The WHO Transformation

2020 progress report

Overview
Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown why the world needs a strong WHO – one that is relevant in all countries, focuses on results, provides technical and normative leadership, and is “ahead of the curve”.

Science and disease patterns are continually evolving, and WHO must evolve with them – not only to remain relevant, but to bring the impact of our work to the people who need it most.

To do this, we must become an organization committed to continuous learning, continuous improvement and continuous accountability. We must be an organization that works together as One WHO, enabled to both respond to emergencies and sustain, and build, our core programmes.

This is the WHO we have been building over the past three-and-a-half years, through our Transformation Agenda – the most deep-rooted and far-reaching change process in WHO’s history.

This document provides a high-level summary of the WHO Transformation: 2020 progress report, and gives a brief overview of the incredible scope of work we have undertaken to implement the Transformation and the results it is producing.

“Our goal is clear – a modern WHO working seamlessly to make a measurable difference in people’s health at country level.”

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, Executive Board, January 2018

For more information visit: www.who.int/about/Transformation
The seven major areas of work in our Transformation Agenda reflect three strategic objectives. The first of these objectives aligns with the ambition reflected in GPW13 to focus WHO’s work on driving impact at country level and embed our mission and strategy in our day-to-day work and organizational culture. The second aims to establish a fit-for-purpose organization to deliver our mission and strategy, anchored in new ways of working that are enabled by “best-in-class” processes and operationalized through an aligned, 3-level operating model. The third seeks to leverage our partners and the global community to drive health outcomes and includes new partnership and resource mobilization initiatives. Underpinning all of these objectives is our work to ensure that we have a diverse, motivated and fit-for-purpose workforce.

Our Transformation reflects the ambitions, ideas and work of WHO staff. It is our staff who have constituted the 3-level working groups and Global Task Forces that shaped major initiatives, and our staff who made up the networks of Change Supporters who shaped our new ways of engaging, working and communicating, regularly providing feedback on areas for improvement.

**Member States** provided direction on our strategic priorities and goals (i.e. the Triple Billion), the strategic shifts to deliver those goals and the organizational shifts to enable GPW13 implementation. Our Governing Bodies continue to provide guidance on key initiatives, such as those relating to human resources, accountability functions and core business processes.

### About our Transformation

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Our Transformation has had four major phases. The timeline below highlights some major milestones we have achieved in each phase of this journey.

**Phase 1: Consultation & analysis**
- Jul '17: Working group on Initiatives for Change
- Feb '18: Transformation Plan & Architecture
- Jul '18: 3-level work groups & 13 processes
- Nov '18: Global values jam

**Phase 2: Design & planning**
- Mar '19: DG & RDE launch 3-level op. model & Transformation vision
- Jun '19: Launch of WHO Academy
- Nov '18: Global values jam

**Phase 3: Alignment & initiation**
- Mar '19: DG & RDE launch 3-level op. model & Transformation vision
- Jun '19: Launch of WHO Academy
- Dec '19: Aligned HQ & RO structures

**Phase 4: Implementation & continuous improvement**
- May '20: WHO Foundation established
- Jun '20: Global Career Pathways initiative
- Oct '20: 27 output delivery teams in place

**Timeline highlights**
- Jul '17: Staff Baseline Survey
- May '18: GPW13 approved at WHA71
- Sep '18: 1st ever WHO Investment Case
- Feb '19: 1st WHO-wide GPW13 Goals Week
- May '19: New WHO Values Charter
- Sep '19: Launch of Global Action Plan
- Jun '20: 1st round of global stocktaking held for Triple Billions
- Nov '20: Triple Billion Dashboard goes live

**Our Transformation**
Revolutionizing lifelong learning in health.
Executive Summary

Our Transformation is well under way.

As of end November 2020, 19 of our 40 major 3-level Transformation initiatives were either completed or fully implemented.

Our strategy is driving our day-to-day work, for example, GPW13’s outcomes and outputs are now fully embedded in our staff work plans. We have also finalized the measurement tools, metrics and mechanisms needed to keep us on track. The foundational architecture for an impact-focused WHO is in place.

More agile and collaborative ways of working are being operationalized, with support through new cultural norms, initiatives and engagement platforms that enable a more seamless “One WHO”.

13 new and/or redesigned processes are enabling and accelerating GPW13’s strategic shifts.

The role of each of WHO’s three levels has been sharpened and our major office structures aligned to more effectively deliver GPW13 and implement the new processes.

New entities under our Chief Scientist, in the new WHO Emergency Preparedness and data divisions and in our business, partnership and external relations and communications functions, were immediately tasked to operate at scale in 2020 as part of the COVID-19 response, validating the importance and rapidly growing capabilities of these new functions and capacities.

Initiatives focused on transforming our approach to partnerships and financing are having early and important impact. This is particularly evident in the COVID-19 response, where for example our resource mobilization efforts have been the most successful in WHO’s history.

For more details, see the WHO Transformation: 2020 progress report available at www.who.int/publications/i/item/the-who-transformation
Executive Summary

COVID-19 has reinforced and accelerated important aspects of our Transformation.

Several of our early Transformation initiatives—such as those related to our digital transformation—were critical to WHO’s business continuity during the worldwide shift to remote working.

Many existing platforms and initiatives needed to be massively scaled up as part of the COVID-19 response, which in many cases helped reinforce and accelerate critical change initiatives. For example, as traditional learning models came to a virtual standstill, WHO rapidly increased the number of online courses available through its pre-existing OpenWHO knowledge and training platform. This platform, which now has training on 17 different topics in 41 languages with more than 4.5 million users globally, has provided an important foundational base for the new WHO Academy.

WHO staff rapidly adopted innovative approaches to ensure continuity of support to countries despite significant logistical and operational constraints. These “agility” experiences have highlighted the importance and feasibility of making WHO more responsive and more connected across its three levels and are now informing the future of how we work within WHO and with our Member States and partners.

Expectations of our Member States, partners, and the general public have increased dramatically as a result of the pandemic, all as WHO moves into a more challenging global political, economic, and operating environment. Reinforcing WHO’s readiness and capacities to lead and partner effectively in this changing operating reality is more vital than ever.

Priorities for 2021 & beyond.

Our Transformation Agenda is more relevant than ever and, as evidenced in this report, well under way. While our new strategy, processes, structures, and cultural norms are largely in place, we must now unlock the underlying mindsets, behaviours, and practices needed to fully implement our new ways of working and deliver the full impact of a Transformed WHO.

As Transformation implementation continues, and as we transition towards monitoring, learning, and continuous improvement, priority will be given to:

1. institutionalizing our new, agile, and fully accountable ways of working;
2. fully implementing our new “best-in-class” processes to enable, support, and reinforce the new ways of working;
3. accelerating our extensive programme of work to build a motivated and fit-for-purpose workforce;
4. rolling out our new measurement tools and mechanisms (e.g. stocktakes, the new Triple Billion dashboard, GPW13 Output Scorecard) and fully mainstreaming their use to help us measure and optimize progress in delivering impact and the Transformation itself; and
5. scaling up our efforts to transform WHO’s financing.

Going forward, it will be important to take into account recommendations and insights from relevant ongoing external evaluations, in particular the external Evaluation of the Transformation Agenda and the Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPPR), as these have the potential to provide invaluable insights for optimizing our Transformation and its impact on the health of people everywhere.