

There's More To Be Done:

# Delivering a Whole-of-Society Approach to Global Health Crises *(Third Session)*

November 14, 2023 • 8:30 - 10:30 AM EST (Virtual)

Business Partner  
**Roundtables**

Topline Action Report

An initiative of



## KEY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are the public health implications of weakened public respect for government and scientific authority?
- What steps can we take to reverse the measurable decline in respect for proven science, increased apathy towards public health measures, and decreased trust in the institutions of a democratic society?
- What steps are needed to establish 21st century systems to prevent, avert and address ongoing threats to our health and well-being?
- What is the role of responsible technology and AI to support pandemic preparedness and avert global health crises?
- Which priority areas does this group believe we can address immediately, as well as in the short, medium and long term?

Leadership  
matters.

There's more  
to be done.

## MEETING OBJECTIVE

The USCIB Foundation hosted more than 20 representatives from IOE, WHO, UNICEF, CDC, CUGH, health organizations, academia, and the private sector to share ideas about ways to increase multisectoral collaboration to better respond to health crises in the post-COVID19 era.

The objective of the discussion was to build a better understanding of what is meant by a whole-of-society approach post-COVID19, taking stock of lessons learned, including the role of multilateral agencies and specific ways the business sector can be more fully engaged to address future health crises.

## DISCUSSION OVERVIEW

The discussion provided participants a unique off-the-record forum to discuss some initiatives that are already underway and served as a sounding board for robust discussion of opportunities to expand efforts to restore public trust, combat increasingly strident anti-science and anti-vaccine propaganda, and engage a fatigued public in the need for continued public health vigilance.

The session included a review of:

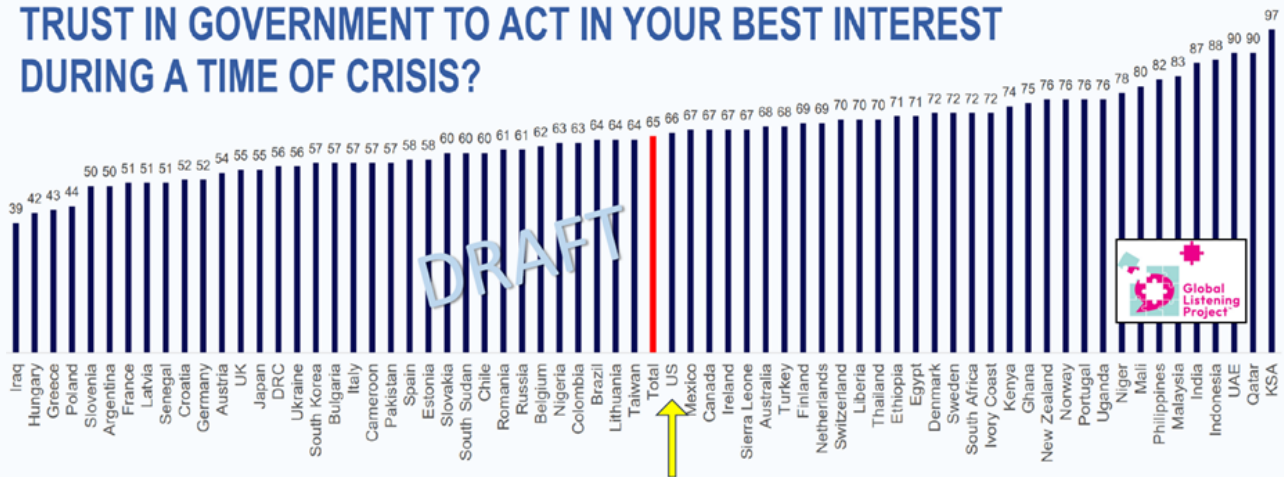
- Preview of *The Global Listening Project's* 70-Country Global Survey on public perceptions
- A presentation on the new United Nations multi-partner trust fund (MPTF) *Health4Life Fund* to address non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health
- Data from the *Nature Global Consensus Study*, 23 country survey on post-pandemic preparedness



49% AGREE

COVID-19 pandemic has increased confidence that their political systems can withstand another major crisis

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT TO ACT IN YOUR BEST INTEREST DURING A TIME OF CRISIS?



E1. You are about to see a series of two choices. For each pair, we want you to choose the one that you agree with more. These statements could refer to any major crisis.

B1. Imagine there was a major crisis (for example, a flood, pandemic, or food/water shortages). To what extent would you trust the following institutions to act in your best interest? - National government.

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES

The Business Partner Roundtable (BPR) offered research and data from renowned global researchers.

Key findings from *The Global Listening Project's* 70-country study, 70,000+ interviewed globally July-August, 2023:

- 49% have trust in government to act in their best interest during a time of crises; 31% experienced mental health problems during the pandemic
- Men more likely to trust information sources in a time of crises; and more likely to trust political leaders. Women under 35 consistently disengaged with TV as a source of information; and women overall indicate that political leaders do not listen to their needs
- 57% reported they were taking a break from news about politics, world affairs and current events at least once or twice a week

The *Health4Life Fund* is intended to address non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health. Hardly 2% of ODA for health is presently devoted to NCDs with fragmented and uncoordinated responses. This fund is:

- The only UN-wide Trust Fund devoted to mental health and NCDs, e.g. heart disease, cancers, diabetes, etc. and their development dimensions
- Creates global financing partnerships with low- and middle-income countries in line with SDG 3.4

Key findings from the *Nature Global Consensus Study* 4th 23-country survey in 2023:

- 72.1% were satisfied with communication efforts on COVID-19 vaccines made by health authorities in country; low trust in information sources (5.0-6.9) about COVID-19 vaccines
- 74.9% were confident that we will manage the next health crisis better than the COVID-19 pandemic. 67.1% would trust the WHO announcement of a new pandemic threat
- 87.8% of respondents indicated that they have taken at least one COVID-19 dose

From this starting point, and consistent with the Roundtable theme, *There's More To Be Done*, attendees offered ideas for action.



## Health4Life Fund Supports...



### DISCUSSION INSIGHTS

Experts with experience in developing and advancing the SDGs reminded attendees that the pandemic exposed vulnerability in the world's "system" and response. The greatest impact comes from coordinated action rather than working in silos. It is also important to regularly **address health in the global agenda** and not just during a pandemic.

There was a clarion call to engage in responses to inaccurate information, including **challenges to the legitimacy of science**, institutions, health authorities, academia, business and government and our entire "system." The influence of the U.S. anti-vax movement, and Western language media, continues to have influence globally. There is a **volatility of sentiment**. These trends threaten future progress and contribute to a trust decay across society, **affecting our ability to prepare for a future pandemic**.

In addition, UNICEF Paraguay data indicates that while 59% of the population has had one COVID-19 dose, only 28% have had the second. Looking at second and third dose data may be a better indicator of future vaccine success. Perceptions around side effects and association with heart conditions rise as the top of the reasons why the public is not willing to take the 2nd or 3rd dose, and impact routine immunization rates as well as childhood vaccination rates. **A systematic approach will be required communicate to the public.**

One area was clear, the **lack of an authoritative and trusted communication strategy** and system makes societies vulnerable to disease outbreaks and disinformation designed to undermine effective public health responses. The diminishing trust in government institutions apparent during the pandemic has not abated. Academic scientists, researchers and business leaders still command a trustworthy role in society that can be leveraged, especially as **mis/dis-information and skepticism about vaccines** remains dangerous for the public health.

To establish this strategy, there must be a **common language established around global health** that will be critical to involve business and the multilateral system. This strategy should address the public's skepticism but also **make vaccination easy and convenient**.

Mental Health is a critical component of the future of global health and affecting business productivity and employee performance. **Low cost, high impact public health opportunities** could be well perceived by the private sector and involve employers. Address the problem that business needs to solve to help establish common ground and create a common language pitch.

The corrective action around Public Health requires **more frequent and more customized** communications with the public, as well as length of touchpoints. The frequency must also be between Medical Professionals and Public Health. **Training for employers** is also critical to empower leaders and managers.

## DISCUSSION INSIGHTS (CONT'D)

The function of **Human Resources** has **not** changed in pace with the needs of employee health. Employee mental health and physical health is critical to organizations and society. Public Health can be more imaginative and creative to help support the shift needed. Large organizations have Medical Departments and teams; and greater collaboration could provide more power to the required shifts.

The Health Communication process has failed. Health Communication is a distinct science, a distinct profession, and a distinct calling. **We need to reinvigorate Health Communication.**

Facts may not change minds (we need facts), but **we need to change hearts**. Temporal emotions research demonstrates that we are managing emotions. To help build trust, we should **look at closely the relational nature** of relationships. Any strategy should understand the **territory of legitimacy to build public confidence**.



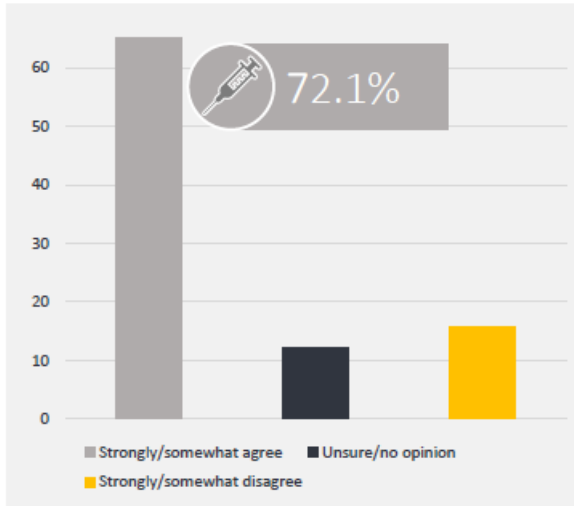
## CRITICAL INSIGHTS

- **Strengthen global collaboration** between multilateral organizations, relevant NGOs and the private sector to support health preparedness as part of the global agenda
- **Establish a common language on global health** to create effective collaboration with business and the multilateral system
- **Reinvent and reinvigorate health communications** to address the volatility of public sentiment, and the mis-/disinformation movement
- **Develop trusted, credible sources** to advance the best available scientific evidence and guidance so that business and key leaders can promote safety and health
- **Create a communication strategy** that leverages trusted sources, multiple touchpoints and addresses changing hearts as well as minds
- **Identify low cost, high impact public health opportunities** that could involve the private sector to provide ease and convenience to employees



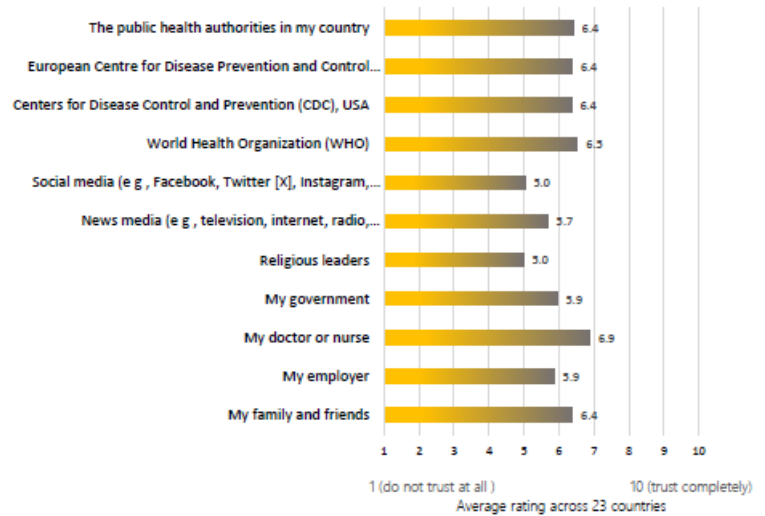
## Trust in sources of information

"I was satisfied with the communication efforts on COVID-19 vaccines made by health authorities in my country."



Satisfaction ranged from 49.4% in Poland to 88.6% in Kenya.

"How much do you trust the following sources of information about COVID-19 vaccines?"



Source: Lazarus JV, et al. A survey of COVID-19 vaccine acceptance across 23 countries in 2023. In review. Study not yet published.

## THE ROLE OF BUSINESS PARTNER ROUNDTABLES

As the organizers of these programs, we recognize that we are aiming high and that, in particular, we are asking for a more inclusive, collaborative global approach to meet the challenges of future health crises that includes all stakeholders working together in transparent, proactive and creative partnership.

Our theme *There's More To Be Done* seeks to galvanize partnerships among all players – governments, multilateral agencies, business, medical and public health professionals – to be ready for future pandemics. Given recent shifts in public trust for the important sectors of civil society, it is clear that the private sector with engagement of international business can provide unique perspectives.

