The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has catalysed, reconceptualized and rebuilt the global response to noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions. Governments need to learn from this crisis and use it to reboot and reorient the global commitments to noncommunicable diseases and mental health. This will be essential to respond to the pandemic and to strengthen access and quality of care for these conditions. Without increased attention to these priority areas, integrating interventions in these areas into the full continuum of care, noncommunicable diseases and mental health. All these efforts will be needed post COVID-19, to reboot and rebuild efforts around partnerships. We suggest that these efforts would be further amplified through advances in feasibility of a global drug facility for essential noncommunicable disease medicines, which will increase choice, reduce prices and expand access to diabetes treatment in low- and middle-income countries and can be replicated for other conditions.

In 2019, heads of state pledged to strengthen efforts to address noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions, as well as quality, safe, effective and affordable essential medicines and health technologies. The UN General Assembly’s (UNGA) 2019 Political Declaration on noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions referred to mental and substance use disorders, and several countries have since included these conditions in their national health policies. WHO is working on implementing the WHO Model list of essential medicines (2020) and horizon scanning for new essential medicines (2021). The WHO Model list of essential medicines catalogue medicines that are cost-effective, safe and high-quality and is used by governments to purchase medicines. The third is our work on affordability and fair pricing, which has involved increasing transparency of pricing approaches and strengthening price negotiation capacities at WHO and more generally at the country level. The fourth is our work on global drug development, which will increase choice, reduce prices and expand access to diabetes treatment in low- and middle-income countries and can be replicated for other conditions. The fifth area is a greater push for pooled procurement, which could include a global pool of essential noncommunicable disease medicines, shaping manufacturing trends, and could bring similar benefits for the impact on availability and affordability.

We support that these efforts result in further amplified through interventions that will aim to progressively cover 1 billion additional people within four years with essential health services, as well as quality, safe, effective and affordable essential medicines and health technologies. Once the COVID-19 emergency is over, governments will need to take a critical look at how post-COVID policies address noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions. Governments need to learn from this crisis and use it to reboot and reorient the global commitments to noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions.

References