



ROAD MAP FOR ACCESS TO MEDICINES, VACCINES AND OTHER HEALTH PRODUCTS

2019–2023

Comprehensive support for access to
medicines, vaccines and
other health products



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Introduction and rationale

Equitable access to health products is a global priority, and the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and affordability of health products of assured quality need to be addressed in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 3.8.¹ Every disease management strategy requires access to health products for prevention, diagnosis, treatment, palliative care and rehabilitation.

Access is a global concern, given the high prices of new pharmaceuticals and rapidly changing markets for health products that place increasing pressure on all health systems' ability to provide full and affordable access to quality health care. The high percentage of health spending on medicines (20–60% as demonstrated in a series of studies in selected low- and middle-income countries) impedes progress for the many countries that have committed to the attainment of universal health coverage (1). Furthermore, it is known that a large proportion of the population in low-income countries who spend for health do pay out-of-pocket for medicines. With the rise in noncommunicable diseases – many of which are chronic conditions that require long-term treatment – the financial burden on both governments and patients will become even greater.

Improving access to health products is a multidimensional challenge that requires comprehensive national policies and strategies. These should align public health needs with economic and social development objectives and promote

collaboration with other sectors, partners and stakeholders; they also need to be aligned with legal and regulatory frameworks and cover the entire product life cycle, from research and development to quality assurance, supply chain management and use.

Primary health care services rely on access to health products, including medicines, vaccines, medical devices, diagnostics, protective equipment and assistive devices. These products must be of assured safety, efficacy, performance and quality, as well as being appropriate, available and affordable. Ensuring that appropriate health products are available and affordable for primary care depends on policy decisions and processes related to the selection, pricing, procurement, supply chain management, maintenance (in the case of medical devices), prescribing and dispensing (in the case of medicines) and use of health products.

WHO's comprehensive health systems approach to increasing access to health products is guided by a series of Health Assembly and Regional Committee resolutions. These resolutions, nearly 100 in number (see Annex, Appendix 1) formed the basis for the previous report by the Director General on this topic (2). The present document responds to the Health Assembly's subsequent request for WHO to develop a road map describing its activities, actions and deliverables for improving access to medicines and vaccines, for the period 2019–2023.

¹ Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services, and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

General Programme of Work, 2019–2023

The Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 sets out three strategic priorities for ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages: achieving universal health coverage, addressing health emergencies and promoting healthier populations (3).

These strategic priorities are supported by three strategic shifts: stepping up leadership; driving public health impact in every country; and focusing global public goods on impact (see Fig. 1).

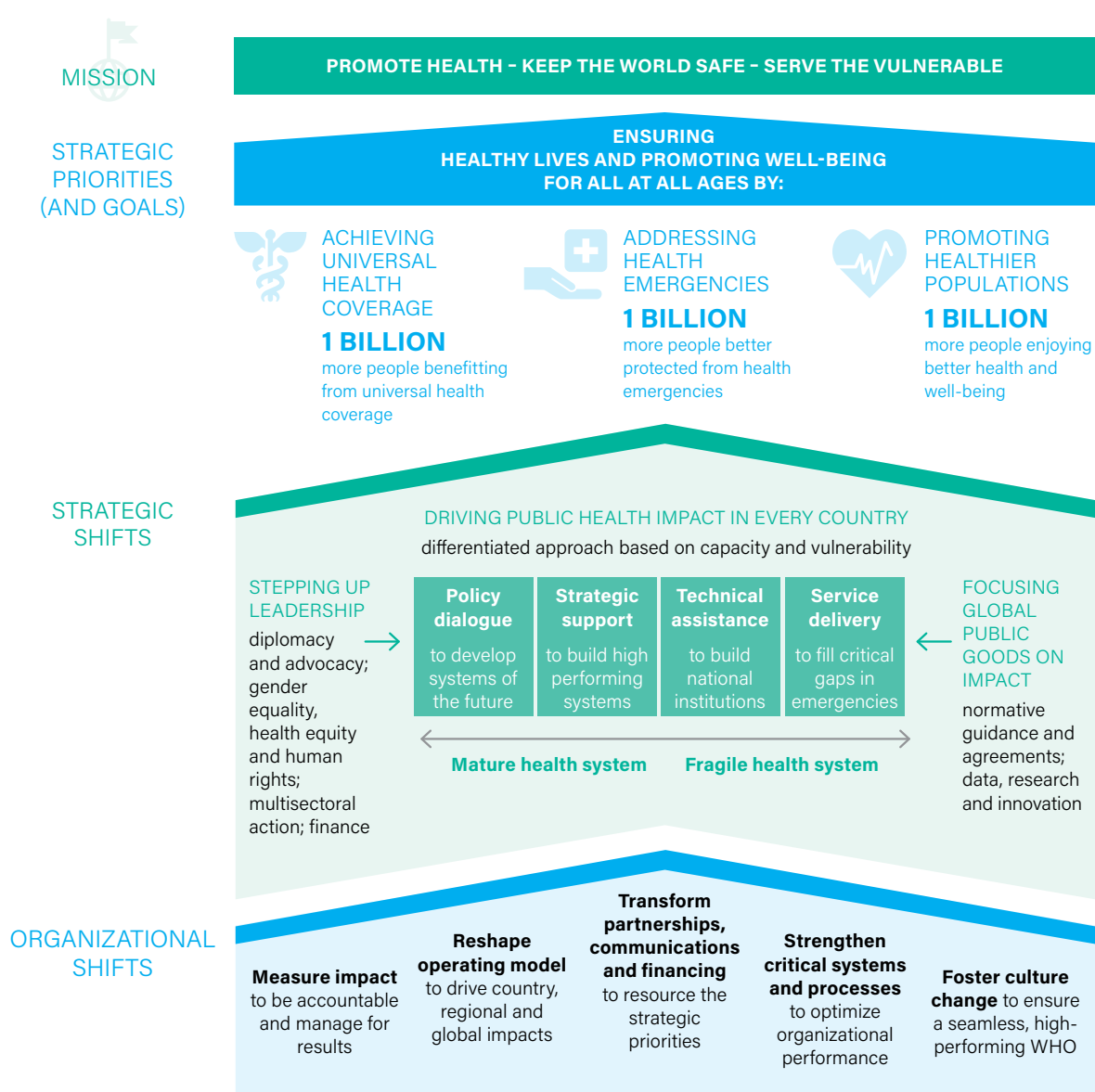


Fig. 1. Overview of WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023: strategic priorities and shifts*

*Reprinted from the World Health Organization Thirteenth General Programme of Work 2019–2023 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/324775/WHO-PRP-18.1-eng.pdf>)

The planning framework for the Thirteenth General Programme of Work provides a structure for identifying priorities at the country level and for the planning and budgeting of the work of WHO. It will ensure that the programme budget reflects the needs of the countries and that work at all three levels of the Organization is geared towards delivering country impact. This road map for access to medicines, vaccines and other health products, 2019–2023, aligns with the following outputs that have been identified within this framework:

- provision of authoritative guidance and standards on the quality, safety and efficacy of health products, including through prequalification services, essential medicines and diagnostics lists;

- access to essential medicines, vaccines, diagnostics and devices for primary health care improved;
- country and regional regulatory capacity strengthened and supply of quality-assured and safe health products improved;
- research and development agenda defined and research coordinated in line with public health priorities;
- countries enabled to address antimicrobial resistance through strengthened surveillance systems, laboratory capacity, infection prevention and control, awareness-raising and evidence-based policies and practices.

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