

## The World Health Organization

According to its Constitution, the mission of the World Health Organization (WHO) was nothing less than the “attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health” without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic status, or social condition. But how consistently and how well has the WHO pursued this mission since 1946? This comprehensive and engaging new history explores these questions by looking at its origins and its institutional antecedents, while also considering its contemporary and future roles. It examines how the WHO was shaped by the particular environments of the postwar and Cold War periods (1948–1991), the relative influence of the United States and other approaches to health care, and its place alongside sometimes competing international bodies such as UNICEF, the World Bank, and the Gates Foundation. The authors reevaluate the relative success and failure of critical WHO campaigns, from early malaria and smallpox eradication programs to struggles with Ebola today.

MARCOS CUETO is a professor at the Casa de Oswaldo Cruz, a unit of Fiocruz, the main Brazilian biomedical institute, and is coeditor of the journal *História, Ciências Saúde – Manguinhos*. His book, coauthored with Steven Palmer, *Medicine and Public Health in Latin America: A History*, won the 2017 George Rosen award of the American Association for the History of Medicine.

THEODORE M. BROWN is a professor of history in the School of Arts and Sciences and of Public Health Sciences and Medical Humanities in the School of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Rochester. He is an associate editor (history) of the *American Journal of Public Health*.

ELIZABETH FEE passed away on October 17, 2018. She was at that time the senior historian at the National Library of Medicine. She was a prolific scholar who authored, coauthored, and edited many books including the coauthored book with Theodore M. Brown, *Making Medical History: The Life and Times of Henry E. Sigerist*.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-48357-5 — The World Health Organization  
Marcos Cueto , Theodore M. Brown , Elizabeth Fee  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

*Global Health Histories*

Series Editor:  
Sanjoy Bhattacharya, University of York

**Global Health Histories** aims to publish outstanding and innovative scholarship on the history of public health, medicine and science worldwide. By studying the many ways in which the impact of ideas of health and well-being on society were measured and described in different global, international, regional, national and local contexts, books in the series reconceptualise the nature of empire, the nation state, extra-state actors and different forms of globalisation. The series showcases new approaches to writing about the connected histories of health and medicine, humanitarianism, and global economic and social development.

# The World Health Organization

## *A History*

---

**Marcos Cueto**

*Casa de Oswaldo Cruz, Fiocruz*

**Theodore M. Brown**

*University of Rochester*

**Elizabeth Fee**

*National Library of Medicine*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-48357-5 — The World Health Organization  
Marcos Cueto , Theodore M. Brown , Elizabeth Fee  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India  
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108483575](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108483575)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108692878

© Marcos Cueto, Theodore M. Brown, and The National Institute of Health 2019

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2019

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Cueto, Marcos, author. | Brown, Theodore M., 1942- author. | Fee, Elizabeth, author.

Title: The World Health Organization : a history / Marcos Cueto, Theodore M. Brown, Elizabeth Fee.

Other titles: Global health histories (Series)

Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom : Cambridge University Press, 2019. |

Series: Global health histories | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018047191 | ISBN 9781108483575 (hardback) |

ISBN 9781108728843 (pbk.)

Subjects: | MESH: World Health Organization. | Global Health

<https://id.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/D014943> | International Agencies—history

<https://id.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/D007390Q000266> | Health Policy—history

<https://id.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/D006291Q000266> | Health Services Administration—

history <https://id.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/D006298Q000266> | Disease Eradication—history

<https://id.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/D060740Q000266> | International Cooperation—history

<https://id.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/D007391Q000266> | History, 20th Century

<https://id.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/D049673> | History, 21st Century

Classification: LCC RA441 | NLM WA 1 MW6 | DDC 362.1—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018047191>

ISBN 978-1-108-48357-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-72884-3 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-48357-5 — The World Health Organization  
Marcos Cueto , Theodore M. Brown , Elizabeth Fee  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

This book is dedicated to Corinne Sutter-Brown,  
Ted Brown's beloved late wife who passed away  
on September 6, 2017

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-48357-5 — The World Health Organization  
Marcos Cueto , Theodore M. Brown , Elizabeth Fee  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

## Contents

---

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>List of Tables</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xiv
Introduction: The World Health Organization and the Dilemmas of the Cold War and the Post–Cold War Periods	1
1 The Making of an International Health Establishment	10
2 The Birth of the World Health Organization, 1945–1948	34
3 The Start-Up Years, 1948–1955	62
4 The Cold War and Eradication	86
5 Overcoming the Warming of the Cold War: Smallpox Eradication	115
6 The Transition from “Family Planning” to “Sexual and Reproductive Rights”	146
7 The Vicissitudes of Primary Health Care	170
8 The Response to the HIV/AIDS Pandemic	203
9 An Embattled Director-General and the Persistence of the WHO	239
10 The Competitive World of Global Health	280
11 The World Health Organization in the Second Decade of the Twenty-First Century	320
<i>Bibliography</i>	341
<i>Index</i>	367

## Figures

---

1.1 Ludwik Rajchman. Courtesy: United Nations Archives at Geneva.	<i>page 20</i>
1.2 Staff: League of Nations Health Organization. Courtesy: United Nations Archives at Geneva.	22
1.3 Andrija Stampar. Courtesy: United Nations Archives at Geneva.	23
2.1 Emblem WHO India. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	36
2.2 Geraldo de Paula Souza. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	37
2.3 Karl Evang. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	38
2.4 Brock Chisholm. Courtesy: Smithsonian Institution Archives.	47
2.5 Martha M. Eliot. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	54
2.6 Infant girl receives her BCG vaccination. Courtesy: Getty Images.	60
3.1 Marcolino Candau. Courtesy: Smithsonian Institution Archives.	70
3.2 Joseph N. Togba. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	78
3.3 Francisco J. C. Cambournac. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	81
4.1 US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Courtesy: Getty Images.	88
4.2 Fred L. Soper. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	102
4.3 Anti-malaria spraying. Courtesy: Getty Images.	102
4.4 Blood sample. Courtesy: National Library of Medicine.	103
4.5 India, the Mobile Malaria Eradication Team. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	104
4.6 Mexico and malaria. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	105
4.7 A man holding a canister of DDT. Courtesy: Getty Images.	106



List of Figures	ix
5.1 Photograph made during smallpox eradication. Courtesy: Getty Images.	116
5.2 Smallpox eradication worker. Courtesy: Getty Images.	129
5.3 Donald A. Henderson. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	130
5.4 Poster vaccine against smallpox. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	132
5.5 Cover “Smallpox is dead!” Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	138
6.1 At the Victoria Jubilee Maternity Hospital. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	157
6.2 Contraceptives explained. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	158
6.3 Family planning. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	158
6.4 Pro–birth control demonstrators. Courtesy: Getty Images.	159
7.1 Halfdan T. Mahler. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	174
7.2 Senator Edward M. Kennedy. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	176
7.3 Nutrition and primary health care. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	185
7.4 Breastfeeding. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	187
7.5 Poster immunization. Courtesy: Getty Images.	191
7.6 Onchocerciasis poster. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	194
7.7 Ebrahim M. Samba. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	196
8.1 Jonathan Mann. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	208
8.2 HIV/AIDS poster. Courtesy: Getty Images.	213
8.3 Health poster regarding AIDS. Courtesy: Getty Images.	214
8.4 Michael H. Merson. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	218
8.5 AIDS prevention. Courtesy: Getty Images.	236
8.6 World AIDS Day 2011. Courtesy: Getty Images.	237
9.1 Hiroshi Nakajima. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	242
9.2 Swine flu. Courtesy: Getty Images.	267
9.3 Poster against smoking. Courtesy: Getty Images.	270
9.4 Poster Don’t Be A Butthead. Courtesy: Getty Images.	270

x List of Figures

10.1 Gro Harlem Brundtland. Courtesy: Courtesy United Nation Photo Library.	281
10.2 Stop TB. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	299
10.3 US President George W. Bush. Courtesy: Getty Images.	303
10.4 Anders Nordström. Courtesy: Getty Images.	310
10.5 Margaret Chan. Courtesy: Getty Images.	312
11.1 Ebola and health workers. Courtesy: World Health Organization Photo Library.	322
11.2 Guinea Ebola. Courtesy: Getty Images.	323
11.3 Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Courtesy: Getty Images.	334

## Tables

---

I Election for Director-General of the World Health Organization, 1988–2017	<i>page</i> 336
--	-----------------

## Acknowledgments

---

We undertook this history of the World Health Organization more than ten years ago with initial support from the Rockefeller Foundation and the World Health Organization. It is important to emphasize, however, that this is not a commissioned or official history. After 2008, we had no financial links with the WHO or the Foundation, and we pursued this book project independently. At the WHO we received generous support from Ariel Pablos-Mendez, Thomas Prentice, Hooman Momen, Marie Villemin Partow, Reynald Erard, Tomas John Allen, Eugenio Villar, and Gaby Caro. Socrates Litisios, a former officer of the WHO and a colleague in historical study, also provided key advice at several stages of our work. Conversations with former officers and leaders in global health such as Halfdan T. Mahler, Ilona Kickbusch, Paulo Buss, Jo Asvall, and Michael Marmot clarified many events and ideas. Historians working on global health gave us inspiration, friendship, and useful critical comments. Among them were Jaime Benchimol, Sanjoy Bhattacharya, Anne-Emanuelle Birn, Iris Borowy, Gilberto Hochman, Paul R. Greenough, Randall Packard, Mariola Espinosa, Adam Warren, Patrick Zylberman and Gabriela Soto-Laveaga. The young and talented Brazilian historian, Gabriel Lopes, was extraordinarily helpful in expanding the references and developing the index. We would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers of the book manuscript who provided sound advice and very useful comments.

Several Cambridge University Press officers played a key role in the publication of this book: Michael Watson, Lucy Rhymer, Lisa Carter, Melissa Shivers, and Natasha Whelan. It is a great honor to be part of the Global Health Histories of the Press.

We are grateful to the archivists and librarians who made our work possible and to the institutions that provided images for this book. We also owe thanks to our home institutions: the National Library of Medicine for Elizabeth Fee, the University of Rochester for Theodore M. Brown, and the Casa de Oswaldo Cruz, Fiocruz for Marcos Cueto. Theodore Brown is also grateful to the research assistance provided by several University of Rochester students and colleagues, particularly Rodney Chau, Michael Healey, Susan Ladwig, and

Victoria Stepanova. In addition, Marcos Cueto would like to thank the Brazilian Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq) and its Bolsa de Produtividade and express his gratitude for the generous invitations to be fellow at the Swiss Brocher Foundation in l'Hermance and the Robert F. Kennedy Visiting Professorship in the Department of History of Science at Harvard University. The final manuscript was completed at these institutions and discussed by the three of us in a number of meetings in Bethesda, Maryland where we benefited from the warm hospitality of Mary Garofalo.

This book is the result of the collective efforts of Marcos Cueto, Ted Brown, and Elizabeth Fee. Liz was an essential and central partner from start to finish of this project. Sadly, she passed away when the completed text had already entered the copyediting, layout, and production phases of publication.

## Abbreviations

---

<i>ABC</i>	<i>Abstinence, Be Faithful and Use Condoms (AIDS)</i>
<i>ACT UP</i>	<i>AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power</i>
<i>AIDS</i>	<i>Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</i>
<i>AMRO</i>	<i>American Regional Office (World Health Organization)</i>
<i>ARV</i>	<i>Antiretroviral Drug</i>
<i>AFRO</i>	<i>African Regional Office</i>
<i>AZT</i>	<i>Retrovir</i>
<i>BCG</i>	<i>Bacille Calmette-Guérin (vaccine)</i>
<i>CCM</i>	<i>Country Coordinating Mechanism</i>
<i>CDC</i>	<i>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</i>
<i>CIDA</i>	<i>Canadian International Development Agency</i>
<i>CIPLA</i>	<i>Chemical, Industrial, and Pharmaceutical Laboratories (India)</i>
<i>CVA</i>	<i>Children Vaccine Initiative</i>
<i>DALY</i>	<i>Disability Adjusted Life Year</i>
<i>DAH</i>	<i>Development Assistance for Health</i>
<i>DDT</i>	<i>Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane</i>
<i>DFID</i>	<i>Department for International Development</i>
<i>DOTS</i>	<i>Directly Observed Therapy</i>
<i>ELISA</i>	<i>Enzyme-linked Immunosorbent Assay (AIDS test)</i>
<i>EHA</i>	<i>Emergency and Humanitarian Action Division (World Health Organization)</i>
<i>EMRO</i>	<i>Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (World Health Organization)</i>
<i>EPA</i>	<i>Environmental Protection Agency</i>
<i>EURO</i>	<i>European Regional Office (World Health Organization)</i>
<i>EPI</i>	<i>Expanded Program on Immunization</i>
<i>FAO</i>	<i>Food and Agriculture Organization</i>
<i>FF</i>	<i>Ford Foundation</i>
<i>FFF</i>	<i>Food supplementation, Female literacy, and Family planning</i>
<i>FCTC</i>	<i>Framework Convention on Tobacco Control</i>
<i>GAVI</i>	<i>Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization</i>

## List of Abbreviations

xv

<i>GOBI</i>	<i>Growth monitoring of young children, Oral rehydration therapy, promotion of Breast feeding, and Immunization</i>
<i>GPA</i>	<i>Global Program on AIDS</i>
<i>HAART</i>	<i>Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy</i>
<i>HEW</i>	<i>Department of Health, Education and Welfare</i>
<i>HP</i>	<i>Health Promotion</i>
<i>HRP</i>	<i>Special Program of Research in Human Reproduction</i>
<i>HSF</i>	<i>Department of Health System Financing</i>
<i>ICA</i>	<i>International Cooperation Agency</i>
<i>ILO</i>	<i>International Labor Organization</i>
<i>IHD</i>	<i>International Health Division (Rockefeller Foundation)</i>
<i>ITN</i>	<i>Insecticide-Treated mosquito Nets</i>
<i>IC</i>	<i>Interim Commission</i>
<i>IHR</i>	<i>International Health Regulations</i>
<i>IUD</i>	<i>Intrauterine Contraceptive Device</i>
<i>IPPF</i>	<i>International Planned Parenthood Federation</i>
<i>LGBT</i>	<i>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender</i>
<i>LRCS</i>	<i>League of Red Cross Societies</i>
<i>LNHO</i>	<i>League of Nations Health Organization</i>
<i>MEP</i>	<i>Malaria Eradication Program</i>
<i>MDG</i>	<i>Millennium Development Goals</i>
<i>MDR-TB</i>	<i>Multidrug-Resistant Tuberculosis</i>
<i>MMV</i>	<i>Medicines for Malaria Venture</i>
<i>NAM</i>	<i>National Academy of Medicine</i>
<i>NATO</i>	<i>North Atlantic Treaty Alliance</i>
<i>NGO</i>	<i>Nongovernmental Organization</i>
<i>NIH</i>	<i>National Institutes of Health</i>
<i>NCD</i>	<i>Noncommunicable Diseases</i>
<i>NTD</i>	<i>Neglected Tropical Diseases</i>
<i>OCP</i>	<i>Onchocerciasis Control Program</i>
<i>ODA</i>	<i>British Overseas Development Administration</i>
<i>OIHP</i>	<i>Office International d'Hygiène Publique</i>
<i>ORT</i>	<i>Oral Rehydration Techniques</i>
<i>OXFAM</i>	<i>Oxford Committee for Famine Relief</i>
<i>PAHO</i>	<i>Pan American Health Association</i>
<i>PASB</i>	<i>Pan American Sanitary Bureau</i>
<i>PEPFAR</i>	<i>President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief</i>
<i>PHC</i>	<i>Primary Health Care</i>
<i>PMI</i>	<i>President's Malaria Initiative</i>
<i>PPP</i>	<i>Public Private Partnerships</i>
<i>RBM</i>	<i>Roll Back Malaria</i>
<i>SARS</i>	<i>Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome</i>

xvi List of Abbreviations

<i>SDG</i>	<i>Sustainable Development Goals</i>
<i>SEP</i>	<i>Smallpox Eradication Program</i>
<i>SPHC</i>	<i>Selective Primary Health Care</i>
<i>SARS</i>	<i>Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome</i>
<i>STD</i>	<i>Sexually Transmitted Disease</i>
<i>SEARO</i>	<i>South-East Asia, Regional Office (World Health Organization)</i>
<i>TDR</i>	<i>Special Program for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases</i>
<i>TPC</i>	<i>Technical Preparatory Committee</i>
<i>TRIPS</i>	<i>Trade-Related Aspects of International Property Rights</i>
<i>UNAIDS</i>	<i>Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS</i>
<i>UNICEF</i>	<i>United Nations Children's Fund</i>
<i>UNDP</i>	<i>United Nations Development Program</i>
<i>UNESCO</i>	<i>United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization</i>
<i>UNEP</i>	<i>United Nations Environmental Program</i>
<i>UNFPA</i>	<i>United Nations Population Fund</i>
<i>UNICEF</i>	<i>United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund</i>
<i>UNRRA</i>	<i>United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration</i>
<i>USAID</i>	<i>US Agency of International Development</i>
<i>UHC</i>	<i>Universal Health Coverage</i>
<i>WHA</i>	<i>World Health Assembly</i>
<i>WHAM</i>	<i>Women Health Action Mobilization</i>
<i>WPRO</i>	<i>Western Pacific Regional Office (World Health Organization)</i>
<i>WTO</i>	<i>World Trade Organization</i>
<i>XDRTB</i>	<i>Extensively Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis</i>