Post-2015: The role of Global Health Research and Development (R&D) in the new development framework

Research and innovation are critical components to the right to health for all

While everybody recognises that health is an essential precondition for development, the research and innovation dimension of global health has too often been sidelined in the development discourse. However, without robust investments into new and improved, safe and effective, affordable and accessible health technologies including vaccines, diagnostics, and drugs for poverty-related and neglected diseases (PRNDs), we will not be able to achieve the right to health for all.

Support for new and improved health technologies is urgently needed

PRNDs affect more than one billion people, claim millions of lives every year and are primarily endemic in developing countries. Associated morbidity and negative socioeconomic consequences hinder the development and economic growth of those countries, and push affected populations further into poverty. Indeed, tools to prevent, diagnose and treat PRNDs are either often still lacking or unsuitable to the conditions of individuals and communities in developing countries, for instance due to the length of the treatment or the need for advanced technology to conserve a drug or provide an appropriate diagnosis. These diseases, primarily found in low- and middle-income countries, provide limited market incentives for the pharmaceutical industry to invest in research and innovation. When market forces alone do not lead to the development of new and improved health technologies for these diseases, public support, global solidarity, and partnerships are needed to invest into research and development in order to trigger innovation and reduce the burden of PRNDs.

Investments in Global Health R&D are cost-effective

Innovation in the domain of global health benefits equity within and among countries. It also contributes to strengthening health systems and to achieving universal health coverage thereby fostering development. Global Health R&D has also proven to be extremely cost-effective and a key driver for the creation of new jobs and consequent economic growth both in high- and low-income countries.

Post-2015: a unique opportunity to boost Global Health R&D

Recent global efforts to rally WHO member states around a legally binding Global Health R&D Convention with clear funding targets have been unsuccessful. The post-2015 framework therefore represents an opportunity to commit governments to address one of the most pressing global health challenges of our time. The European Union (EU) institutions, EU Member States and the United States as the top public funders of Global Health R&D, should show leadership in ensuring the inclusion of global health research and innovation into the post-2015 agenda.

For these reasons, we call on governments, civil society and other stakeholders involved in the development of the post-2015 framework to ensure that the health goal encompasses R&D-specific targets related to the development of new, safe, effective, affordable and accessible health technologies to fight PRNDs.


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