

Global call to action for health innovation scale-up by the public sector



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This **Call to Action outlines “asks” to governments and ecosystem partners to establish a sustainable, locally-owned process for scaling health innovations.**



© WHO / Marta Soszynska
A cardiologist in one of the primary health
centre in Armenia.

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Advancing Public Sector Scale-Up of Health Innovation¹

This global Call to Action is intended to *inspire governments and their innovation ecosystem partners²* around the world to work together to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through health innovation.

Vision

To accelerate the achievement of Universal Health Coverage and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals, governments in all countries need to harness the power of innovation to build efficient, effective and resilient public health systems that leave no-one behind. The vision for scaling innovations in countries was summarized by WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus during the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly in May 2022, as “the Secretariat’s proposal for the next five years is to support the scaling of at least five innovations that reach at least five million people each” (1). Equity is also key: the best science and innovations are those that make the biggest difference to people who are the furthest behind.



- 1 Innovation is a new approach for a given context, responding to a public health need, with the ability to accelerate and sustain positive health impact.
- 2 Innovation ecosystem is a dynamic network of various stakeholders, including governments, civil society, private sector, universities, entrepreneurs, and others.

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Health worker at the Referral Hospital in
western Kenya.

Opportunity

WHO envisions a world where everyone can live healthy, productive lives, regardless of who they are or where they live (2). However, progress towards the health-related SDGs is lagging. The value chain from research and development to programme and policy development does not always translate into optimal outcomes, due to systemic and complex barriers to scale-up. Even if evidence-based, scalable health interventions exist to address public health priorities, some of the current strategies fail to achieve the level of scale-up needed for effective coverage. This gap can be effectively addressed by identifying systematic, innovative approaches to scaling up locally appropriate health interventions, simultaneously mitigating barriers that impede successful scale-up efforts. The public sector holds the principal responsibility for people's health and can take a more proactive role in leading the scale-up and sustainability of innovative approaches that can accelerate improved health outcomes.

Approach

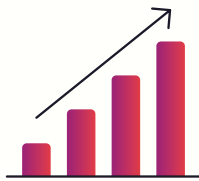
There are many frameworks that offer countries the opportunity to adopt a unified, multi-faceted and collaborative approach for engaging diverse sectors and stakeholders in harnessing innovation to transform their health outcomes.

The WHO/ExpandNet³ guides for designing and implementing innovations and the Mountain Model of the International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA) are among the many relevant, experience-informed innovation frameworks collaboratively developed by public health professionals and practitioners. Countries can utilize these frameworks to create systematic enablers for scaling health innovations and overcoming complex barriers to scale-up. The WHO/ExpandNet guides include 12 recommendations to design projects for future large-scale impact and a nine-step approach for strategic planning of scaling-up strategies (3). The IDIA's Mountain Model provides a six-stage pathway for guiding governments and ecosystem partners on how they can sequence their innovation scaling journeys for success – from identifying demand and priority needs, to sourcing and selecting appropriate innovations matching that demand, mobilizing the resources and partners and, finally, implementing the innovation at scale (4).

³ ExpandNet is a network of global health professionals who seek to advance the science and practice of scale up, in collaboration with WHO.

Each “ask” to governments and ecosystem partners in this Call to Action draws on the insights derived from these frameworks. These “asks” empower governments and ecosystem partners to collaboratively, systematically and sustainably scale up innovations to achieve greater health impact. This process is rooted in the core principle of equity to prioritize underserved, marginalized populations and reduce health disparities.

Governments



1. Demand-driven

Conduct inclusive, participatory and data-driven process of consultations across relevant government entities (national/regional), frontline workers, community members and other stakeholders to identify gaps, barriers to implementation and inefficiencies within the health system where innovation is needed. Initiate this need identification process on a small scale, gradually expanding it to ensure that it is effective and responsive to emerging demands.



2. Assessment

Agree on assessment criteria to identify appropriate innovation(s) that have the potential to address priority gaps/inefficiencies. Ensure the innovation is relevant and tailored to sociocultural and institutional settings. Set appropriate benchmarks and analyze progress against them.

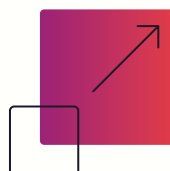


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Mother holding her
infant in Pakistan.



3. Pilot

Test the innovation under the routine operating conditions and existing resource constraints of the health system. Adaptively manage implementation and track critical learnings relevant to future scaling.



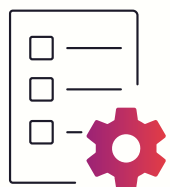
4. Scaling Pathway

Analyse factors such as cost, time, impact, and sustainability to agree on an appropriate pathway(s) for scale-up. Reach consensus on the scope of the scale-up and the government's role within it.



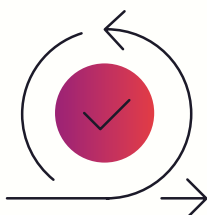
5. Resourcing

Secure high-level political commitment and resources from internal and/or external stakeholders to support scale-up of the chosen innovation(s), beyond the pilot stage.



6. Implementation Plans

Develop comprehensive innovation scale-up plans including delineation of the roles of various government entities and ecosystem partners. Consider using the WHO/ExpandNet guide "Nine steps for developing a scaling-up strategy" to strategically plan for expanding implementation and institutionalization of the intervention package (5).



7. Implement, Learn, Iterate

Design appropriate documentation processes for implementation, and monitor scaling progress so as to inform potential modifications in light of the changing system environment. Impact should be assessed using transparent, objective and evidence-based frameworks or methods.



8. Institutionalize

Prepare to change government budget, policies, laws/regulations, management information systems and other health system components to sustain the innovation at scale and systematize the adoption of innovation within the health system.

Ecosystem partners



1. Facilitate Consultations

Facilitate government consultations by tapping into partners' local knowledge and expertise, which can be helpful in eliciting the public sector demand for innovation. Demonstrate demand-supply gap to establish necessity for identification and scaling up of innovation.



2. Showcase Innovations

Curate and showcase diverse innovative solutions for consideration by public sector entities at different levels, in response to health system needs.



3. Assist Decision-Making

Provide assistance to governments by ensuring that relevant datasets are available to support precise decision-making and for optimization of scaling pathways.



4. Supply Resources

Supply a diverse array of technical, technological, financial, and non-financial support to governments during the initial phases of scaling, helping governments to progressively integrate and sustain these resources as the scaling process evolves.



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WHO staff during a visit to Suhrawardy
Hospital in Bangladesh.



5. Assess Implementation

Offer technical assistance to governments in co-designing, managing, and funding appropriate monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) techniques to assess implementation expansion and institutionalization while supporting innovators to be adaptive and flexible in the scale-up of their solutions.



6. Enable Sustainability

Support targeted capacity development aligned with government-defined priorities and consider longer-term public-private partnerships where relevant to outsource responsibilities more effectively. It is important to ensure that innovations continue to benefit communities, promoting self-reliance and long-term impact.

Approach to content development

The development of this "Call to Action" followed a comprehensive methodology. A two-pronged approach comprising of literature review and stakeholder consultations was adopted. The literature review ensured the Call to Action is based on a robust evidence base, aligned with existing innovation scaling guidance. The stakeholder consultations included leading innovation scale-up experts from the global, regional, and country levels. The WHO Regional Innovation Leads nominated government officials from their respective regions to participate in the ongoing consultations too. The consultations took place by teleconference monthly.

The authors and contributors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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