

New materials help assess medicines policies and interventions

by MARGARET EWEN

Many countries, no matter their geographic region or level of economic development, have tremendous opportunity to improve medicines prices, availability and affordability for their citizens. To aid in this endeavour, various medicines policies and interventions exist. It can be difficult, however, for countries to determine which policies and interventions to implement; all have specific strengths and weaknesses, just as all countries have unique medicines needs and challenges. A ‘magic bullet’—or one-size-fits-all solution—to improve medicines access across the globe simply does not exist. Instead, each country must assess its own medicines situation and implement different combinations of policies and interventions.

For low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), in particular, where the need for improved medicines access is greatest, little has been published about the use of pharmaceutical pricing policies and interventions. But last year, Health Action International, the World Health Organization and a group of international experts developed in-depth reviews on five medicines policies and interventions to provide policy-makers in LMICs with some guidance. We are now pleased to announce that an additional review on [health technology assessment](#) is available, along with concise policy briefs for each review. (Links to all materials are provided below.)

The reviews and briefs, which stem from systematic literature reviews and analyses of policy issues and options, do not recommend one medicines policy or intervention over another. Instead, they offer an objective description of the advantages and disadvantages of each. They also discuss other important considerations that policy-makers should assess when developing pricing policies.

Improving access to medicines is incredibly complex and challenging; however, it is hoped that these materials—along with another review and brief that we are currently developing on generics policies—will encourage policy-makers to implement affordable medicines policies in their own countries.

Links to policy reports and briefs:

The role of health technology assessment in medicine pricing and reimbursement
([Review](#)) ([Policy brief](#))

External reference pricing
([Review](#)) ([Policy brief](#))

The role of health insurance in the cost-effective use of medicines
([Review](#)) ([Policy brief](#))

Regulation of mark-ups in the pharmaceutical supply chain
([Review](#)) ([Policy brief](#))

Competition policy

([Review](#)) ([Policy brief](#))

Sales taxes on medicines

([Review](#)) ([Policy brief](#))