

Belt and Road Initiative:

An opportunity or threat to Universal Health Coverage (UHC)?

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“Belt and Road Initiative:
Opportunities and Challenges for Health”

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Overview

- What do we mean by Universal Health Coverage (UHC)?
- Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) cooperation measures that could advance UHC
- Opportunities and considerations



Sustainable development goals (SDGs): one health goal and 13 targets for health...



UNITED NATIONS
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
SUMMIT 2015
25-27 SEPTEMBER



- **Target 3.4:** By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from NCDs
- **Target 3.5:** Strengthen responses to reduce the harmful use of alcohol
- **Target 3.8:** Achieve universal health coverage
- **Target 3.a:** Strengthen the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
- **Target 3.b:** Support research and development of vaccines and medicines for NCDs that primarily affect developing countries
- **Target 3.b:** Provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines for NCDs



SDG Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all

Target 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage (UHC), including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

The goal of UHC is to ensure that all people obtain the health services they need without suffering financial hardship when paying for them.



Belt and Road Initiative: Where does health fit?

Implicit

- Trade, infrastructure, and commerce
- Good health drives strong economic development
- Collective action needed to address health problems
- BRI is a platform for collective action

Explicit

- Communique 2017: “health corridor” cooperation measures to advance health
- MOU with WHO for technical cooperation



MoU: Government of PRC with WHO for technical cooperation on BRI

- International Health Regulations (IHR)
- **Health systems and UHC**
- Prevention and control of infectious diseases
- Prevention and control of non-communicable diseases
- **Traditional medicines and WHO prequalification of Chinese medicines and vaccines**
- **Capacity building and training**
- **Local production of medicines**



Beijing Communique: Health Silk Road 2017: “cooperation measures” to advancing UHC

Trade

- *Belt and Road Health Industry Sustainable Development Alliance* to support health services trade
- Medical and health care tourism
- Human resources for health: exchange of experts, professional and technical training
- Dispatch of Chinese medical aid teams, short term clinics
- *Belt and Road Hospital Alliance* to advance clinical research



Beijing Communique: Health Silk Road 2017: “cooperation measures” to advancing UHC

Commerce

- Mutual recognition of drug and device standards
- Traditional medicine: policies, technology, R&D
- Medicines and device donations
- Health technology transfer

Infrastructure

- Maternal and child health, and reproductive health projects
- Appropriate technology in pediatrics, obstetric, and gynecology



Opportunities

- Long-term commitment
- Investments in health infrastructure, particularly in low density regions, can improve service availability.
- Important needs for strengthening human resources for health, and possibilities through mutually accepted professional training programs and exchanges, joint degrees
- China's focused MCH program has been very successful in reducing maternal mortality and increasing quality of obstetric care at all levels
- China's large domestic pharma, API, vaccine industry: possibility for greater access to quality-assured generic essential medicines and medical supplies



Challenges

- Health infrastructure: need to work with local health authorities to ensure appropriate staffing, medicines, and support systems.
- Deployment of medical teams has had mixed success.
- Success of China's MCH program went beyond projects: series of laws, regulations, and policies that promoted health of women and children; systematic retraining of midwives; promotion of family planning
- Strong regulation and quality controls for exported medicines and products, particularly for countries with weak medicines regulatory systems
- Donated medicines and medical equipment may be less likely to match local needs, and may be more difficult to maintain and use properly.



Broad challenges

- Direct to government development assistance outside of existing development coordination mechanisms
- No formal presence in countries to implement and coordinate
- Promotion of health as well as commercial objectives that may conflict
- Detailed information not widely available
- Based on 1964 principles of South-South cooperation including respect sovereignty and never attach conditions.



Thank you

