



Health Cooperation Between China and Other “Belt and Road” Countries

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2.1 East Asia

China and Mongolia have close cooperation partnership in the area of health. The governments of the two countries signed an agreement on health cooperation in the 1990s and have signed a series of 5-year health cooperation work plans since 2004. In August 2017, the two countries renewed another 5-year health cooperation work-plan (2017–2021). There were frequent bilateral ministerial visits in the health sector. Health cooperation between China and Mongolia mainly focuses on traditional medicine, infectious disease control and prevention, and healthcare services. The achievements made included the training of human resources in clinical medicine and public health, medical technology communication and exchange, the establishment of medical facilities and channels for Mongolian patients to obtain medical treatment in China. The two countries also cooperate under multilateral mechanisms, such as the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) mechanism, WHO multilateral mechanism, etc.

2.2 Southeast Asia

The ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), including Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam and Indonesia, have cooperated well with China in the health sector. All ten ASEAN member states have signed bilateral intergovernmental health cooperation agreements or Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with China.

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China and six ASEAN member states, that is, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Brunei, have frequent ministerial-level visits and exchanges in health. Infectious disease control and prevention is a common concern all ASEAN countries share with China. Except for Vietnam, the other nine countries also focus on traditional medicine in their work with China. The priorities differ with conditions of each country and mainly include human resources development in health, health management, maternal and child health (MCH), noncommunicable disease (NCD) control and prevention, food and drug safety, health education, the technology of clinical diagnosis and treatment, medical service provision, etc.

Most of the health cooperation between China and ASEAN countries are undertaken with the support of bilateral or regional funds mainly invested by the Chinese government, as well as under the traditional or new multilateral cooperation mechanisms, such as the ASEAN plus China, Japan, South Korea (10+3) Cooperation Mechanism, “China-ASEAN Health Cooperation Forum” and its Joint Declaration, Greater Mekong Subregional (GMS) Cooperation Mechanism, Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Mechanism, and WHO multilateral mechanism. The cooperation is committed to promoting in-depth communication and exchanges among health professionals, enhancing the capacity building of institutes responsible for infectious disease control and prevention in ASEAN countries, establishing regional infectious disease surveillance and emergency response mechanisms, and jointly maintaining regional health security.

2.3 South Asia

China has signed bilateral intergovernmental MOU on health cooperation with three of the six South Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), that is, Pakistan, Maldives and India. The governments of Nepal and China have signed the “Protocol on the Dispatch of A Medical Team from China to Serve in Nepal.” Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have not signed any intergovernmental health cooperation agreements or MOU with China.

Pakistan and India have built up relatively good partnership with China in the health sector. Pakistan and China have frequent exchanges of high-level visits of health officials. In the past, Pakistan assisted China in fighting against SARS and supported China during Sichuan earthquake in 2008. China also sent public health experts to Pakistan for polio elimination. The high-level health officials of India and China have exchanged visits many times, and the governments of the two countries have actively worked together in promoting the institutionalization of the ministerial conference and population development within the framework of BRICS, and advocating the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) under South-South cooperation. As Nepal and China share borders, the two countries have cooperated relatively more closely in health. The Chinese government has provided steady health assistance to Nepal, including dispatching a medical team to serve in Nepal, providing healthcare

services to Nepal national leaders and sending medical teams to conduct emergency rescue and disposal after earthquakes in Nepal.

Since the “Belt and Road” initiative was launched in 2013, China has strengthened its health cooperation and partnership with South Asian countries and meanwhile, new cooperation models have been explored and developed. The needs and willingness of health cooperation between the six South Asian countries and China are strengthened. China has progressively advanced its collaboration with Pakistan on traditional medicine, and gradually furthered its health cooperation with India in the framework of BRICS. In 2016, the ministers of Health of Nepal, Maldives, and Bangladesh visited China, and Vice Minister of the National Health and Family Planning Commission of China visited Sri Lanka. In September 2014, China and Maldives signed intergovernmental MOU on health cooperation. In 2016, China sent ophthalmologists to Maldives and Sri Lanka on the “Bright Journey—Eye Care Mission.” In 2015 and 2016, China hosted Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Cooperation Forum on Health and Disease Control under the framework of Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar regional cooperation and Bangladesh representatives joined the meetings.

2.4 West Asia

Of the seven West Asian countries, including Afghanistan, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Israel, except for the UAE and Iraq, all other countries have signed bilateral intergovernmental health agreements or MOU with China.

Israel and China have been close partners in health cooperation. Since the two governments signed the health cooperation agreement in 1993, they have continuously signed health cooperation workplans. The two countries have frequently exchanged high-level health visits since 2011, and steadily forged ahead practical and in-depth cooperation on hospital management, telemedicine, health emergency management, and medical and health technology. China has established good partnership with Afghanistan and Turkey in the health sector, and exchanged ministerial visits with the two countries several times in the area of health. Infectious disease control and prevention is a common area for cooperation. Both countries have planned to set bilateral “Joint Working Commission on Health” with their Chinese counterpart. Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq have limited health cooperation with China, yet China has sent medical experts to these three countries to provide diagnosis and treatment services to their senior officials.

2.5 Central Asia

All of the five Central Asian countries, namely, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, have signed bilateral intergovernmental agreements on health cooperation with China, but actually few health cooperation activities

have been carried out between China and these countries. Infectious disease control, prevention, and traditional medicine are commonly emphasized, and due to the difference in national conditions, the areas of cooperation also involve MCH, medical education, health reform, pharmacology, etc. The cooperation between China and Central Asian countries is mainly conducted under the frameworks of the WHO and Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

2.6 Eastern Europe

Russia and Ukraine have established close cooperation partnership with China in the health sector. Both countries have signed bilateral intergovernmental agreement or MOU on health cooperation with China.

In addition to the comprehensive agreement on health cooperation, Russia and China have also signed specific cooperation agreements or MOUs in many areas, such as infectious disease prevention and control, rehabilitation and treatment of children injured in terrorist incidents, and medical treatment as a means of disaster relief. High-level visits are frequently conducted between the two countries in the area of health. Bilateral collaborations have been carried out through various channels, for example, bilateral mechanisms such as the Health Cooperation Sub-Committee of China-Russia Humanities Cooperation Committee, multilateral mechanisms like WHO, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS and APEC, and collaborations with nongovernmental organizations and institutions. Health cooperation and many medical exchange programs have been robustly advanced between the two countries, including pragmatic activities launched in the fields of traditional medicine, infectious disease control and prevention, and exchanges of professionals and experts among medical institutions.

High-level visits have been conducted several times between Ukraine and China. In the field of health, the two countries have established the Health Cooperation Sub-Committee under the China-Uzbekistan Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee. Meetings are held periodically to promote the cooperation of the two countries in traditional medicine, gerontology, MCH, and medical personnel training.

2.7 North Africa

Egypt and China have signed bilateral intergovernmental MOU on health cooperation, and cooperation needs in the areas of biomedical industry, disease control and prevention, health emergency, population and reproductive health, medical insurance and primary health care have gradually increased.