

The **second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine**, held in New Delhi, India, on 17–19 December 2025, has the theme of “Restoring balance: The science and practice of health and well-being”. The Summit aligns with the [Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034](#), which recognizes Traditional Medicine as a living science that contributes to universal health coverage, health equity and sustainability. The Summit serves as a global platform to accelerate implementation of the new strategy, foster partnerships, and translate pledges and commitments into concrete action.



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## Parallel session 2.D

### From innovation to investment – building the Traditional Medicine pipeline for scale and equity

Plenary 2 and associated parallel sessions will focus on how advancing research, innovation and investment in Traditional Medicine can bring balance for both people and planet, as aligned with the Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034 and global declarations.

This parallel session explores the concept of innovation within Traditional Medicine and how innovations can move from local practice to global impact. It tackles the innovation-to-investment continuum for Traditional Medicine, examining whether and why innovation is necessary, how ideas become validated solutions, how to design fair and rigorous criteria for evaluating innovations, and how to mobilize investments that can be scaled up to improve access and universal health coverage for both health and economic returns. With a focus on governance, equity and scale, the discussion will highlight pathways to transform Traditional Medicine’s potential into sustainable health solutions for all.

### Rationale

Traditional Medicine is rooted in dynamic systems of knowledge and innovation that hold immense potential to address unmet health needs and advance universal health coverage. However, this potential remains largely untapped due to longstanding underinvestment in Traditional Medicine innovation ecosystems and limitations in bringing innovations to scale (1,2). The importance of focusing on innovation has been emphasized in the Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034 and the Gujarat Declaration in 2023 to advance health for people and the planet across the life course (3,4). Examining the innovation-to-investment continuum within Traditional Medicine will highlight how to identify promising ideas through fair, rigorous and transparent criteria (5) and transform them into validated, investable and scalable solutions (1,6). Traditional Medicine can also learn lessons about the innovation-to-investment continuum from global health product development partnerships (7,8) and health product profiles (9), as well as from the experiences of social entrepreneurs addressing needs equitably and sustainably (10). Moreover, case studies of Traditional Medicine innovations from WHO’s Health & Heritage Innovations Open Call can highlight how to strike the right balance between integration within scientific frameworks while honouring Traditional Medicine’s long-established systems of validation and impact (11).

### Objectives

- Examine what innovation means for Traditional Medicine, exploring whether Traditional Medicine requires new innovation mechanisms for scale-up, evidence generation and improved access to existing practices.
- Identify frameworks and criteria for assessing promising Traditional Medicine interventions.
- Showcase and analyse current Traditional Medicine innovations from the Health & Heritage Innovations Open Call and explore how to mobilize investments that can be scaled up to improve access and universal health coverage.
- Draw lessons for Traditional Medicine innovation ecosystems from global health product development partnerships and social entrepreneurs, exploring how approaches like public–private partnerships, patent pools

and social business models can inform sustainable, ethical and inclusive innovation and access in Traditional Medicine.

- Examine how to safeguard Indigenous rights, cultural sovereignty and ecosystem integrity while promoting innovation and scale-up in Traditional Medicine, ensuring that traditional knowledge holders are active partners and beneficiaries in innovation pathways.

## Guiding questions

1. Why should we innovate in Traditional Medicine, and how can we ensure innovations are both scientifically valid and culturally grounded, preserving integrity while demonstrating measurable impact?
2. How can we identify, evaluate and nurture promising Traditional Medicine innovations that meet both scientific and community standards while progressing efficiently through development pipelines?
3. How can we build a robust, equitable Traditional Medicine innovation ecosystem, supported by financing, partnerships and governance to drive sustainable scaling and integration?
4. How can Traditional Medicine innovation safeguard traditional knowledge while accelerating innovation and investment?

## Session format

The proposed session format begins with the moderator's opening and then moves to a series of short presentations on criteria for assessing innovations, case studies of Traditional Medicine innovations, mobilizing investments for scale, learning lessons from other innovators and social entrepreneurs, and safeguarding sovereignty and rights in innovation. Following the talks, the moderator will transition to a panel discussion and Q&A, inviting speakers and participants to discuss governance mechanisms that actively mitigate against known pitfalls (such as high costs, inequity and intellectual property lock-ins), reinforcing the focus on equity and access. The final segment will serve as a call for investment commitments, where panellists propose specific funding mechanisms, policy shifts or capacity-building actions for the next 12–24 months. The session will conclude with key takeaways and an invitation for continued dialogue at the Innovation Stage in the Traditional Medicine Discovery Experience.

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