

PRIORITY 3

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO MEDICINES

Save lives by increasing equitable, universal access to quality, affordable essential medicines and products

Rationale

Access to treatment and care is a prerequisite for the fundamental human right to achieve the highest possible standard of physical and mental health and well-being. Availability and access to essential lifesaving medicines and products for people living with NCDs is, unacceptably, still out of reach for millions of people around the world, particularly in low- and middle-income countries and for the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations. A particular issue is the insufficient access to controlled opioid analgesics for pain relief and palliative care.

Challenges of access relate to fragile and ill-equipped health systems in many LMICs, including the lack of adequate preparation and training of the health workforce, insufficient financial resources and rising prices, poor procurement policies and weak supply chains, inefficient information systems, and lack of patient education and low health literacy. Furthermore, too often people are shouldered with the cost of treatment for NCDs, with [over 60% of people living with NCDs having experienced catastrophic health expenditure](#)¹.



Illustrative Advocacy Asks

Implement policy measures and actions, such as those outlined by WHO, to increase access to affordable, safe, effective, and quality assured medicines, vaccines, and technologies.

Include essential NCD medicines and products in UHC benefit packages to reduce catastrophic financial expenditure, and include NCD essential medicines and products, including disease preventing vaccines, including HPV and hepatitis B vaccines, in national essential medicines drug lists and national drug procurement systems.

Commit to increase access to affordable, safe, effective, and quality medicines, diagnostics and health technologies, reaffirming that the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement), in line with the 2001 WTO Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health.

Strengthen supply chains and health systems to increase access to affordable, quality-assured essential medicines and health products.

¹ Jan S *et al*, Action to address the household economic burden of non-communicable diseases, *The Lancet* 391(10134). April 2018