

Global South Matters



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IN FOCUS

What does the Global South have to offer for global health and well-being?

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) commitment to “leaving no one behind”, can benefit from the potential of Indigenous knowledge (IK) and Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine systems (TCIM) for global health and well-being. Recent advances in technology, such as the emergence of systems biology, and developments in bioinformatics and artificial intelligence have helped scientists to understand ancient knowledge systems better. There is now a rising support for TCIM from global bodies, like the establishment of the Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM) in Jamnagar, India by the World Health Organisation (WHO). To support GCTM, India has committed US \$250 million. Government offices of 107 member countries of the World Health Organization will be based in the centre.

Recognizing the benefits of TCIM demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, the 76th World Health Assembly (WHA) resolved to develop a new WHO Global Strategy for Traditional Medicine 2025–2034, and passed a resolution mentioning the integration of TCIM in health systems as an obligation for member states to improve indigenous health. Such resolutions offer important directions for achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the SDGs. The benefits of such initiatives is explained in an article with the same title by Patwardhan, Chaturvedi, Chuthaputti, Cheng Soon, Abeygunawardana, and Sung Chol, in *The Lancet* ([https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lansea/article/PIIS2772-3682\(23\)00130-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lansea/article/PIIS2772-3682(23)00130-0/fulltext)).

By sharing best practices, TCIM integration with modern biomedicine can foster cross-cultural understanding and collaboration between stakeholders for a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach to global health and development. There is a growing realization that epistemology and context are important considerations in understanding and interpreting evidence. This has begun

allowing newer insights and experiences to inform decisions, especially in culturally complex societies that often have a stronghold of TCIM.

Complementing current health system with TCIM's holistic approach offers opportunities to address emerging health challenges such as antimicrobial resistance, irrational drug use, emerging infectious diseases, rising burdens of non-communicable diseases, and mental ill health. It is hoped that the WHO will create a favourable environment for TCIM integration leading to conducive policies, increased investment, transdisciplinary research, and person-centred clinical practice. This brings the historical opportunity to dissolve disciplinary silos and think beyond geographical boundaries to envision the evidence-based integration of TCIM with conventional medicine as the holistic modern medicine of the future. The Global South stands to benefit the most from these inter-disciplinary initiatives as traditional medicine is not only practiced but widely accepted in developing countries.

