

WHO Strategic Priorities on Antimicrobial Resistance

Preserving antimicrobials
for today and tomorrow



Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) poses a significant global threat of far-reaching proportions. It is estimated that drug-resistant infections contribute to nearly 5 million deaths every year¹.

Unless we act now, common diseases will become untreatable and modern life-saving procedures riskier to perform.

The economic impact of uncontrolled antimicrobial resistance will result in a dramatic rise in health expenditures and damage to food systems and livelihoods, leading to increasing levels of poverty and inequality.

Although antimicrobial resistance is a natural phenomenon, the main drivers of both its development and spread are ‘man-made’. These drivers include misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in humans, animals and plants; limited availability of vaccines, diagnostics and appropriate treatment; lack of access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene; poor infection prevention and control; transmission of resistant pathogens through the food chain; and failing waste management systems.

Addressing the drivers and the impact of AMR presents significant challenges, for countries and the international community alike. It requires both **multisectoral coordination** and strong **sector-specific** responses. WHO leads the global human health sector response to AMR, working with countries as they prioritize, implement and evaluate their interventions. WHO also coordinates the multisectoral One Health response, through its hosting of the Tripartite Joint Secretariat on AMR, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other partners.

The response of WHO to AMR is based on four strategic priority areas that require urgent attention. Each is aligned with the Organization’s core mandate and functions and places

public health at its centre. The priority areas incorporate the essential components of the AMR response at global, regional and country levels while also generating the evidence base for coordinated actions.

This document highlights the key achievements and next steps of the WHO Antimicrobial Resistance Division at Headquarters, Geneva. AMR is a cross-cutting strategic issue with extensive work in other departments and divisions, and at regional and country level. The AMR Division coordinates the work across WHO Headquarters and between the three levels of the Organization.

Tackling AMR requires multisectoral coordination and sector-specific responses



Priority 1

Stepping up leadership for the AMR response

Rationale

A global comprehensive and coordinated AMR response is essential for optimal public health impact

Objective

To develop a common vision, alignment of purpose and shared accountability among stakeholders

Approach

By establishing and strengthening global structures for a multisectoral AMR response and ensuring global coordination mechanisms function effectively

Key achievements to date

- The **Tripartite (FAO/OIE/WHO) Joint Secretariat (TJS)** on AMR, hosted by WHO
- The **Global Leaders Group on AMR**, established in January 2021 and delivering impact internationally
- An agreed five-year (2022-2026) Tripartite Strategic Framework on AMR, in partnership with UNEP
- The **Multi-partner Trust Fund for AMR**, established in 2019 and dispersing funds for global and national activities
- The **United Nations General Assembly High-Level Dialogue 2021 “Call to Action”** signed by 113 Member States and supported by 35 non-state actors

Key WHO and Tripartite deliverables and next steps

- Convene an Independent Panel on Evidence for Action against AMR to support evidence-based actions across the One Health spectrum
- Establish a Multi-stakeholder Partnership Platform on AMR to develop and promote a shared global vision, narrative and targets among governments, civil society and the private sector
- Build a collaborative framework for key AMR stakeholders working across the One Health spectrum to enhance efficiency and effectiveness

Stakeholders need a common vision, alignment of purpose and shared accountability

Priority 2

Driving public health impact in every country to address AMR

Rationale

The public health imperative is to mitigate the impact of AMR on lives, livelihoods, and societies

Objective

To reduce mortality, morbidity and disability by preserving the effectiveness of antimicrobials, and ensuring access to patient-centred public health services

Approach

By supporting the multisectoral development, prioritization, costing, implementation, governance and monitoring of evidence-based AMR national action plans

Key achievements to date

- **National AMR Action Plans (NAP)** in 148 countries
- Practical guidance and tools to facilitate the implementation of NAPs for both leadership and technical levels
- Strengthened linkages with related health programmes
- The annual **World Antimicrobial Awareness Week** campaign

Key WHO deliverables and next steps

- Establish an AMR Technical Assistance Mechanism (AMR TEAM)
- Develop a patient-centred approach to evidence-based NAPs 2.0
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive “NAP implementation handbook”
- Facilitate access to early quality diagnosis for AMR through innovation, laboratory strengthening and links to primary and universal health care
- Develop a tool to review and assess NAP implementation

Effective antimicrobials and access to health services help to mitigate the impact of AMR on lives and livelihoods

Priority 3

Research and development for better access to quality AMR prevention and care

Rationale

Countries need equitable access to effective and affordable vaccines, diagnostics, digital tools and new antimicrobials

Objective

To promote scientific interest, research and investment into new tools and policy guidance relevant to the AMR response

Approach

By defining the priorities, setting the research agenda, and supporting the development of related policies and mechanisms for global procurement and equitable access

Key achievements to date

- **Priority bacterial and fungal pathogen lists**
- **Regular analyses** of the pre-clinical and clinical pipelines of antibiotics, antifungals and bacterial vaccines
- **Target product profiles** for new treatments for high-priority infections
- Updated list of the **Critically Important Antimicrobials for Human Medicine**

Key WHO deliverables and next steps

- Define and promote a global AMR research agenda in the human health sector and a One Health research agenda across the interface of animal health, human health, food systems and the environment
- Operationalize the **SECURE** initiative for access to quality antimicrobials
- Collaborate with partners to conduct an economic assessment of AMR interventions globally and in countries
- Develop guidance and tools with the Tripartite to contain AMR across all sectors, in line with Codex Alimentarius standards

National action plans must be patient-centred and evidence-based

Priority 4

Monitoring the AMR burden and global AMR response

Rationale

Quality data is essential to inform and evaluate the AMR response at local, national and global levels

Objective

To collect comprehensive country-specific and global data to monitor emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance, its drivers and the AMR response

Approach

By developing and strengthening surveillance systems and mechanisms for the collection, reporting, dissemination and use of quality AMR data

Key achievements to date

- The **Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System (GLASS)**, established and reporting annually
- The **Tripartite AMR Country Self-Assessment Survey (TrACCS)** conducted and reporting annually
- AMR indicators approved for the **Sustainable Development Goals** with more than 60 countries reporting to the **WHO Global Health Observatory**

Key WHO deliverables and next steps

- Establish a WHO AMR dashboard to monitor the global AMR response
- Develop, pilot and implement prospective national AMR surveys including reporting on SDG indicators
- Scale up the surveillance of antimicrobial consumption and use to inform antimicrobial stewardship policy at country level
- Establish the Tripartite Integrated Surveillance System on AMR (TISSA)
- Develop and introduce guidance for countries on the use of data for policy development and NAP monitoring and evaluation

Data is key to understand the AMR burden and evaluate the response

Looking forward

The WHO AMR strategic priorities are enabling the Organization to define, advance, promote and monitor comprehensive policies and strategies to prevent, reduce, and mitigate drug-resistant infections. This will lead to tangible impact, globally and nationally, of the **Global Action Plan on antimicrobial resistance** and the 13th Global Programme of Work of WHO (GPW13) and contribute significantly towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Universal Health Coverage.

WHO recognizes that funding is inadequate to support countries in implementing sustainable national action plans on AMR and that robust estimates of the costs and benefits are lacking. WHO will work with key partners and stakeholders to make the investment case at global and national levels, defining the return for investment on antimicrobial resistance activities. At the same time, leveraging existing funding streams could lead to synergies and yield efficiencies. Progress at country level will also be contingent upon national engagement and prioritization, stronger systems and collaboration across sectors and with key partners and programmes.

Progress depends on commitment, collaboration and sustainable investment



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Antimicrobial Resistance Division
20 Avenue Appia
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

<https://www.who.int/health-topics/antimicrobial-resistance>

