

Input to the Swedish strategy for sustainable global social development (2023-27)

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a renewed awareness and understanding of the importance of investing in global health and building resilient systems. The COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed systemic and deeply unacceptable global health inequalities. The world now has an unprecedented opportunity to address the need for resilient health systems that are highly dependent on sustainable and equitable access to effective antibiotics.ⁱ **Antibiotic resistance (ABR)** has been recognized as one of the greatest and most urgent cross-border public health threats. According to [data published in the Lancet in 2022](#), an estimated 1.27 million deaths were a direct result of antibiotic resistant bacterial infections in 2019. Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) carry a disproportionately high toll of the negative impact of antibiotic resistance, including severe economic consequences and the direct threat that it poses to the lives of both humans and food animals as well as the achievement of a number of sustainable development goals particularly on poverty reduction, economic growth, health, equality, food and environment.^{ii,iii} This points to the fact that all governments must urgently speed up actions on multiple levels to mitigate antibiotic resistance.

2. ABR is a cross-cutting systems issue and a development challenge that should be reframed from a purely medical challenge to an important systems issue of global sustainable development, global inequality and planetary health. Securing access to effective antibiotics as a global resource requires a rapidly elevated political responsibility and engagement from society. A systems view is also needed in the animal and environmental sectors with synergies sought across sectors in a One Health perspective.

3. Sweden has a critical role to play in addressing the global challenge of ABR, just as the current priorities given to health, SRHR, WASH and environment which are closely linked to the management of ABR. Through its new global strategy, Sweden should take the lead in working with LMICs to **build capacity and strengthen health systems** to ensure sustainable access of antibiotics i.e. access without excess. Additionally, significant improvements on infection prevention, including WASH, are necessary at all levels to decrease the need for antibiotics in the first place. This is a realistic and appropriate ambition, given Sweden's own technical capacity rooted in decades of domestic experience in managing antibiotic use in humans and animals responsibly. There is an urgent need to apply such practical experience and support the effective implementation of national action plans on AMR worldwide, and showing the way in LMICs is a crucial part of this.

ReAct therefore proposes that Sweden should **make ABR a priority issue** that cuts across its existing priority areas (education, health, SRHR, WASH and environment). Sweden should position itself as a champion in **advocating for ABR to be included into resilience building and pandemic preparedness** which would not only bring political momentum and mobilize resources to address the important systems issue, but also benefit multiple sustainable development goals. Interventions should be seen as levers for the overall systems strengthening, by focusing on following components:

- **Governance:** actively engage and support effective and sustainable global governance for systemwide response to ABR.
- **Resource mobilization for national actions:** sustainable and tangible funding for capacity building and system strengthening to manage ABR at national level.
- **Innovation in antibiotic research and development (R&D):** Covid-19 has shed light on the need to rebuild the whole R&D ecosystem to make it more need-driven and the responsibility of the public sector to take leadership in doing so. Ensuring sustainable access for antibiotics calls for a new paradigm in this field – an end-to-end approach that addresses the entire lifecycle of a drug, from solving the scientific challenges to ensuring equitable and sustainable access.^{iv}

Reference

ⁱ Cars O, Chandy SJ, Mpundu M, Peralta AQ, Zorzet A, So AD. Resetting the agenda for antibiotic resistance through a health systems perspective. Lancet Glob Health. 2021 Jul;9(7):e1022-e1027.

[https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/langlo/PIIS2214-109X\(21\)00163-7.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/langlo/PIIS2214-109X(21)00163-7.pdf)

ⁱⁱ ReAct (2019) When the Drugs Don't Work: Antibiotic Resistance as a Global Development Problem.

<https://www.reactgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/When-the-Drugs-Don't-Work-Antibiotic-Resistance-as-a-Global-Development-Problem-Feb-2019.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ ReAct (2020) Scoping the Significance of Gender for Antibiotic Resistance

<https://www.reactgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Scoping-the-Significance-of-Gender-for-Antibiotic-Resistance-IDS-ReAct-Report-October-2020.pdf>

^{iv} ReAct (2021) Ensuring sustainable access to effective antibiotics for everyone, everywhere – How to address the global crisis in antibiotic Research and Development.

<https://www.reactgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ReAct-Report-Ensuring-sustainable-access-to-effective-antibiotics-for-everyone-everywhere-How-to-address-the-global-crisis-in-antibiotic-Research-and-Development-March-2021.pdf>