Regional Collaborative Strategy for ASEAN Drug Security and Self-Reliance (ADSSR)

Nor I A Muhsin¹ Noraini Nordin¹ See Wan Ho¹ Pui Lim Chan¹ Azuana Ramli² Norhaliza A Halim¹ Abdul H M Yahaya¹

¹Ministry Of Health Malaysia, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia,
²National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency Malaysia, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

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The ASEAN region persistently face crucial challenges to ensure continuous access to medicines for the population. These include disruptions in the availability of some essential medicines, including those needed to treat infectious diseases which often resulted in the ASEAN Member States (AMS) to pay higher prices and risk purchasing products of low quality. ASEAN Drug Security and Self-Reliance (ADSSR) project was proposed under the ASEAN Health Cluster 3 Work Programme for 2016-2020 to allow all AMS to work together and improve access to medicines by enhancing drug security and self-reliance in the region. The project was divided into two phases which were the situational analysis survey and the focus group discussion (FGD) among the Member State-representatives. The Baseline Pharmaceutical Situational Analysis Survey were carried out to examine the laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to production, regulatory, distribution, procurement, pricing and medicines use practices in the 10 Member States. The baseline analysis identified many challenges faced by the Member States in the production, regulation, supply and distribution, procurement, and pricing of pharmaceuticals. Nevertheless, ASEAN posed a global pharmaceutical potential to be self-reliance as it constituted approximately 1.5% of world total pharmaceutical consumption annually. The FGD was conducted during the Technical Meeting on Regional Collaborative Strategy for the ADSSR to examine the feasibility of regional collaboration and to develop the collaborative strategies for the project. A framework and draft action plans for the regional collaborative strategy comprising of four domains and five strategies. The domains are: (i) research and development (R&D) and manufacturing, (ii) medicine registration and other regulatory issues, (iii) supply and distribution of medicines, and (iv) medicine procurement and pricing. Across all domains and strategies, effective cross-country communication is most critical, therefore sophisticated data exchange among the AMS will be instituted in the ADSSR action plans. Although this initiative is still at its beginning stage, several AMS have also expressed interest in collaboratively developing a regional pooled procurement mechanism. It is with great hope that the proposed strategies could help the ASEAN nations improve access to medicines and achieve better health outcomes for the population.