

WHO launches 5 year plan to improve quality of health products

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Current regulatory capacity and enforcement are insufficient in most developing countries



Despite global progress, serious problems with health product quality and safety persist, particularly in lower- and middle-income countries. These problems threaten the health of people every day and waste resources. Quality and safety of medicines, vaccines and other products are compromised when manufacturers, whether by accident or intent, produce substandard products, when the supply chain allows unsafe medical products through, and when systems (usually due to lack of resources) are too slow to respond to adverse events.

As a result, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has launched a five-year plan [Delivering Quality-assured Medical Products for All 2019–2023](#).

The plan outlines work and activities to reach four main objectives:

- Strengthen country and regional regulatory systems – improving the functioning of regulatory authorities but also speeding up product registration timelines so that patients can get the product sooner, and facilitating cross-border collaboration;
- Increase regulatory preparedness for public health emergencies – equipping regulators with the knowhow to deal with emergencies, including by fast-tracking product approval processes and improving crisis communication;
- Strengthen and expand WHO prequalification – WHO prequalification of priority health products has contributed to treating millions of people with quality, cost-effective HIV medicines, as well as to the vaccination of millions of children through Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. It is now expanding to include cancer medicines as the cancer burden grows in low- and middle-income countries;
- Increase the impact of WHO's Regulatory Support activities – by aligning work across all levels of the organization, with particular attention given to countries' needs.

While WHO has worked to improve the quality and safety of health products for many years, this is the first time it is aligning goals and activities with global partners (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNITAID, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB

and Malaria, GAVI and UNICEF) to ensure full coordination and work towards a common goal – to deliver a safe and quality-assured supply of medicines, vaccines, medical devices and other health products for all populations.