

# Assessing the development of palliative care worldwide: a set of actionable indicators



World Health Organization



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# Foreword

The World Health Organization (WHO) is currently implementing its 13th General Programme of Work (GPW13) to support countries in reaching all health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). GPW13 is structured around three interconnected strategic priorities: achieving universal health coverage (UHC); addressing health emergencies; and promoting healthier populations. Palliative care, which has been identified by the World Health Assembly as an “ethical responsibility of health systems” (WHA67.19), is part of this global effort towards UHC. However, it is still not accessible to the great majority of the people, adults and children who need it.

Facing the escalating global burden of serious health-related suffering, WHO has been developing a series of technical documents providing

countries with practical guidance on integrating palliative care into health-care systems. As requested by the Declaration of Astana, adopted by Member States in 2018, special emphasis has been given to the strengthening of palliative care within primary health care.

The provision of good palliative care to all people who need it, across disease and age groups and in all contexts, including humanitarian emergencies is possible only if health systems are adequately prepared; this requires considering several important dimensions, described in this document. This technical report aims to provide countries with concrete modalities to assess the development of palliative care and address gaps in a timely manner. The proposed set of indicators is the result of experiences

from the field and lessons learned across the world; it also includes innovative approaches and pays attention to the engagement of people and their communities. Suggestions to use these indicators in a strategic way will have to be adapted to specific settings and improved over time through knowledge sharing between countries; but this document is underpinning our common effort to understand better and address in a comprehensive way the needs of the people facing the problems associated with life threatening illness. It is strongly in line with our commitment to leave no one behind.

**Zsuzsanna Jakab**

Deputy Director-General  
World Health Organization

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