

Abstract

Non-governmental Action to Improve the Access of the Poor to Good Quality Low Cost Drugs

Investigators

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Aims and objectives of the research

This research aims to analyse the scope for non-governmental action to improve access by low income people to quality-assured low cost medicines. It concentrates on problems of access by the poor in India and in Tanzania to reliable drugs from Indian pharmaceutical companies. Our key objectives are to understand the current successes and failures of non-governmental action in seeking to improving access of the poor to drugs; and to analyse the scope within current market structures for improving non-governmental local and international action for this purpose.

Key research questions/hypotheses and methods

The research will:

1. examine the experience of and scope for non-governmental action, including social enterprise, autonomous public companies and non-governmental organisations, to improve access to quality-assured low cost drugs in India;
2. analyse problems of sourcing, importing, pricing and quality assurance of drugs from low cost sources, notably India, in an African market (Tanzania), and assess the scope for non-governmental public action, including faith based organisations, social enterprise and consumer activism, to improve access by the poor;
3. analyse the role of and scope for international non-governmental action, including international NGOs, European-based social enterprises, consumer groups, and campaigning groups on trade, public health and access to drugs, including identification of issues, perceptions of shared and conflicting South/North interests, the scope for alliances, and successes and failures;
4. contribute to development of relevant methods of analysis of ethical and effective non-governmental intervention in highly perverse markets – in this case pharmaceuticals – including the sources of effective resistance to market incentives for unethical behaviour.

Relation to the programme

This research falls into Strand C, Global Processes and Impact of Non-Governmental Public Action. Drug access problems are inherently international, and we aim to

create an international research collaboration to analyse a major public action problem for those concerned with poverty and public health. Exclusion from health care, and high costs of access, are important drivers of impoverishment in developing countries, so this project directly addresses the NGPA programme focus on understanding the impact of non-governmental public action in reducing poverty and exclusion.

Relevance of this research to user groups

The research should be of relevance to campaigning organisations in the fields of public health, HIV-AIDS, trade and development, and consumer rights; to faith-based and other NGOs that buy, dispense and use drugs; to social enterprises undertaking ethical trading in pharmaceuticals; to governments and regulatory agencies for medicines in developing countries that could benefit by working more effectively with non-governmental actors; and to policy analysts in this field.

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