

International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA)

Agenda 8.2- Expanding the corpus of the South-East Asia Regional Health Emergency Fund (SEARHEF)

IFMSA commends the WHO and Member States for establishing SEARHEF as a vital mechanism to respond swiftly to health emergencies. Recent crises from COVID-19, which caused over 2 million cases in the Region in 2021, to cyclones and floods affecting millions in Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar, have shown that timely access to emergency funds is critical in preventing localized crises from escalating into regional or global threats.

We recognize that the current corpus, while valuable, requires strengthening to ensure rapid, sustained, and equitable response capacity. Health emergencies disproportionately affect vulnerable populations: children under five, older adults, migrants, and marginalized communities often experience the highest mortality and morbidity. For instance, delayed funding during the 2019 measles outbreak in parts of India and Nepal contributed to preventable deaths and disruptions in routine immunization campaigns.

We, the IFMSA, representing 1.5 million medical students worldwide, call upon WHO and Member States to:

Expand and sustain SEARHEF to ensure immediate financial readiness for diverse emergencies.

Establish transparent, accountable mechanisms for rapid fund allocation and disbursement.

Prioritize equity, ensuring resources reach underserved and high-risk populations first.

Promote youth engagement in emergency preparedness and response planning, leveraging the innovation, energy, and commitment of future health professionals.

Well-resourced emergency funds are essential for resilient health systems capable of protecting lives, reducing preventable morbidity and mortality, and sustaining regional health security. By investing in SEARHEF, Member States can ensure that the South-East Asia Region is prepared for both current and future health emergencies.