan Institute of Rehabilitation Sciences, Comprehensive Health and Education Forum (CHEF) International, CBM and the WHO country office. Activities include awareness sessions, seminars, TV and radio programmes, media outreach through national and local newspapers and hearing screening camps.





Philippines: The Philippines National Ear Institute raised community awareness about safe listening through public health lectures and distribution of leaflets on noise-induced hearing loss. Screening for ear and hearing problems as well as ear cleaning for employees was carried out throughout the day.



Qatar: The Ministry of Health carried out a number of activities over a two-day period. These included workshops, lectures, TV and radio programmes as well as hearing screening activities in many parts of the country.



Rwanda: Rwanda Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery Society in conjunction with the Starkey Hearing Foundation organized activities including screening and treating of school children for ear and hearing problems as well as raising awareness through use of advocacy materials and talks.



Seychelles: The Ministry of Health conducted activities in the inner islands over a 5-day period. The activities involved advocacy through use of awareness materials as well as TV and radio programmes. Screening for hearing loss and hearing aid fitting was undertaken in the districts.



South Africa: Awareness activities were organized in different parts of the country by various partners. In the rural area of Limpopo province, it was led by the Ndlovu Wits Audiology (NWA) clinic, which is the result of a partnership between the University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg) and the Ndlovu Care Group (an NGO). Information materials were distributed and poem writing and art competitions were held. Safe listening messages were conveyed through an innovative play.

In Cape Town, the Mitchells Plain District Hospital Audiology Department and Western Cape Department of Health organized an awareness activity to promote the theme of Make Listening Safe.



USA: The American Academy of Otolaryngology-Hearing and Neck Surgery Foundation promoted the day on the AAO-HNS/F web site and their social network, ENTConnect.

Zambia: Activities were carried out in the city of Lusaka by the Beit Cure Hospital and CBM. Safe listening messages were spread through radio programmes. A free ear and hearing clinic was organized and free hearing aids were provided to 19 people.



Zanzibar: The Minister of Health of Zanzibar launched the targeted newborn hearing screening programme in Zanzibar on 3 March 2015 on collaboration with the Zanzibar Outreach Programme. The ceremony was attended by the Minister of Labor, Minister of Trade, the WHO Representative as well as many other senior government officials. A nationwide awareness campaign was carried out through use of posters, banners, electronic and print media.





Other participating organizations

Agir Pour l'Audition, France launched its new campaign “Protect your music” in three university campuses in Paris. Students were invited to answer questions about their listening practices and test their hearing. Over 1000 students participated and received guidance from speech therapists and audiprothesists.



American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery supported the IECD media activities through their website and social media.

American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) issued a press release in support of WHO's Make Listening Safe initiative. Information and tips for safe listening along with WHO advocacy materials were shared through the 'Listen To Your Buds Campaign' website. <http://www.asha.org/Buds/Make-Listening-Safe/>

AURES Foundation, Georgia, carried out activities from 3-5 March 2015 to mark the International Ear Care day for the first time. WHO information products (brochures, handouts, posters) were printed in Georgian and distributed. AURES Foundation released its first magazine “AURES-all about hearing.” A parents’ conference was organized and free individual consultations for parents with hearing-impaired children carried out.



CBM undertook advocacy activities at a raised awareness about hearing loss and safe listening through its website. Two articles related to the theme were published and a leaflet on ‘Ear and Hearing Care & Education’ was launched.

Cochlear Limited, a biotechnology company led and supported the organization of activities in many countries including Australia, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Poland, Russia and USA. The activities promoted the key messages of the WHO initiative through use of print media, social media, a press release and awareness sessions for different sectors.





European Association of Hearing Aid Professionals (AEA), The European Federation of Hard of Hearing people (EFHOH) and the European Hearing Instrument Manufacturers Association (EHIMA) joined hands to issue a press release and disseminate innovative advocacy materials in fifteen languages reaching potentially millions of viewers. Free hearing tests were carried out by hearing professionals in twelve countries.

Hearing Foundation of Canada in partnership with Western University's Audiology Department undertook an awareness campaign through social media and awareness-raising sessions. In a special presentation by Sound Sense, schoolchildren of grades four to six were educated about safe listening.



Hear and Say, Australia opened a new centre for paediatric hearing loss in Queensland on 3 March 2015.



Hear the World Foundation developed a video on the theme of Make Listening Safe in order to raise awareness about hearing loss prevention. They undertook advocacy through their web site reaching over 15 000 people that day.

Inter Academy Medical Panel (IAMP) released a statement endorsed by over 40 member academies. The statement is a call for action to strengthen healthcare for hearing loss. A parallel commentary was also published in the Lancet <http://www.iamp-online.org/call-action-strengthen-healthcare-hearing-loss-0> <http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2815%2960208-2/abstract>

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine displayed the WHO materials and had a stand with information about safe listening. Free earplugs were handed out and students and staff were shown how a hearing test is performed with an audiometer.

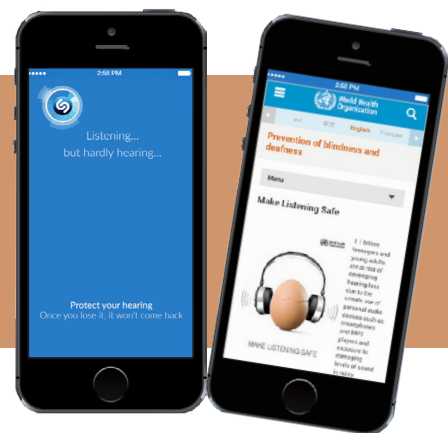




Society for Sound Hearing, India, in collaboration with CBM organized the Run For Better Hearing-Mini Marathon to facilitate spreading awareness among people and strengthen support regarding ear and hearing care. A sensitization programme targeted towards officers and soldiers of paramilitary forces was held. Sensitization in the community was done through short talks and awareness material including pamphlets, posters and flipcharts.



Shazam is an app used by millions of people to recognize and listen to music of their choice. On 3 March 2015, Shazam conveyed WHO's messages on safe listening, through its user interface. The screen directed users to the WHO webpage on Make Listening Safe. Over 5 million screen impressions were shared by Shazam users across the world on this day.



Media coverage

Following the WHO press release and briefing, the story was picked up by leading news agencies and widely covered through print and electronic media in many countries across the world. A brief online search revealed over two hundred reports for the news (some links are included below).

The messages were also promoted through the WHO main page and intranet sites.



Tweets and Facebook posts were made and live question-answer sessions were undertaken over Twitter and Facebook.



Some news links

<http://www.bbc.com/news/health-31661789>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/27/us-health-hearing-idUSKBN0LV1BC20150227>

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/is-your-music-too-loud-experts-say-yes-if-its-louder-than-a-microwaves-beep-1425921356>

<http://www.sabc.co.za/news/a/155db4804775e14ebacafe42d945d4b0/GoingundefinedtoundefinedtheundefinedgameundefinedPackundefinedearplugsundefinedandundefinedloseundefinedtheundefinedvuvuzela:undefinedWHO->

<http://dailysciencejournal.com/one-billion-teenagers-and-youngsters-at-risk-of-suffering-from-hearing-loss/21505/>

<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2015/03/02/experts-earbuds-could-be-putting-kids-at-increased-risk-for-hearing-loss/>

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/says-1-billion-young-people-risk-hearing-loss/>

<http://www.australiaplus.com/international/2015-03-02/more-than-1-billion-young-people-at-risk-of-hearing-damage-from-listening-to-loud-music-world-health/1420285>

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/foreign/28-Feb-2015/billion-of-adults-are-at-risk-of-hearing-loss-who>

<http://muslimmirror.com/eng/over-360-mn-people-suffering-hearing-loss-who/>

http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/02/27/world/europe/ap-eu-united-nations-hearing-loss.html?_r=0

<http://www.indiagazette.com/index.php/sid/231730181>

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50224#.VS-kTvmUcsA>

<https://www.nfd.org.nz/our-work/news/international-ear-care-day-3-march-2015/>

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/says-1-billion-young-people-risk-hearing-loss/>

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Tiruchirapalli/college-girls-undergo-audiometric-test/article6957779.ece>

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201503040308.html>

<http://www.theguardian.com/science/occams-corner/2015/mar/03/save-our-bleeding-ears>

<http://www.cbc.ca/m/touch/health/story/1.2975641>

<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2015/03/02/experts-earbuds-could-be-putting-kids-at-increased-risk-for-hearing-loss/>

<http://www.sierraleonetimes.com/index.php/sid/230782213>

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/punjab/04-Mar-2014/international-ear-care-day-observed-at-uhs-speakers-call-for-awareness-about-ear-related-diseases>



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