



SELECTION OF **ESSENTIAL** **MEDICINES** AT COUNTRY LEVEL

Using the WHO Model List
of Essential Medicines
to update a national
essential medicines list





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1. Introduction

Since 1977, WHO has been working with countries to design the package of essential medicines as an integral component of treatment within the continuum of care, developing and disseminating the Model List of Essential Medicines (Model List). WHO is committed to supporting Member States in sharing best practices in selecting essential medicines, and in developing processes for the selection of medicines for national essential medicines lists (national EMLs, or NEMs) consistent with the evidence-based methods used for updating the WHO Model List.

Achieving universal health coverage (UHC) requires access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines, vaccines and health products. The pillars of UHC are enshrined in the key leadership priorities for WHO, reaffirmed in the WHO 13th General Programme of Work 2019–2023 and captured in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (see Box 1). Equity in public health depends on access to essential, high-quality and affordable health-related technologies for all. However, ap-

proximately half the world's population lacks access to such essential health-related technologies, specifically essential medicines. Therefore, to achieve SDG target 3.8 of UHC for all by 2030, at least 1 billion more people will need to have access to essential health services in each five-year period between 2015 and 2030. Moving towards UHC requires that countries concentrate efforts on supporting a people-centred health system with primary care as its foundation, and essential medicines, community-based services, health promotion and disease prevention as key components. This document aims to support countries in developing their own NEMs and, through these lists and other medicine policy actions, to progress towards UHC and the goal of ensuring that all people and communities have access to highly effective medicines that are appropriate to their needs, affordable to individuals and health systems, and of assured quality.

The connection between the Model List and which medicines are available and affordable in countries might not be immedi-

BOX 1. WHO and affordable access to essential medicines: EMLs as an essential component of UHC

Sustainable Development Goal SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*

3.8 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.**

3.b Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, **provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines**, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all.

WHO 13th General Programme of Work (2019–2023):

The foundation of WHO's work is SDG 3... WHO is an organization focused principally on promoting health rather than merely fighting disease, and especially on improving health among vulnerable populations and reducing inequities. Leaving no-one behind, the Organization aims to give women and men, girls and boys, in all social groups, the opportunity to live not just long but also healthy lives. WHO will explore measuring this foundation of its work using healthy life expectancy, which could serve as one overarching measure aligned with SDG 3, complemented by the triple billion goal, which leads to three more specific priorities, each with overlapping one-billion people goals.

WHO commitment on universal health coverage is ambitious, with 1 billion more people benefiting from UHC. GPW 13 is based on the SDGs and is relevant to all countries – low-, middle- and high-income.

WHO's work on UHC will be fully aligned with SDG target 3.8, which focuses on achieving UHC, 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.

With a commitment to achieving SDG 3, WHO will “lead a transformative agenda that supports countries in reaching all health-related SDG targets”.

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