

# Stronger Collaboration, Better Health

Global Action Plan  
for Healthy Lives and  
Well-being for All

Strengthening collaboration  
among multilateral organizations  
to accelerate country  
progress on the health-related  
Sustainable Development Goals



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Strengthening collaboration among multilateral organizations to accelerate country  
progress on the health-related Sustainable Development Goals



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Stronger collaboration, better health: global action plan for healthy lives and well-being for all. Strengthening collaboration among multilateral organizations to accelerate country progress on the health-related Sustainable Development Goals

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# Foreword:

## Stronger collaboration for better health



In 2018, the leaders of Germany, Ghana and Norway requested that WHO and other multilateral organizations streamline their efforts to better support countries to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 – ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages – and the other health-related targets in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

That call was echoed in the G20 Osaka Leaders' Declaration, which urged more effective collaboration between international organizations.

This is our response - a collective commitment by 12 multilateral organizations with significant roles in health, development and humanitarian work to strengthen their collaboration in support of countries. If the highly engaged and constructive way in which the organizations have collaborated on the plan is any indication, we are already on the path to a new way of working together. I thank the 12 agencies for joining the collaboration with such enthusiasm, as well as the countries and partners who have supported us and given feedback to help shape the Plan.

I know first-hand from my experience as a health minister how helpful the support of the multilateral agencies can be, especially when they work effectively together and align with countries' plans and priorities. I also understand that countries have the ultimate responsibility to achieve SDG 3 and the other health-related SDG targets and that they must lead and own work under the Global Action Plan, backed by our commitment to serve them better.

The Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All has a simple premise: that stronger collaboration contributes to better health. Stronger collaboration is the path, but better health is the destination. While the 12 agencies have already worked constructively together, our scaled-up collaboration to accelerate progress starts now. The measure of success is not writing a plan – it's delivering results. The success of this plan will ultimately be reflected in improved health and lives saved.

**Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**  
**Director-General**  
**World Health Organization**



## About the Global Action Plan

In April 2018, the Heads of Government of Germany, Ghana and Norway - and later the United Nations Secretary-General - wrote to the Director-General of WHO and other agencies requesting that they develop a Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All. In response, 11 multilateral health, development and humanitarian agencies committed themselves in October 2018 to closer collaboration and alignment to help accelerate progress towards the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to developing a Global Action Plan.<sup>1</sup> The 11 initial signatories to the October 2018 commitment were later joined by the World Food Programme. Detailed descriptions of the 12 agencies and their mandates and activities appears in Annex 1.

While developing the Plan, the 12 agencies identified seven cross-cutting “accelerator themes” of relevance to their core mandates in which collaboration and joint action offer significant opportunities to accelerate progress in achieving the health-related SDG targets. Discussion papers on each of the seven accelerator themes were developed by subsets of the agencies benefiting from substantial input by partners, such as the Wellcome Trust on research and development, innovation and access, to inform development of the Plan and discussions with countries. The agencies also began work to align institutional investment case approaches and develop 2023 milestones for health-related SDG targets.

In June 2019, an online process was held to solicit public comment on a draft outline of the Global Action Plan and the seven accelerator discussion papers. More than 100 submissions were received from governments, civil society, the private sector, academia and individuals. The submissions were taken into account in finalizing the Plan. The accelerator papers and submissions received can be found on the Global Action Plan website. A civil society advisory group provided valuable guidance and input throughout development of the Plan.

By mid-2019, interest and support from countries, including the G20, had grown. In their declaration in Osaka in late June 2019, G20 leaders noted that they “encourage international organizations and all stakeholders to collaborate effectively and we look forward to the upcoming presentation of the global action plan for healthy lives and well-being for all.” Several ministries of health have shown interest in joint support from the agencies on key accelerator themes, and engagement with countries to discuss opportunities presented by the Plan is ongoing. Attention to health by the African Union throughout 2019 and the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage in September 2019 further reinforce political commitment.

The Global Action Plan was launched to coincide with the High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage and the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019.

# Our commitment to stronger collaboration for better health

As leaders of the signatory agencies to the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All, we acknowledge the tremendous efforts being made in many countries with the support of their development and humanitarian partners to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 and other health-related targets in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We also recognize that progress towards these targets is uneven, among and within countries, and that we must all step up our efforts in the next few years if the world is to reach these targets by 2030.

Although our agencies are already working together in many areas, we believe that more purposeful, systematic, transparent and accountable collaboration among us will help to increase momentum at this critical moment in global health and to realize the full potential of health as a precondition, driver and outcome of sustainable development. Accordingly, to support countries to achieve the health-related SDG targets, we commit to working better together to:

- > *Engage* with countries better to identify priorities and plan and implement together;
- > *Accelerate* progress in countries through joint actions under seven accelerator themes set out in the Plan, and through our overarching commitment to advance gender equality and support the delivery of global public goods;
- > *Align*, by harmonizing our operational and financial strategies and policies in support of countries where this increases our efficiency and reduces the burden on countries; and
- > *Account*, by reviewing progress and learning together to enhance our shared accountability.

<sup>1</sup> Towards a Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All: Uniting to accelerate progress toward the health-related SDGs. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/311667/WHO-DCO-2018.3-eng.pdf>, accessed 1 August 2019).



The Global Action Plan strengthens our collaboration with countries and each other by leveraging our collective strengths. The Plan builds on existing mechanisms, including country platforms for achieving the SDGs and the ongoing process of reform in the United Nations Development System.

The launch of the Global Action Plan marks the next chapter of a shared journey. Over the coming months and years, we will work closely with countries to refine and implement the proposed collaborative actions in the Plan at country, regional and global levels. These actions will support countries on their pathways towards the health-related SDGs and help them to deliver on their political commitments to health and development, including those from the Astana Conference on Primary Health Care and the United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage. We will give special attention to the needs of the many marginalized and vulnerable people who lack access to health products and services and are being left behind, including people affected by conflict, fragility and disease outbreaks.

Collaboration is a process. Yet we are interested in impact. We look forward to working better with each other, countries, communities and civil society, the private sector, other stakeholders and development partners to accelerate progress and increase the impact of our joint work through the next “decade of delivery” on the SDGs, so that the goal of healthy lives and well-being for all can become a reality.

## Our commitment to accelerate progress towards the health-related SDGs together



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Director-General



Aerial view of United Nations staff in Geneva simulating the Sustainable Development Goals logo on UN Staff Day.

Photo credit: UN Emmanuel Hungrecker

# Executive summary

## The Global Action Plan: A new approach to strengthening collaboration in global health

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 – ensuring health and well-being for all at all ages – is critical to achieving progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Because health is an integral part of human capital and a precondition, driver and outcome of sustainable development, SDG 3 is linked to around 50 health-related targets across the SDGs and the pledge to leave no one behind.

The overall objective of the Global Action Plan is to enhance collaboration among 12 global organizations engaged in health, development and humanitarian responses to accelerate country progress on the health-related SDG targets. The Plan presents a new approach to strengthening collaboration among and joint action by the organizations, building on an initial joint commitment made in October 2018. The Plan is primarily intended to be strategic but provides some operational detail to guide implementation while also allowing flexibility for adjustment based on regular reviews of progress and learning from experience. Although the purpose of the Global Action Plan is not to provide or seek additional resources, the Plan will enable better use of existing resources as a result of improved collaboration, recognizing that each agency has its own unique mandate and area of expertise.

Countries are at the forefront of efforts to achieve the health-related SDG targets. The 12 signatory agencies to this Global Action Plan (“the agencies”) also play important roles in the global health architecture, collectively working to advance all the SDG 3 targets and many other health-related targets in the 2030 Agenda. The agencies’ mandates range from health financing to normative and policy guidance, technical cooperation, market shaping, convening stakeholders and humanitarian responses. Together, the agencies channel nearly one-third of all development assistance for health. Several

## Obstacles and opportunities on the path to health and well-being for all by 2030

Despite remarkable gains in health over the past few decades, the world is not on track to achieve SDG 3. Moreover, there are substantial differences between and within countries in terms of the likely achievement of many health-related SDG targets.

Many countries – especially low-income countries – face significant challenges as they strive to achieve these targets. These challenges include widening inequalities and inadequate attention to the determinants of health, such as water and sanitation, nutrition, stigma and discrimination, gender inequality, violence and education. Countries also face the challenges of realizing universal health coverage; prioritizing the poor and the vulnerable and leaving no one behind; mobilizing adequate and sustainable financing; ensuring allocative efficiency in their health expenditure, with a focus on the highest impact investments; adapting to a changing disease burden, population demographics and new health threats; ending the epidemics of AIDS, TB and malaria and combating other communicable diseases, including viral hepatitis; maintaining a skilled health workforce; building resilient health systems able to withstand conflict and natural disasters and respond to health emergencies; and creating and driving the multisectoral responses necessary to ensure health and well-being for all. In addition, while the expansion of the global health architecture over the last two decades has brought significant benefits, countries can face significant difficulties dealing with multiple international partners, each with its own mandate, priorities and operational approaches to financing, monitoring, reporting and engaging with national stakeholders. On the other hand, promising new opportunities for countries are emerging in the form of innovative health products and approaches and digital technologies that can transform the way health data are collected and used and contribute to more equitable, rights-based health services.

The agencies have a strong record of collaboration with each other and a wide range of development partners. However, countries seeking to tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities of the SDG era would benefit from more purposeful, systematic, transparent and accountable collaboration and harmonization among multilateral organizations. Stronger collaboration – in the way the agencies work with countries and with each other; in their programmatic, operational and financial policies and approaches, including on gender equality and human rights; in the delivery of global public goods;<sup>2</sup> and in how they measure progress – will move the agencies from complementarity to synergy and increase the efficiency and impact of their support to countries to achieve the health-related SDG targets.

<sup>2</sup> Global public goods may be defined as “goods that are non-excludable and non-rival in consumption and whose benefits are quasi-universal in terms of countries, people and generations”. See I. Kaul et al, 2003. Global public goods: International cooperation in the 21st century and Moon S. et al. Global public goods for health: Weaknesses and opportunities in the global health system. Health Economics, Policy and Law. Vol 12, Special Issue 2. April 2017, pp195-205. Examples of global public goods include global guidance, such as the operational framework on primary health care referred to in section 3, generating evidence on the impact of innovations and technologies, or market-shaping to increase the supply base of, or competition for health products.

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