

NTS Bulletin April 2016**Understanding the risks of the Zika virus**

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On February 1st 2016, World Health Organization Director General, Dr. Margaret Chan declared an international public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on the Zika virus. She called Zika an “extraordinary event” that warranted coordinated international response to minimize the threat in affected countries and reduce the risk of international spread. To date, Zika has been documented in over 59 countries, and most recently in Vietnam, posing an imminent public health threat to Southeast Asia.

Zika, so what?

Zika can be sexually transmitted but it is primarily spread through the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito - the same mosquito carrying dengue, yellow fever, and chikungunya. However, other types of mosquitoes like the *Aedes albopictus* are believed to be contributing to the spread as well. Only a certain percentage of Zika-affected patients exhibit symptoms. Thus, it is a barely visible virus that is harmless to some but detrimental to others. Though not yet scientifically proven, doctors have asserted strong links between Zika, Guillan-Barre Syndrome, and microcephaly. This elusive virus will arguably have consequential risks to affected countries and the international community.

Political risk

At global level, Dr. Chan’s swift declaration of Zika as a PHEIC, framed the virus as a security risk that carries implications for public health beyond the affected State’s borders. Moreover, declaring a PHEIC denotes a requirement for international action, encouraging states to work together to limit spread. The task at hand remains for international collaboration to not only contain the virus but to also develop a vaccine. Immediate action now, could counter the expected spread this El Niño year, as changes in climate will alter behaviors and lifespans of affected mosquitoes. Consequently, leaving humans more exposed to them.

At transnational level, not being able to address Zika may incur the political risk of hindered relations amongst neighboring states. Lack of coordination amongst porous landlocked nations may result in increased spread. Monitoring of borders and health checks at airports are merely two ways of tracking Zika.

Social risk

The biggest social risk brought on by Zika is to affected communities themselves. The outbreaks stemming from highly urbanized cities in Brazil started in marginalized communities or in the favelas jam-packed between the urban sprawl. In such areas, underprivileged populations have little education on disease, poor sanitation standards, and limited, if any access to contraception. Thus making such areas the perfect breeding grounds. Given this, already marginalized communities further risk disruption to their social landscape as Zika could virtually cripple the productivity of families. There is arguably a dire need for local

and community-based organizations to tap in to such communities. A simple change in behavioral patterns such as wearing insect repellent and sleeping under mosquito nets could save lives.

Economic risk

Zika poses significant economic risks to the affected and their families. Raising children with microcephaly have escalating economic costs depending on the degree of severity of the disease. This is significant for poorer families who may find these costs impossible to bear. Moreover, studies show that caring for children with disabilities have made middle-income families significantly poorer. That said, caring for children with microcephaly would lead to substantial pressure on national healthcare systems that are already grappling with financial cutbacks. In estimating how much Zika will cost the international community, it is simply imperative to recall the words of Dr Chan: “The more we know, the worse things look”, and the worse things look, economic costs are likely to skyrocket.

Is Southeast Asia ready for Zika?

Since 2010, several cases of Zika have been recorded within ASEAN. However, with the first case in Vietnam this week, ASEAN nations need to be on high alert. The subtropical nature of ASEAN countries and its densely packed mega-cities make it an ideal area for Zika mosquitoes to thrive. Moreover, easy mobility and low travel restrictions within the region further promulgate the threat of spread of Zika.

ASEAN member states need to begin collaboration on Zika before an outbreak strikes. A statement from the Secretary-General framing the security threat of Zika to the region would kick start the collaborative effort and thereby mobilize the representatives in the ASEAN Working Group on Pandemic Preparedness and Response (APWGPPR).

Recommended Readings

- Bonnie Barkowitz et al, 2016, What you need to know about the Zika virus, The Washington Post.
- Julia Belluz, 2016, The science of Zika is changing rapidly. Here's what we've learned to date, VOX Science and Health.
- Samantha Costa, 2016, Health Buzz: Zika Spread Worsened by Climate Change, US News & World Report.
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- Zika situation report, The World Health Organization.
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CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY AND NATURAL DISASTERS

News & Commentaries

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- Hans Nicholas Jong, Palm oil industry urged to help combat climate change, The Jakarta Post, 19 March 2016.
- Janice Heng, Ng Keng Gene, Earth Hour: Lights out on Saturday to shed light on climate change, The Straits Times, 19 March 2016.
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- Ann-Kristin Matthe, Gender and migration in the context of climate change, UNU-EHS Institute for Environment and Human Security, 21 March 2016.

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- Vishwa Mohan, India to sign Paris climate change agreement on April 22, The Times of India, 25 March 2016.

Selected Publications

- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016, Attribution of Extreme Weather Events in the Context of Climate Change, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- Crimmins, A., J. Balbus, J.L. Gamble, C.B. Beard, J.E. Bell, D. Dogen, R.J. Eisen, N. Fann. M.D. Hawkins, S.C. Herring, L. Jantarasami, D.M. Mills, S. Saha, M.C. Sarofim, J. Trlanj, and L. Ziska, 2016, The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment, Washington, DC: U.S. Global Change Research Program.

Events & Announcements

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- Adaptation Futures 2016, 10–13 May 2016, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

ENERGY SECURITY

News & Commentaries

- Mina Pollman, Japan: How energy security shapes foreign policy, The Diplomat, 16 March 2016.
- John Kemp, Oil price war threatens U.S. sense of energy security: Kemp, Reuters, 28 March 2016.
- SIEW launch addresses Asia's new energy realities, Singapore International Energy Week News, 28 March 2016.
- Neal Kimberley, South-China-Sea headbutting of nations is about energy security, South China Morning Post, 5 April 2016.
- Matthew Bunn, The Nuclear Security Summit: Wins, losses, and draws, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 8 April 2016.
- Julius Cesar I. Trajano, Five years after Fukushima: Southeast Asia's nuclear dilemma, The Straits Times, 14 April 2016.

Selected Publications

- RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies, Is Southeast Asia ready for nuclear power? An RSIS Roundtable at the Singapore International Energy Week 2015, 29 October 2015, Singapore: NTS Centre, 2016.
- International Atomic Energy Agency, Long-term structure of the IAEA safety standards and current status, Vienna: IAEA, 2016.

Events & Announcements

- SIEW Energy Insights, 26 April 2016, Washington DC, USA.
- International Conference on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, 21-25 November 2016, Vienna, Austria.

FOOD SECURITY

News & Commentaries

- Tan Hui Yee, Drought exacts toll on crops in region, The Straits Times, 20 March 2016.
- John McArthur and Krista Rasmussen: Where does the world's food grow? Brookings Institution - Blogs, 21 March 2016.
- Busani Bafana, Zimbabwean 'wizard' bewitches a bumper crop amid drought, Thomson Reuters Foundation, 23 March 2016.
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- Reid Hamel, Commentary: Severe, climate change-driven wheat fungus found in Bangladesh, highlighting need for risk management programs, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 28 March 2016.
- Minister Susi leads explosion of 23 fishing boats, The Jakarta Post, 5 April 2016.
- Christina Larson, Mekong megadrought erodes food security, Science Magazine, 6 April 2016.
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- B. Henderson, et al., 2016, Closing system-wide yield gaps to increase food production and mitigate GHGs among mixed crop–livestock smallholders in Sub-Saharan Africa, Agricultural Systems, Vol. 143, pp. 106-131.

Events & Announcements

- RSIS Seminar on “The Future of Food Security in Asia: Emerging Issues and Challenges”, 20 April 2016, 2pm-5pm, RSIS Lecture Theatre, Blk. S3.1, Level B3, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.
- 2016 Food Tank Summit, 20-21 April 2016, Washington, D.C.

HEALTH SECURITY

News & Commentaries

- Kevin McCoy, Executive fired after opposing 5,000% drug price hike, USA Today, 17 March 2016
- South-East Asia & Pacific desk, Making anti-TB drug within reach, SciDev.Net, 24 March 2016
- Yanzhong Huang, China's Contribution To Global Health Security Through Pharma Partnerships, Forbes Asia, 23 March 2016
- Amy S. Patterson, Why the World Health Organisation responded so differently to Zika and Ebola, The Age, 5 April 2016
- Nina Fedoroff and John Block, Mosquito vs. Mosquito in the Battle Over the Zika Virus, The New York Times, 6 April 2016
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- Jonathan D. Rockoff, How Do We Deal With Rising Drug Costs?, The Wall Street Journal, 10 April 2016

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- Mundel, Trevor, 2016, Honing the Priorities and Making the Investment Case for Global Health, PLoS Biology.

Events & Announcements

- Education & Healthcare Security Forum, 25-26 April 2016, Dallas, Texas
- Call for papers: The SPE African Health, Safety, Security, Environment and Social Responsibility Conference and Exhibition, 27 April 2016, Accra, Ghana.

PEACE, HUMAN SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT

News & Commentaries

- Colin Freeman, Analysis: Why did Al-Qaeda attack the Ivory Coast?, The Telegraph, 14 March 2016.
- Muath Freij, Investing in children an investment in change, peace – experts, The Jordan Times, 17 March 2016.
- Chelsea Harvey, How exploiting the Earth can fuel violent conflict, The Washington Post, 22 March 2016.
- Simone Filippini, Women's equality and inclusive peace need to move beyond talk, 30 March 2016.
- Saw Yan Naing, Where has Burma's peace money gone?, The Irrawaddy, 1 April 2016.
- Min Zaw Oo and Elliot Brennan, Peace, alliance, and inclusivity: Ending conflict in Myanmar, The Brookings Institution, 1 April 2016.
- Wilfried Lemke, Sport is the most unifying tool for peace in the world, The Guardian, 6 April 2016.
- Ian Black, Syrian peace talks set to resume with few hopeful of progress, The Guardian, 8 April 2016.
- Pakistan, India peace talks 'suspended', BBC News, 8 April 2016.

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- Human Security Study Group, 2016, From hybrid peace to human security: Rethinking EU strategy towards conflict, The London School of Economics and Political Science, London, United Kingdom.
- Marc von Boemcken, 2016, The political economy of security practice, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Think Piece 10, Berlin, Germany.

Events & Announcements

- UNGA High-level thematic debate: Strengthening the UN's role in peace and security, 10-11 May 2016, UN Headquarters, New York, US.
- Conversations: Exploring hierarchies of wartime sexual violence, 10 May 2016, Centre for Women, Peace and Security, The London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

News & Commentaries

- Mike McPhate, U.S. Anti-Gang Sweep Yields Over 1,100 Arrests, International New York Times, 28 March 2016.
- The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, Giant Leak of Offshore Financial Records Exposes Global Array of Crime and Corruption, ICIJ, 3 April 2016.
- Anna Triandafyllidou, Governing migrant smuggling: a criminality approach is not sufficient, Open Democracy, 6 April 2016.
- Dionne Searcey, Boko Haram Turns Female Captives Into Terrorists, International New York Times, 7 April 2016.
- Joanna Menagh, Asylum seeker jailed for attempted drug smuggling at Yongah Hill detention centre, ABC News, 8 April 2016.
- Wassayos Ngamkham, Fake marriages linked to transnational crime, Bangkok Post, 11 April 2016

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- The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and Europol, April 2016, EU Drug Markets Report 2016, Europol.
- The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, April 2016, Organized Crime and Illegally Mined Gold in Latin America, The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

Events & Announcements

- Migration and Asylum: New Challenges and Opportunities for Europe, 21-22 April 2016, Madrid, Spain.
- 5th Annual National Cyber Crime Conference, 25 April 2016, Boston, USA
- World Maritime University: Migration by Sea Symposium, 26-27 April 2016, Malmö, Sweden.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF

News & Commentaries

- Stephen O'Brien, The Humanitarian Consequences of El-Niño and the Need for Urgent Action, OCHA, 7 January 2016.
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- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2015, Global Humanitarian Overview 2016, New York, USA.

Events & Announcements

- Humanitarian Airlift and Disaster Response Asia-Pacific Conference, 23-24 May 2016, Singapore.
- Asian Business Forum 2016 Risk Reduction and Resilience Building, 20-21 April 2016, Bangkok, Thailand.

WATER SECURITY

News & Commentaries

- Catalin Cimpanu, Hackers modify water treatment parameters by accident, Softpedia News, 22 March 2016.
- David Lipton, The case for reforming the price of water, The Huffington Post, 22 March 2016.
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- Kalinga Seneviratne, China's release of Mekong waters reflects an environmental crisis, Eurasia Review, 25 March 2016.
- Sara Jerome, Water scarcity has western cities cutting deals, Water Online, 28 March 2016.
- Vianne Law, When it comes to water security, Hong Kong should suck it up, South China Morning Post, 29 March 2016.
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Events & Announcements

- Global Water Conference 2016, 23–24 May 2016, Yangon, Myanmar.
- The 7th International Conference on Water Resources and Environment Research (ICWRER2016), 5-9 June 2016, Kyoto, Japan.