Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals

A road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030 Overview





Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a diverse set of 20 diseases and disease groups with a singular commonality: their impact on impoverished communities. Together they affect more than 1 billion people with devastating health, social and economic consequences.

Targets and strategies for the next decade



The road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030 sets out global targets for 2030 and milestones to prevent, control, eliminate and eradicate a diverse set of 20 diseases and disease groups, as well as cross-cutting targets aligned with WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 and the Sustainable Development Goals. It also proposes strategies for attaining these targets over the next decade. The document is intended to succeed the first road map, published in 2012.¹

The new road map was drafted through an extensive global consultation that began in 2018 and culminated in the document's endorsement by Member States at the Seventy-third World Health Assembly in November 2020. This consultative process involved regional workshops with managers of NTD prevention and control programmes, country workshops with stakeholders in NTDs and related areas of work, input from disease experts, disease modellers, donors and partners obtained through more than 100 bilateral interviews and more than 300 responses from two rounds of online consultations. The document therefore reflects the perspectives of Member States and a wide range of stakeholders.

The road map also describes the integrated approaches needed to achieve these targets through crosscutting activities that intersect multiple diseases. It is built on three pillars that will support global efforts to control, eliminate and eradicate neglected tropical diseases:

Pillar 1

Accelerate programmatic action

Pillar 2 Intensify cross-cutting approaches

Pillar 3

Change operating models and culture to facilitate country ownership

Accelerating work to overcome the global impact of neglected tropical diseases. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2012 (https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/70809).

Driving progress

Since 2010, significant progress has been made. Today, 600 million people no longer require interventions against several NTDs and 42 countries. territories and areas have eliminated at least one disease. Dracunculiasis is on the verge of eradication, with 54 human cases reported in four countries in 2019; lymphatic filariasis and trachoma have been eliminated as a public health problem in 17 and 10 countries, respectively; onchocerciasis has been eliminated in four countries in the Region of the Americas; the annual number of cases of human African trypanosomiasis has fallen from more than 7000 in 2012 to fewer than 1000 in 2019, eclipsing the original target of 2000 cases by 2020; and the number of new leprosy cases reported globally has continued to decline since 2010 at on average 1% per year after most endemic countries reached elimination as a public health problem, defined as less than one case on treatment per 10 000 population.



Addressing NTDs has contributed to alleviating the human and economic burden they impose on the world's poorest communities. It also demonstrates the impact of aligning the work of Member States with that of diverse partners, which during the past nine years has demonstrated two important facts: (i) NTD interventions are one of the best buys in global public health and yield an estimated net benefit to affected individuals of about US\$ 25 per dollar invested in preventive chemotherapy²; and (ii) NTDs serve as an important tracer in identifying disparities in progress towards both universal health coverage and equitable access to high-quality health services.

Renewing momentum



Even though substantial progress has been made, some of the targets set for 2020 in the earlier road map were not achieved. The new road map identifies critical gaps and the actions required to reach the 2030 targets. Experience from the past decade shows that further multisectoral action is required across the whole gamut of 20 diseases and disease groups and along particular dimensions such as diagnostics, monitoring and evaluation, access to and logistics for medicines and medical products, capacity strengthening, advocacy and funding. At this critical juncture on the road towards elimination of NTDs, the stakes remain high. Ambitious, impact-oriented targets are needed to guide efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goals and accelerate control and elimination.

Concerted action across multiple dimensions and an agile response to challenges will be necessary to achieve the targets. The recognition, for example, of *Dracunculus medinensis* infection in mammals other than human beings shows how challenges can manifest in the last stages – the "last mile" – of eradication. Unforeseen circumstances such as pandemics, local epidemics, political instability, migration, consequences of climate change and antimicrobial resistance can complicate existing programmatic complexity and will require additional mitigating action.

² Fitzpatrick C, Nwankwo U, Lenk E, de Vlas SJ, Bundy DAP. An investment case for ending neglected tropical diseases. In: Holmes KK, Bertozzi S, Bloom BR, Jha P, editors. Major infectious diseases, 3rd edition. Washington, DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The World Bank; 2017. doi:10.1596/978-1.4648-0524-0/ch17.

Integrating and mainstreaming approaches



Continued programmatic action is called for, particularly in targeted areas where critical gaps exist across multiple diseases. Adequately structured investigations of operations and implementation, including communitybased and applied research, are also essential for building a solid foundation on which effective NTD interventions can be designed and delivered.

Beyond incremental modifications to programmatic action, a more radical change is needed to integrate and mainstream approaches within national health systems and coordinate action across sectors. These cross-cutting concepts are not new; they are outlined in various existing NTD plans, but their operationalization has been problematic in some instances. The road map aims to renew momentum by proposing concrete actions focused on integrated platforms for delivery of interventions, and thereby improve programme costeffectiveness and coverage.

Capacity strengthening within national health systems will deliver interventions through existing infrastructures, improve the sustainability and efficiency of interventions and enable patients to access equitably all aspects of treatment, care and support.

Close coordination and multisectoral action within and beyond the health sector, encompassing not only vector control, water and sanitation, human, animal and environmental health and health awareness but also, for instance, education and disability, will maximize synergies.

Delivering results, achieving impact

Countries are both the drivers and the beneficiaries of progress towards the 2030 targets for NTDs. National and local governments must therefore lead work to define agendas and realize their objectives, financed partly or fully through domestic funds. Countries must integrate and prioritize prevention and control of endemic NTDs in national health plans and dedicate a corresponding line item in national health budgets. Multisectoral action must be fostered and planned well in advance in order to build the high-level political will required to support NTD plans.

As countries define their national NTD plans, the support of partners will remain essential for filling critical gaps, strengthening capacity and enabling programmatic targets to be achieved. Deliberate efforts are needed to engage the community, especially young people, in processes that support national NTD programme implementation, follow-up and review. Given the shift to cross-cutting approaches, structures and ways of working may need to be adapted accordingly, for example by making funding streams and reporting structures more flexible.

Looking ahead to the next decade, clearly much work needs to be done to address NTDs, as their burden remains heavy among the most vulnerable and marginalized populations of the world. Yet, perhaps equally clearly, the need to overcome these diseases of poverty is compelling in order to attain the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure universal health coverage.

The road map sets out global targets for stakeholders to align their efforts and re-focus action over the next decade. It encourages all parties to reevaluate their approaches and consider how the efficiency and effectiveness of their commitments and contributions can be improved. Finally, it seeks to foster greater collaboration and openness in lessening and removing the profound global burden of NTDs.

Road map targets, milestones and indicators¹



Overarching global targets for 2030²

90%³

Percentage reduction in people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases 75%

Percentage reduction in disability-adjusted life years related to neglected tropical diseases 100

Number of countries having eliminated at least one neglected tropical disease

2

Number of neglected tropical diseases eradicated

Cross-cutting targets for 2030



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75%

Integrated treatment coverage index for preventive chemotherapy

40

Number of countries that adopt and implement integrated skin neglected tropical disease strategies

75%4

Percentage reduction in number of deaths from vector-borne neglected



100%

Access to at least basic water supply, sanitation and hygiene in areas endemic for neglected tropical diseases – to achieve targets 6.1 and 6.2 of Sustainable Development Goal 6

90%

Share of the population at risk protected against catastrophic outof-pocket health expenditure due to neglected tropical diseases – to achieve target 3.8 of Sustainable Development Universal health coverage

90%

Share of countries including neglected tropical disease interventions in their package of essential services and budgeting for them

90%

Share of countries with guidelines for management of neglected tropical disease-related disabilities within national health systems



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90%

Share of countries reporting on all relevant endemic neglected tropical diseases

90%

Share of countries collecting and reporting data on neglected tropical diseases disaggregated by gender

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