



Photo of scientists at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, using equipment donated through the NGO Seeding Lab's Instrumental Access programme aimed at strengthening research capacity.

Evolving challenges

Global health issues hit lower-income countries the hardest

The growth in development aid for health has fallen in recent years as donor government budgets have tightened. This is particularly concerning for low-income countries that rely heavily on aid to provide health services to their populations. Low-income countries are being hit the hardest: in these countries, government health expenditure as a percentage of GDP has been in decline in recent years, resulting in more needing to be done with less. In 2015, the UN agreed the Sustainable Development Goals, including global health targets such as the elimination of major disease epidemics and the reduction in the burden of childhood obesity. To ramp up progress towards these goals, in September 2019, the UN Secretary General called for a Decade of Action to deliver the Global Goals by 2030.

Progress in global health is not inevitable. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease are a growing challenge due to rapid urbanisation, worsening diets and increasingly sedentary lifestyles, they account for 71% of deaths globally each year, including 15 million people aged between 30 and 69 years, with more than 85% of these so-called premature deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries. Access to prevention, detection, screening, treatment for NCDs is essential.

Low- and middle-income countries face the bulk of disease burden