



World Health  
Organization

A central illustration featuring a large, light-brown rounded rectangle with the title text. Surrounding this rectangle are several stylized figures: a person in a red shirt meditating with headphones, a person in a blue shirt doing a yoga pose with headphones, a man in a suit standing with a headset and briefcase, a woman in a pink shirt lying down with a tablet and headphones, a man in a red shirt sitting and looking at a phone with headphones, a man in a blue shirt sitting and looking at a phone with headphones, and a woman in a yellow and red dress standing and looking at a phone with a headset. The background includes simple line drawings of clouds and trees.

# *Toolkit*

*for safe listening  
devices and systems*



*Make Listening Safe*



An illustration featuring a central orange rounded rectangle with the title text. Surrounding it are various stylized figures: a person meditating with headphones on top, a person doing a yoga pose on top, a man in a suit with a headset on the left, a woman in a sari with a headset on the right, a person lying on the ground with a headset, a person sitting on the ground with a headset, and a person sitting on the ground with a headset. The background includes simple line drawings of clouds and trees.

# *Toolkit*

*for safe listening  
devices and systems*



*Make Listening Safe*

Toolkit for safe listening devices and systems  
ISBN 978-92-4-151528-3 (WHO)  
ISBN 978-92-61-28411-4 (ITU)

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**Suggested citation.** Toolkit for safe listening devices and systems. Geneva: World Health Organization and International Telecommunication Union, 2019. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

**Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data.** CIP data are available at <http://apps.who.int/iris>.

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Printed in Switzerland.

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# Foreword

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Globally, a billion teenagers and young adults are at risk of developing hearing loss due to the practice of listening to music at high volumes for prolonged time over their personal audio devices. Once hearing loss due to loud sounds sets in, it cannot be reversed. Such hearing loss, if unaddressed, can greatly impact one's ability to communicate, gain education or find and hold suitable employment. However, hearing loss that results from loud sounds can be prevented through raised awareness and appropriate prevented measures.

To address this issue the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) have developed the **Toolkit for safe listening devices and systems**, which provides the necessary practical guidance for the implementation of the Global standard for safe listening devices (ITU-T H.870). The standard outlines key features to regulate the user's exposure to sound, limit volume and provide information on safe listening. The implementation of the safe listening features recommended here will be key to protect users from hearing loss caused by loud sounds and ensuring that people can continue enjoying the sounds they like listening to.

Governments can act by regulating for the standard and manufacturers can develop and market devices that implement the recommendations of the toolkit. Civil society can advocate for the implementation of the standard and raise awareness on safe listening.

ITU and WHO call upon Member States, industry partners and civil society to play their part in promoting safe listening and in addressing this emerging health challenge.

The use of this toolkit and implementation of the H.870 global standard will promote the responsible use of technology to enhance health and wellbeing among its users.



Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin, ITU



Dr Etienne Krug, WHO

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# Acknowledgements

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The World Health Organization (WHO) and International Telecommunications Union (ITU) gratefully acknowledge the following contributors to this handbook.

Content development: Elena Altieri, Young-Se An, Simao Campos-Neto, Shelly Chadha, Alarcos Cieza, Nicola Diviani, Catalina Valencia Mayer, Ericka Lara Ovares, Karen Reyes, Sara Rubinelli, Roxana Widmer-Iliescu.

Guidance: Etienne Krug, Tamitza Toroyan.

Further contributions: Lidia Best, Avi Blau, Brian Fligor, Mark Laureyns, Richard Neitzel, Michael Santucci.

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Editing: Angela Burton.

Layout and Design: 7 Estudio Creativo.

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# Executive summary

This toolkit provides practical guidance to support Member States, industry partners and civil society groups in the use and implementation of the WHO-ITU H.870 Global standard on safe listening devices and systems. The WHO-ITU Global standard is the result of a collaboration between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and has been developed in response to the growing prevalence of hearing loss and the threat to hearing posed by unsafe listening. The WHO-ITU Global standard has been developed using an evidence-based and consultative process, with the participation of experts in the field of sound, audiology, acoustics, communication, and smartphone technology.

This toolkit outlines the need for hearing loss prevention and describes how WHO and ITU have shaped their response to this. It summarizes the WHO-ITU Global standard in a simplified way and provides a step-wise approach for implementation by three main partners in the field of hearing loss prevention:

- Governments
- Industry
- Civil society

A section tailored to each partner outlines the steps necessary for effective implementation of the WHO-ITU Global standard. A variety of tools are included to help with this: a situation assessment tool; an outline of planning workshops; and sample awareness-raising communications and slide presentations.

The aim of the toolkit is to make it easy for partners to adopt, implement and monitor the WHO-ITU Global standard. Its overall goal is to ensure that all users of personal audio systems are empowered with information on safe listening and have the option to make safe listening choices in order to protect their hearing.

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