

Role of WHO in social health programmes

World Health Organization (WHO) is the United Nations' specialized agency for Health. It is an inter-governmental organization and works in collaboration with its member states usually through the Ministries of Health. The World Health Organization is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends.

India became a party to the WHO Constitution on 12 January 1948. The first session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia was held on 4-5 October 1948 in the office of the Indian Minister of Health. It was inaugurated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India and was addressed by the WHO Director-General, Dr Brock Chisholm. India is a Member State of the WHO South East Asia Region.

The core functions include the following:

- providing leadership on matters critical to health and engaging in partnerships where joint action is needed;
- shaping the research agenda and stimulating the generation, translation and dissemination of valuable knowledge;
- setting norms and standards and promoting and monitoring their implementation;
- articulating ethical and evidence-based policy options;
- providing technical support, catalysing change, and building sustainable institutional capacity; and
- monitoring the health situation and assessing health trends.

'The WHO India Country Cooperation Strategy 2019–2023: A Time of Transition' has been jointly developed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH&FW) of the Government of India (GoI) and the WHO Country Office for India. The Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS), provides a strategic roadmap for WHO to work with the GoI towards achieving its health sector goals, improving the health of its population and bringing in transformative changes in the health sector.

The India CCS is one of the first that fully aligns itself with the newly adopted WHO 13th General Programme of Work and its 'triple billion' targets, the Sustainable Development Goals and the WHO South-East Asia Region's eight Flagship Priorities. The CCS also captures the work of the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework for 2018–2022.

The CCS outlines how WHO can support the MoHFW and allied Ministries to drive impact at the country level. The CCS builds on other key strategic policy documents including India's National Health Policy 2017, the many pathbreaking initiatives India has introduced — from Ayushman Bharat to its National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme and promotion of digital health amongst others.

This CCS not only builds upon the work that WHO has been supporting out in the last several years, but also expands to address complex challenges—such as the prevention of NCDs, the control of

antimicrobial resistance (AMR), the reduction of air pollution, and the prevention and treatment of mental illnesses — WHO will further expand its collaboration with a broader set of government sectors and other stakeholders beyond health, under the overall guidance of the MoHFW, as well as continue to work collaboratively with other United Nations (UN) agencies and international partners.

WHO's technical support to the Government of India will fall under the following four strategic priorities to contribute India's health agenda:

The period of this CCS is expected to bring rapid and significant changes to India's health sector and to improve access to quality health care, especially to the vulnerable and underserved populations

Strategic Priority 1: Accelerate progress on UHC (universal health coverage)

1. Implementing Ayushman Bharat: Health and Wellness Centres and hospital insurance scheme
2. Monitoring and evaluation of health sector performance
3. Improving access to priority health services such as immunizations, maternal and child health, tuberculosis, hepatitis
4. Digital health ecosystem
5. Eliminating neglected tropical diseases and control of vaccine-preventable and vector-borne diseases

Strategic Priority 2: Promote health and wellness by addressing determinants of health

1. Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) action plan roll-out
2. Environmental health, including air pollution
3. Mental health promotion and suicide prevention
4. Nutrition and food safety
5. Road safety
6. Tobacco control
7. Integration of NCD and environmental risk factors in the digital health information platform

Strategic Priority 3: Better protect the population against health emergencies

1. Disease surveillance and outbreak detection and response, including International Health Regulation
2. Roll-out of integrated disease surveillance programme using the real-time integrated health information platform (IHIP)
3. Preparedness for, and response to all, emergencies
4. Containment of antimicrobial resistance

Strategic Priority 4: Enhance India's global leadership in health

1. Improving access to medical products of assured quality made in India
2. Development and information sharing of innovations in health practices and technologies including IHIP
3. Strengthening India's leadership in digital health