15 May 2019 - Today, WHO's new Science Division launched an online resource to guide the development of new health products for which there are limited markets or incentives for research and development. An essential tool for realizing universal health coverage, the Health Product Profile Directory aims to promote research and development for products to combat neglected diseases and threats to global health, including antimicrobial resistance and diseases with pandemic potential.

The Health Product Profile Directory is a free-to-use online resource created and developed by TDR, the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, on behalf of WHO as a global public good. It provides a searchable database of profiles for health products needed to tackle pressing health issues in global health including those prioritized by WHO. The summary of the published profiles outlines 8-10 key characteristics (such as target population, measures of efficacy and dosage) for the development of health products, including medicines, vaccines and diagnostics. Building in these characteristics at an early stage of the development process is essential to ensure that the final products will be accessible to the populations that need them.

The Ebola outbreak of 2014-15 and other recent pandemics have highlighted the urgent need for centralized information to guide and improve coordination of efforts to develop new health products for neglected diseases and populations. Until now, less than 10% of new products that have been submitted for regulatory review have referenced product profiles in the R&D process. This absence of a standard way to describe the health products that are priorities for global health has contributed to uncoordinated and ineffective research and development in these areas.

WHO Chief Scientist invites global health R&D community to contribute to the Directory

"As the first global public good launched by WHO's new Science Division, the Health Product Profile Directory exemplifies our effort to shape the global health research agenda to achieve health for all," said WHO Chief Scientist Dr Soumya Swaminathan. "While the Directory is launched with a focus on infectious diseases, we will update and grow the content, so I invite submissions of product profiles on other priority areas such as non-communicable diseases and antimicrobial resistance."

Currently, the Directory contains 196 product profiles developed by 24 agencies, of which 191 describe a product with an infectious disease as the target. The top four diseases with product profiles are tuberculosis, malaria, HIV and Chagas. The Directory contains only 5 product profiles for conditions other than infectious diseases (one vaccine for breast cancer and four contraception technologies).

"DNDi welcomes the release of this new resource that will help to better understand the priorities of the global health product R&D landscape," said Graeme Bilbe, Research & Development Director, Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi). "At DNDi, we recognize the importance of product profiles as an essential tool to guide our research strategy and

ensure that the products we develop are able to be used by the vulnerable populations we are developing them for. We are pleased to have contributed some of the product profiles used in this valuable new directory and we look forward to using it."

"In an R&D landscape which is increasingly complicated to navigate, Medicines for Malaria Venture welcomes this new Directory, which will help us ensure that new malaria products that are developed are able to be accessed and used by the populations that need them," said David Reddy, Chief Executive Officer of Medicines for Malaria Venture.

Links are provided to access full product profile documents that are publicly available.ÂÂ The Directory includes profiles developed by WHO and other agencies and can also be accessed through the WHO Global Observatory on health R&D, where other key resources to analyze R&D can be found.

Profiles for products prioritized for global action by WHO are clearly marked as authored by WHO.ÂÂ Other product profiles authored by Product Development Partnerships, commercial companies and other organizations that meet the inclusion criteria are also included. For non-WHO authored profiles, inclusion in the directory does not imply endorsement by WHO but may help inform research prioritization decisions. Organizations outside WHO stand to benefit from submitting profiles to the Directory by gaining an understanding of the landscape of related profiles and seeing where gaps lie.

Health Product Profiles are already making an impact

As an example of the impact product profiles can make, profiles published by WHO in response to the Ebola outbreak have been used by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and Innovation (CEPI) to inform its R&D funding strategy. This covers diseases identified by WHO as having the potential to cause global outbreaks. To date, CEPI has distributed more than $350 million to develop new vaccines to combat these diseases.

https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/15-05-2019-smarter-research-development-to-tackle-global-health-priorities

More information on how to submit a health product profile for inclusion in the Directory
https://www.who.int/tdr/diseases-topics/product-directory/en/