

# WHO Framework for strengthening and scaling-up services for the management of invasive cervical cancer



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for strengthening and  
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management of invasive  
cervical cancer**

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# foreword

## **“Cervical cancer is an NCD we can overcome”**

That is World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus’s rallying call to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem. The burden of cervical cancer cannot be ignored. Each year more than half a million women are diagnosed and more than 310 000 women die. It is preventable or avoidable and disproportionately affects the most vulnerable women globally. Regrettably, the majority of affected women live in low- and middle-income countries, where they are not diagnosed early enough and lack access to life-saving treatment and care. Even in many high-income countries, highly available, effective and cost-effective cervical cancer interventions are under-utilized, and for the most socially and economically vulnerable populations, largely inaccessible. Overcoming cervical cancer is not only feasible, then, but equitable. As a global community, we have been entrusted with one of public health’s most ambitious, yet realistic, goals – to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem for the next generation and generations to come. This is achievable, and the resultant benefits for women, families, communities and economies are immense. To succeed, we must act now and must act jointly.

WHO is pleased to bring out the *WHO Framework for strengthening and scaling-up services for the management of invasive cervical cancer*. This Framework is vitally impelled by the WHA 2020 adoption of the Global Strategy to Accelerate the Elimination of Cervical Cancer as a Public Health Problem. The Elimination Strategy sets out a quantified goal – reaching an age-standardized incidence rate of less than 4 per 100 000 women. To achieve this goal everywhere within this century, implementation targets for 2030 that are linked to three pillars of action have been set: to vaccinate more than 90% of girls, to screen more than 70% of eligible women, and to ensure that 90% of women with cervical pre-cancer and invasive disease are able to access treatment and palliative care. We cannot realize accelerated reductions in cervical cancer cases and deaths without the coordinated attainment of all three targets.

Scaling-up capacity in the third pillar – to promote access to care for women diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer – is driven by striking disparities in survival from cervical cancer. Whereas 5-year overall survival in high-income countries is close to 80%, it is only about 20% or less in low-income countries. Attainment of the third target has the potential to save more than 300 000 women lives over the next decade and ensure that no woman with cervical cancer suffers without palliative care.

The Framework presented in this document provides the “how to” for governments seeking to scale-up capacity in cervical cancer management and reap the social and economic benefits of doing so. It provides an important perspective on how quality is an essential principle of cancer programmes. Regardless of the level of resources available to a country, each aspect of invasive cancer management – diagnosis, staging, treatment, palliative care and survivorship care – should be and can be delivered with the utmost attention to quality to increase the likelihood of improving and saving lives. It is not only unethical to ignore quality, it is also a waste of precious resources.

For decades, cervical cancer management has been ignored or deprioritized because of perceptions of high cost and implementation challenges. This is not accurate. Through strategic investments and by following the guidance provided in this technical document, governments can immediately improve access to high-quality cervical cancer management services, including palliative care.

We, at WHO, are ready to fully support governments get on the path to cervical cancer elimination and to save lives through an integrated approach. To succeed, we will need to have everyone involved – governments, private sector, professional societies, educational programmes, service providers, civil society, people of all ages and creed. The elimination of cervical cancer is a global ambition with a global benefit.

Let’s work together to beat the burden of noncommunicable disease, to vanquish cervical cancer and to improve the lives of women and families around the world today. We have no reason to wait.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B Mikkelsen', followed by a long horizontal line.

**DR BENTE MIKKELSEN**

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# acknowledgements

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