

Hot issue

Health cooperation is a key part of policy communication and people-to-people connectivity between countries.

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By Li Min/ China Daily

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A team of Chinese doctors impressed staff in the Maldives with their accomplished medical skills.

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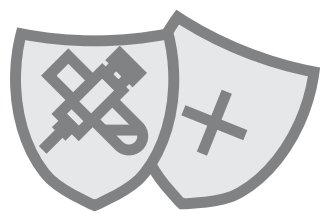
Health cooperation under Belt and Road Initiative plays a vital role

Health cooperation aims at improving people's health and well-being. It is a key part of policy communication and people-to-people connectivity between countries.

According to an MOU signed this January, China and the World Health Organization (WHO) will strengthen health cooperation to improve people's health in China and in countries taking part in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Multi-lateral and bilateral cooperation mechanisms and innovative modes will be adopted to encourage pragmatic collaboration between those countries at a national, regional and global level.

The cooperation includes five parts.



First, China and WHO will enhance health security prevention and control.

As globalization deepens, the risk of transnational transmission of diseases substantially increases. Not a single country can avoid epidemic and contagious diseases so it is important to work together to confront various threats to public health security.

Upgraded health cooperation under the initiative will also reduce threats to national safety posed by cross-border contagious diseases and public health emergencies and protect the people from preventable contagions.



Second, they will promote global health governance.

China will participate more proactively in regional and global health governance to advance related reforms.

It will also contribute to the setting of global health agendas and international rules conducive to the common interests of developing countries and share its experience of health reform and development.



Third, they will expand the medicine trading market.

Cooperation on health products and services with countries involved in the "Belt and Road" will be enhanced to promote people-to-people connectivity and smooth trade relations.

This will, on the one hand, create a healthy investment environment for China's infrastructure construction and economic and trade cooperation in those countries. On the other hand, market needs for health products and services will be explored, not only to push forward trade, but to optimize their quality and quantity.



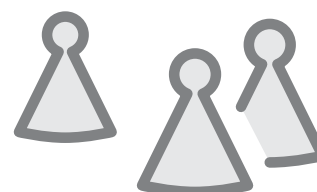
Fourth, health promotion will be integrated into policy in other sectors for a "health Silk Road".

Departments of foreign affairs, trade, science and technology, education and culture should share the responsibility of conserving health. Cross-department cooperation and consultation mechanisms will be set up to promote the integration and complementation of health with other fields.



Fifth, they will increase collaboration and exchanges with countries within the initiative on traditional Chinese medicines.

Trade and services of TCMs will be promoted together with Chinese culture so that China's advantages in TCMs resources, culture and academic study can be translated into scientific and technological and economic benefits and will take a leading role in setting regional and global standards and rules of traditional medicines.



China has launched related projects.

China will improve cooperation and exchanges with central and eastern European countries on prevention and control of infectious and chronic diseases, inter-sector collaboration and innovative approaches, and vaccination.

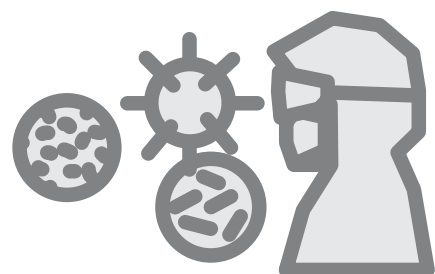
China's Yunnan province, and countries such as Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand will study resistance to anti-malarial drugs (artemisinin) in the Mekong River watershed.

China also has a cooperation project with Laos, Cambodia and Thailand on control and elimination of schistosomiasis in the Mekong River watershed.

It will also work with central-Asian countries, including Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, to control tuberculosis in the region.

Finally, a regional information communication platform of chronic disease prevention and control will be established in the Asia-Pacific region.

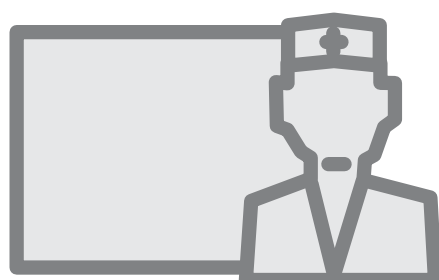
Achievements of health cooperation under Belt and Road Initiative



Prevention and control of infections

Since the three-year implementation plan for health cooperation (2015-2017) was initiated, more than 20 million yuan has been spent in strengthening China's cooperation with the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) countries on prevention and control of AIDS, malaria, dengue fever, plague, bird flu, influenza and tuberculosis.

20
million yuan



Capacity building and talent training

China has put 9 million yuan into training 2,000 public health management and disease prevention and control professionals, a joint effort with countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

9
million yuan

Training courses on public health senior administration (three sessions to date) and on field epidemiology for ASEAN specialists have been organized.

A training project on laboratory testing technologies for malaria and dengue fever for the GMS and border areas was put in place.

China has also provided short-to-medium-term medical and technical training for Laos.



Health emergencies and urgent medical aid

China has been promoting exchanges and cooperation with Belt and Road countries in response to health emergencies through joint health emergency drills.

It held a Sino-Russian medical cooperation project to cope with disasters and the fourth disaster-relief exercises during the ASEAN Regional Forum.

It also sent a medical rescue team to Nepal after the earthquake of April 2015.

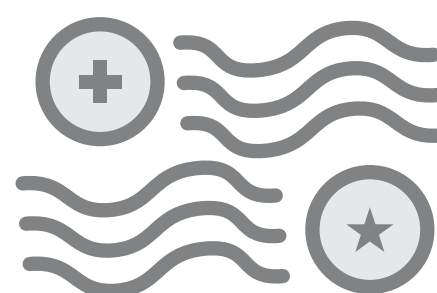
An urgent medical assistance center for marine perils was set up in

Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

China has also expanded its collaboration on traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) with the Belt and Road countries by building 10 overseas centers, including one in the Czech Republic.

With a total expenditure of about 80 million yuan, these centers have helped TCM go global.

China also held the China-ASEAN Traditional Medicine and Health Tourism International Forum (Bama Forum) in 2015 and the third China (Ningxia) Nationality Pharmaceutical Expo.



Health system and policy

China is exploring a long-term cooperation mechanism on health system and policy exchanges. It is to increase mutual understanding of one another's universal health coverage, medical system reform and health promotion.

Furthermore, China will display its health development philosophy and share its experience in policy-making and system reform via the mechanism.

By holding the 2015 Silk Road Economic Belt Strategy and Health Promotion Forum, China has actively participated in global public health affairs and shown its latest achievements and experience while seeking pragmatic cooperation.

At the Silk Road Health Forum, China established a cross-border medical teleconference network with Xinjiang's neighboring countries to share medical information and resources, a solid foundation for deeper cooperation.

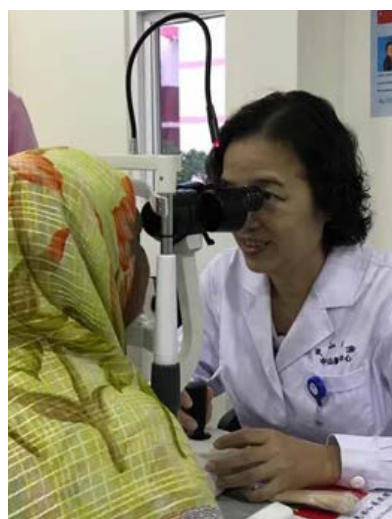


Health development assistance

China has offered underdeveloped countries and regions health development assistance in various forms. **5,200**
patients

In "Bright Journey" events, Chinese medical teams were sent to Myanmar, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives and have done free cataract operations for over 5,200 patients.

Guangdong has continued to send medical workers to provide free short-term treatment to the Pacific islands, including Fiji, Tonga, Federated States of Micronesia and Vanuatu.



Prof. Chen Weirong inspects a patient in the Hulhumale Hospital.

Photo/southcn.com

Chinese doctors create miracles in the Maldives

China's "Bright Journey" medical team to the Maldives completed 33 cataract surgeries on Sept 10 at the Maldives's Hulhumale Hospital, setting a record in the Maldives for such operations conducted in a single-day.

In the Maldives, the world-famous tourist resort Hulhumale is a reclaimed island bigger than the capital Male Island, and has a population of more than 50,000.

Many islanders suffer from cataracts due to the strong sunshine. But the location and low medical levels make it inconvenient to receive instant treatment as they have to travel a long way to the capital hospital on a boat or seaplane.

As China presses ahead with its Belt and Road Initiative, cooperation in all areas, including healthcare, has been strengthened in recent years. Last year, a medical team sent by Guangdong province's Health and Family Planning Commission performed 107 cataract surgeries on the island, bringing the patients the relief of better eyesight.

This year, a team led by Prof. Chen Weirong, head of Guangdong's Sun Yat-sen University Ophthalmic Center, once again impressed staff in the Hulhumale Hospital with her accomplished medical skills and charming personality.

The hospital's one and only ophthalmologist Dr. Waahid shared his feeling in a chat group with his colleagues.

"Prof. Chen Weirong from China is now operating on our patients. She has a very professional and experienced team but she is performing the surgeries herself. That shows her respect for our people and a strong sense of responsibility.

"I have watched my teacher in the medical school doing such surgeries. He is also a very good surgeon and it takes him more than 30 minutes to finish one operation. But Prof. Chen

is able to do almost five surgeries an hour, including disinfection and other pre-operative preparation, which means she finishes one operation in less than 10 minutes.

"It is unimaginable! In just over seven minutes, she finished an excellent surgery under the microscope. It is so amazing!"

Dr. Waahid also said, "I heard Prof. Chen performs more than 3,000 operations on average a year. With such experience, she is one of China's best experts. I cannot think of any another country that could send such an expert to our island. I am very grateful for the help and everything the Chinese government has offered to our hospital and people."

In fact, seven minutes are not such a surprising speed for the Guangdong team.

Chen Aihuan, head nurse of the university ophthalmic center, noted that this is much slower than in China and that the shortest one only lasted no more than four minutes.

In Hulhumale Hospital, the speed has been slowed down by restrictive conditions such as equipment and medical staff cooperation, language barriers with patients, and occasional power cuts.

The team has also amazed the local patients. They gave a thumbs-up to the Chinese doctors and expressed their heart-felt gratitude.

Sixty-six year old Abdulla Didi, who lost her sight five years ago, felt so happy as she could see things clearly only minutes after the operation. "I am very grateful to the Chinese doctors!"

Abdul Waahid Wahhab smiled all the way through the operation. "I heard the Chinese doctors are here so I came. I didn't feel a thing on the table. And now I can read and do everything! It's wonderful! Chinese doctors, very good!" he said.

A patient has just undergone a cataract surgery by Prof. Chen Weirong.

Photo/southcn.com

