

Access to medical products in the South-East Asia Region 2021



Review of progress

Access to medical products in the South-East Asia Region, 2021: Review of progress



REGIONAL OFFICE FOR

**World Health
Organization**
South-East Asia

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Foreword by the Regional Director



The WHO South-East Asia Region is committed to ensuring access for all to safe, effective, affordable and quality medical products, in line with the 2018 Delhi Declaration on Improving Access to Essential Medical Products, and the Region's Flagship Priority Programme on achieving universal health coverage (UHC).

Across the Region, spending on medicines comprises a large proportion of out-of-pocket costs. To reduce those costs, Member States have in recent years begun implementing medical products pricing policies, which play a key role in ensuring that medicines are affordable. Several Member States have improved governance in medicine management, including by strengthening national policies and procurement systems. The finalization of the Initiative for Collaborative Procurement in South-East Asia (iCAPS) procedures, which guides implementation, is an important milestone towards collaborative procurement. The interest in leveraging the Initiative to increase access to essential antidotes, even from countries outside the Region, has been inspiring.

To build resilient supply chains, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts to reduce risks and dependency, and increase domestic production, are ongoing. Such efforts will diversify the supply base and secure sufficient stockpiles of medical products. Partnership with the private sector, alongside ongoing regulatory system strengthening, is necessary for technology transfer and enhanced local production of high-priority medical products. Initiatives such as the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool could be effective in achieving these outcomes by providing a one-stop shop for developers of health products to share their intellectual property, knowledge and data.

Monitoring access to medical products remains a complex endeavour that requires gathering of information from multiple sources and ensuring the interoperability of data collection systems. More complete and timely data on access to medicines will better enable countries to identify access disparities between population groups and understand the effects of interventions across their medicine supply and distribution chains.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in massive human and economic costs, partly on account of shortages of critical medical products. It has exposed vulnerabilities that impact the global supply chain. This report provides Member States, partners and other stakeholders an opportunity to review progress and identify and leverage new opportunities to improve access to essential medical products for a fairer, healthier Region for all.



Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh
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