WHO report on health development goals

Geneva – WHO has launched its report *Health in 2015: from MDGs to SDGs*, which looks at results achieved since 2000 against the health millennium development goals (MDGs) and identifies priorities for the key areas outlined in the health-related sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the next 15 years.

Key ingredients for success in the past 15 years included a doubling in global funding for health, the creation of new funding mechanisms and partnerships, and the critical role of civil society in tackling diseases.

Universal health coverage is the linchpin underlying the new, inclusive focus in the new sustainable development agenda. A new focus will lie on preventing and treating non-communicable diseases. The report includes the latest data on health trends and explores how global health is linked to the other 16 SDGs and to emerging issues such as technological and environmental change.

Better health data systems will be crucial to measure and evaluate progress. The WHO *Global Reference List of 100 Core Health Indicators*, published in 2015, is a first step towards the Health Data Collaborative that WHO is working to establish with global partners in 2016.

► WHO News release, 8 December 2015.

*MMP signs licensing agreements*

Geneva – In December 2015 the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) signed a new licensing agreement with AbbVie to help ensure sustainability of long-term supply of lopinavir/ritonavir (LPV/r), the most widely used second-line HIV treatment in South Africa and across Africa. Generic manufacturers with stringent regulatory approval that obtain a licence from the MPP will be able to manufacture and sell generic versions of LPV/r, as well as combinations of ritonavir with other ARVs, throughout Africa. The agreement has been actively encouraged by the South African government. In December 2014 an agreement had been signed with AbbVie for paediatric formulations of LPV/r.

In January 2016 the MPP signed its first round of sub-licences for the hepatitis C medicine daclatasvir developed by Bristol-Myers Squibb, enabling the generic companies Cipla, Emcure, Hetero and Natco to produce and sell daclatasvir in 112 low- and middle-income countries. Under the licence, the generic manufacturers can develop fixed-dose combinations that offer the potential to treat all six major genotypes of the hepatitis C virus. MPP expects to grant further sub-licences soon.

► (1) MPP Announcement, 18 December 2015.

(2) MPP Announcement, 20 January 2016.
Call for applications for the 2017 WHO Model EML and EMLc
Geneva – WHO has called for applications seeking inclusion, changes to or removal of medicines on the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (EML) and Model List of Essential Medicines for Children (EMLc). The application period has been extended until 2 December 2016 to facilitate interaction between applicants and the EML Secretariat to ensure that applications adequately address the critical elements for selection: public health relevance, clinical efficacy and safety of the proposed medicine. The WHO Expert Committee on Selection and Use of Essential Medicines will meet in April 2017.

Impact factor of key medicines
A paper published in PLoS ONE proposes a model measuring the impact of key malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS medicines on global health in terms of averting loss of disability-adjusted lifeyears. The study suggests that key drugs for these three diseases are, together, ameliorating about 37% of the global burden of the three diseases. Artemether/ lumefantrine and artesunate/amodiaquine have the greatest impact globally across the three diseases, followed by lamivudine and four first-line tuberculosis drugs. Drug impacts vary widely across countries depending on disease patterns and access to medicines.

This index provides useful information for policy makers, pharmaceutical companies, countries, and other stakeholders working to increase access to essential medicines.

WHO to fast-track availability of Zika diagnostics
Geneva – The Department of Essential Medicines and Health Products has issued an expression of interest call to manufactures and product development partnerships who have developed in vitro diagnostic tests for Zika virus disease. Interested parties can submit their products to WHO for assessment through the Emergency Assessment and Listing (EUAL) procedure, designed during the Ebola outbreak. This procedure serves
to evaluate products during public health emergencies of international concern. In parallel WHO is working on establishing regulatory support to accelerate assessment and approval of future clinical trials for potential vaccines and treatments for Zika virus disease.


WHO In vitro diagnostics and laboratory technology. EUAL Procedure for Zika Virus Disease (IVDs) [web page].


Diseases

Top emerging pathogens
Geneva – A panel of scientists and public health experts convened by WHO have identified the top emerging pathogens likely to cause severe outbreaks in the near future, and for which few or no medical countermeasures exist. These include: Crimean Congo haemorrhagic fever, Ebola virus disease and Marburg, Lassa fever, MERS and SARS coronavirus diseases, Nipah and Rift Valley fever. These infections need urgent research and development (R&D) attention and other measures to increase preparedness. Three other diseases were designated as “serious”, requiring action as soon as possible, namely: chikungunya, severe fever with thrombocytopenia syndrome, and Zika.

HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, avian influenza, dengue and some other diseases with epidemic potential were not included in the list because major disease control and research networks and a pipeline for improved interventions are in place to combat these infections.

The list will be reviewed annually or when new diseases emerge.


Ebola: transmission chains stopped but new flare-ups likely
Geneva – WHO has declared the end of the most recent outbreak of Ebola virus disease in Liberia. While all known chains of transmission have been stopped in West Africa, the Organization warns that more flare-ups are expected and that strong surveillance and response systems will be critical in the months to come. A massive effort is under way to ensure robust prevention, surveillance and response capacity across the three hardest-hit countries – Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone – by the end of March.


Malaria: more countries moving towards elimination
Brussels – New estimates from WHO show a significant increase in the number of countries moving towards malaria elimination. According to the World Malaria Report 2015, an estimated 6.2 million deaths have been averted since 2000, and an estimated US$ 900 million in case management costs have been saved in Africa in that period. Insecticide-treated mosquito nets contributed the largest savings, followed by artemisinin-based combination therapies and indoor residual spraying. The use of rapid diagnostic tests has increased sharply and has enabled timely and appropriate treatment.

However, about 3.2 billion people – nearly half of the world’s population – remain at risk of malaria globally. Fifteen
countries, mainly in Africa, account for 80% of global malaria cases. New challenges have emerged, notably the increasing resistance of mosquitoes to insecticides and of *Plasmodium* parasites to medicines.

In May 2015, the World Health Assembly adopted the WHO “Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016-2030”, a new 15-year framework for malaria control in all endemic countries. Achieving its targets will require country leadership, sustained political commitment and a tripling of current annual funding to US$ 8.7 billion by 2030.

*WHO News release, 9 December 2015.*

**Rabies: new global framework launched**

*Geneva* – A new framework to eliminate human rabies has been launched by WHO, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Global Alliance for the Control of Rabies (GARC).

The framework calls for three key actions: making human vaccines and antibodies affordable, ensuring prompt treatment of people who get bitten, and mass dog vaccinations to tackle the disease at its source.

Tens of thousands of people, many of them children, die from rabies each year. About 80% of people exposed to rabies live in poor, rural areas of Africa and Asia.

*WHO News release, 10 December 2015.*

**Antibiotics**

**Industry declaration on combating antimicrobial resistance**

*Davos* – In a declaration signed at the 2016 annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, more than 80 international pharmaceutical, generics, diagnostics and biotechnology companies, as well as key industry bodies, have outlined their views on how industry and governments should work together to combat the threat of antimicrobial resistance. They called for more predictable and sustainable markets with incentives for research and development of antibiotics, and committed to action to help reduce the development of drug resistance, increase R&D investment meeting global public health needs, and improve equitable access to high quality antibiotics.

In her comments the WHO Director-General said that WHO and its Member States have called for the development of new antimicrobial medicines and affordable access to them in line with the global action plan on antimicrobial resistance, and that the Declaration affirms that the challenges of antimicrobial resistance can be addressed only through collaboration and global collective action.