

## **Executive Summary**

In this paper the author seeks to demystify debates around intellectual property rights and global health. Taking some of the commonly held assumptions around patents and access to medicines, the author challenges the view that the needs of the developing world inherently come into conflict with the need to protect intellectual property in the pharmaceutical industry.

In fact, the paper suggests that developing countries should be actively promoting intellectual property rights rather than devoting efforts to obstructing their spread. Developing countries that have been signatories to international intellectual property agreements like TRIPS have benefitted from increased foreign direct investment, manufacturing, exports, and the decentralisation of R&D. Above all, health outcomes in these countries have improved rather than deteriorated as many claim.

Furthermore, extraordinary global health challenges remain, for which R&D remains the only viable way to find solutions. Improving the distribution of existing medicines is insufficient to address many of these challenges because in many cases treatments do not yet exist. If we are to address the health needs of those in both the developed and developing world pharmaceutical innovation must be encouraged. Undermining the intellectual property system is absolutely not the way to achieve this goal. For a start, and as discussed further in the paper, focusing on patents as the culprit behind health crises is misleading. Secondly, the process of pharmaceutical innovation has special characteristics that make intellectual property rights essential for innovation.

To conclude, health and intellectual property rights are mutually supportive. It is therefore worrying that the new multilateral negotiations in the Doha Trade-Round have stalled. Their successful conclusion could provide the catalyst for the global development process to reach new heights.