

A photograph showing a woman in traditional beaded attire receiving a vaccine from a healthcare worker. The woman is wearing a colorful beaded headband and multiple necklaces. The healthcare worker is wearing a red and blue striped shirt and is administering a vaccine into the woman's arm. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in similar attire.

WHO Foundation Strategy 2023–2025  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



Image credit: WHO. Cover image credit: WHO

## Health: Important but Unequal

Health has been proven repeatedly to be an essential ingredient in education, economic empowerment, and geopolitical stability. As such, programs to improve health outcomes have a uniquely high return on investment: the costs to promote and protect health are repaid many times over by what health delivers in human potential.

Nonetheless, access to health services – to life itself – is deeply inequitable. The greater disease burden among the poorest populations globally is documented, with the largest disparities in communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases.<sup>1</sup> The differences in life expectancy globally are stark, representing 65.1 years in lower-income countries (LICs) compared with 80.9 years in higher-income countries (HICs) in 2019. Furthermore children are particularly vulnerable with five million children dying each year of health conditions that are preventable and treatable. Under-5 mortality is fourteen times higher in Africa than in Europe, and LICs account for 94% of the world's maternal deaths<sup>2,3</sup>

1 Coates, MM, Ezzati, M, Aguilar, GR et al. (2021) 'Burden of disease among the world's poorest billion people: An expert-informed secondary analysis of Global Burden of Disease estimates' in PLoS One 16(8). Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8366975>

2 World Health Organization (2022) World health statistics 2022: monitoring health for the SDGs, sustainable development goals. Available at: [https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/gho-documents/world-health-statistic-reports/worldhealthstatistics\\_2022.pdf](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/gho-documents/world-health-statistic-reports/worldhealthstatistics_2022.pdf)

3 Boniol, M, Kunjumen, T, Nair, TS et al. (2022) 'The global health workforce stock and distribution in 2020 and 2030: a threat to equity and 'universal' health coverage?' in BMJ Global Health, vol 7, issue 3. Available at: <https://gh.bmj.com/content/7/3/e009316>



Image credit: WHO

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare global health inequity. After two years of vaccine availability, three quarters of people in low-income countries had not received a single dose.<sup>4</sup> More than a million lives might have been saved if COVID-19 vaccines were shared more equitably with lower-income countries in 2021.<sup>5</sup> The pandemic also illustrates the compounding effects of generations of inequity: racialized populations who have historically experienced discrimination were more likely to experience severe morbidity and mortality due to COVID-19 infection.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the pandemic interrupted health services in most countries, preventing care reaching those in need.

Solutions exist to deliver equitable health products and services, but they lack adequate support. For example, the international partnership to deliver vaccines, medicines, and tests for COVID-19 (ACT-A) received only half of its required funding in 2020–2022, despite credible assertions that falling short would cost trillions (US\$) of economic damage. This was compounded by the delay in making funding available to the ACT-A partners.

4 UN (2022) The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022. Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/>

5 Leadford, H (2022) 'COVID vaccine hoarding might have cost more than a million lives' Nature online article, 2 November 2022. Available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-03529-3>

6 Mude, W, Oguoma, VM, Nyanhanda, T et al. (2021) 'Racial disparities in COVID-19 pandemic cases, hospitalisations, and deaths: A systematic review and meta-analysis' in Journal of Global Health 11: 05015, Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8248751/>



## The Role of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the WHO Foundation

The World Health Organization (WHO) is at the center of global health. Its vision is a world in which all people attain the highest possible level of health, and its mission is to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable.

WHO seeks to achieve its vision and mission by:

- Guiding medical research and health policy
- Driving the adoption of scientific guidelines to prevent and treat disease
- Certifying the safety and efficacy of associated technologies
- Serving as a first responder to health outbreaks and crises
- Influencing the health departments of 194 national governments.

Image credit: WHO



Image credit: WHO

Despite WHO's singular role and unparalleled impact – including eradicating smallpox, the adoption of a global convention on tobacco control, and almost eliminating polio – it lacks sufficient resources to fulfill its mandate. It estimates a greater than 30-fold return on its costs (US\$3 billion annually from 2022-2031, including more than 8 000 professionals in 150 locations).<sup>7</sup> Beyond funding, WHO cannot achieve its mission through the public sector alone; this requires strong collaboration with the private sector.

The WHO Foundation is an independent Swiss foundation affiliated with, and independent of, WHO but it shares WHO's vision. The Foundation was conceptualized before the COVID-19 pandemic, to support WHO's transformation agenda and to diversify its resource mobilization. Created without an endowment, the Foundation became operational in 2021 with a US\$1 million pledge. By 2023 it had raised approximately US\$70 million.

The Foundation aims to add funding, capacity and focus to support WHO and the global health ecosystem, by being agile, flexible and focused. It exists to marshal new resources from, and build new partnerships between, philanthropists, foundations, businesses, and individuals. It has ambitions to drive innovation, impact, and achieve a greater return on investment for partners who are committed to health equity.

7 WHO (2022) A healthy return: Investment case for a sustainably financed WHO. Available at: [https://www.who.int/about/funding/invest-in-who/investment-case-2.0#:~:text=The%20cost%20of%20WHO%20in,trillion%20and%20US\\$24%201.46%20trillion](https://www.who.int/about/funding/invest-in-who/investment-case-2.0#:~:text=The%20cost%20of%20WHO%20in,trillion%20and%20US$24%201.46%20trillion)



Image credit: Getty Images

## The WHO Foundation Strategy 2023–2025

This inaugural WHO Foundation Strategy for 2023–2025 outlines how the Foundation will support WHO's General Programme of Work in critical areas that are ripe for innovation and are potential positive catalysts for global health.

By marshaling new resources from philanthropists, businesses, and individuals, and working synergistically with WHO, the Foundation is committed to:

- Facilitating connection between its key stakeholders and the high-impact, lifesaving programs of WHO and its partners
- Acting as a catalyst – enabling philanthropists, businesses, and the general public to have an impact on communities through WHO's global public platform
- Leveraging WHO's brand and platform, translating technical language and outputs into human stories, engaging meaningfully with the private sector, and promoting opportunities to benefit communities in need.



Image credit: WHO

This strategy is the result of a strategic diagnostic exercise undertaken with WHO staff at headquarters, regional, and country levels. The process benefited from consultations with civil society, and with a Strategic Advisory Group including leaders in global health and philanthropy. Guided by the principles of: health equity, inclusiveness and local relevance; evidence and impact orientation; and innovation and leverage, it consciously builds on lessons from other organizations working in global health.

To help WHO and global health actors achieve the ambitious goals of promoting health, keeping the world safe, and serving the vulnerable in 2023–2025, the WHO Foundation will focus on three Strategic Objectives:

1. Identify and incubate select high-impact opportunities in global health across key thematic areas: Health emergencies; Digital health; Mental health; Primary healthcare; Climate and health; and Health equity
2. Mobilize and steward resources from philanthropic foundations and individuals, businesses, and the general public, including grants, in-kind contributions, value-based partnerships, and return-seeking capital through impact investment in support of WHO's mission
3. Advocate for WHO, and broker connections and relationships to support WHO and the global health ecosystem.

# The WHO Foundation Strategic Framework 2023–2025

<b>Vision</b>	The Foundation shares the same vision as WHO: A world in which all people attain the highest possible level of health.			
<b>Mission</b>	To mobilize greater private capital and partnership to advance WHO's mission, catalyzing a positive impact on the people whose lives rely on WHO's work, and facilitating innovation to maximize the impact of the resources the Foundation invests.			
<b>Guiding Principles</b>	<b>Health Equity</b> The Foundation aims to address unfair, avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically, or by other dimensions of inequality.	<b>Inclusivity and Local Relevance</b> The Foundation aims to ensure local relevance and inclusivity in its investments, partnerships, and approaches.	<b>Evidence-Based and Impact-Oriented</b> The Foundation aims to systematically use best evidence and modeling to demonstrate social returns and the value of investments, by undertaking effective assessment. This will include measuring outcomes, equity, and the impact of its operations on the environment.	<b>Innovation and Leverage</b> The Foundation aims to leverage new, enhanced or improved policies, practices, products, and delivery methods to more efficiently support its mission and the global health ecosystem.
<b>Value Proposition</b>	The Foundation's key stakeholders are philanthropists, businesses and the general public. It will create value for these stakeholders by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Facilitating connection</b> between key stakeholders and the high-impact, lifesaving programs of WHO and its partners</li> <li><b>2. Acting as a catalyst</b>, enabling philanthropists, businesses, and the general public to have a positive impact on communities through WHO's global public platform</li> <li><b>3. Leveraging WHO's brand and platform</b>, engaging meaningfully with the private sector, translating technical outputs into human stories, and promoting opportunities to benefit communities in need</li> </ol>			
<b>2023–2025 Strategic Objectives (SOs)</b>	<b>SO1: Identify and incubate high-impact opportunities in global health across six thematic areas:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health emergencies</li> <li>2. Digital health</li> <li>3. Mental health</li> <li>4. Primary healthcare</li> <li>5. Climate and health</li> <li>6. Health equity.</li> </ol> Prioritize a limited number at a time (such as 3–5 per year).	<b>SO2: Mobilize and steward resources to power those opportunities</b> , from philanthropic foundations and individuals, businesses, and the general public, including grants, in-kind contributions, value-based partnerships and return-seeking capital through impact investment in support of WHO's mission.	<b>SO3: Advocate for WHO, and broker connections and relationships to support WHO and the wider global health ecosystem.</b>	
<b>Strategic Enablers</b>	Political and public support for WHO	Efficient and transparent collaboration between WHO and the Foundation	Effective and agile WHO Foundation	
<b>Impact</b>	The ultimate outcome the Foundation seeks to promote is more people benefiting from universal health coverage, protected from health emergencies and enjoying better health and well-being. An impact framework is under development, based on criteria aligned with the Foundation's Strategic Objectives. The impact framework will explore indicators such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. SO1: Investment quality:</b> Identified investment opportunities represent high-impact initiatives that contribute materially to WHO's mission and need for novel resource mobilization</li> <li><b>2. SO2: Funding:</b> Resources are mobilized to support WHO and its partners achieve catalytic, positive change in global health, through diverse funding streams and methods</li> <li><b>3. SO2: Partnerships:</b> Creative and new partnerships are incubated across the global health ecosystem.</li> <li><b>4. SO3: Brand equity:</b> Awareness, trust, and confidence in WHO's brand (and the Foundation's, as relevant) are increased.</li> </ol>			