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WHO: World Health Organisation

# Research Report

Topic 1: Raising awareness about and preventing the spread of neglected tropical diseases.



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## Introduction

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), include a variety of diseases, collectively responsible for both health and economic damages<sup>1</sup>. Particularly prevalent amongst economically impoverished countries, they are responsible for various illnesses such as leprosy, dengue fever, sleeping sickness, totalling to a sum of 19 main diseases declared by the WHO<sup>2</sup>. It is estimated over 200.000 deaths are directly linked to NTDs and other conditions like disabilities, stigmatization, social exclusion, discrimination and financial strains on affected families<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore it is crucial, for the wellbeing of the affected countries, to invest in raising awareness and increasing prevention measures, to safeguard the lives of over 1.6 closely affected people, and reduce the negative image around NTDs.

## Definition of Key Terms

**NTDs:** Neglected tropical diseases. These include as previously mentioned, leprosy, dengue fever, sleeping sickness and 16 more illnesses.

## Background Information

Neglected tropical diseases are a wide variety of diseases affecting particular countries. They thrive in impoverished environments, places with little sanitation and inadequate healthcare infrastructure. NTDs are particularly notorious due to their multifaceted impacts on both mental as well as physical suffering.

It was initially recognised in the 19th and 20th century, as scientific breakthroughs unraveled the etiology and transmission mechanisms of NTDs. Nevertheless, they were overlooked due to global efforts to combat more prominent and prevalent threats like malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS.

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<sup>1</sup>Filariasis, Lymphatic. *NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES Blinding Trachoma Onchocerciasis Schistosomiasis Soil-Transmitted Helminths Guinea Worm Disease DEMONSTRATED SUCCESS.*

<sup>2</sup>“Neglected Tropical Diseases | German Center for Infection Research.” *Dzif.de*, 15 Nov. 2024, [www.dzif.de/en/glossary/neglected-tropical-diseases](http://www.dzif.de/en/glossary/neglected-tropical-diseases). Accessed 15 Dec. 2024.

<sup>3</sup>World Health Organization. “Neglected Tropical Diseases .” *Www.who.int*, 2023, [www.who.int/health-topics/neglected-tropical-diseases#tab=tab\\_1](http://www.who.int/health-topics/neglected-tropical-diseases#tab=tab_1).

Although it was recognised to be a threat, combatting NTDs threats lied in the fact that the diseases were dispersed and had no simple common factor to target them all. This allowed and still allows many NTDs to go unnoticed and infect a large number of people.

Another issue that must be addressed when combatting NTDs is the fact that it is a type of issue that occurs in countries in which there is inadequate measuring of health cases, such as sub saharan african countries. Due to the lack of financial assistance, proper numbers are often not taken in, leading to false estimations. Therefore it is only the government's inability to deal with cases, but also the infrastructure that is often lacking in poorer countries.

## Major Countries and Organisations Involved

**The United States of America** - Although not largely affected itself, it contributes significantly via U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programmes. These provide substantial funding to contribute to combatting NTDs.

**United Kingdom** - The UK has been a major donor of funding and research against NTD, similar to the United States. This done via separate organisations:

- The UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and,
- London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

**Nigeria** - Being one of the most affected countries, it has been actively involved in efforts to combat NTDs like onchocerciasis and schistosomiasis. The national government often collaborates with international donors and pharmaceutical companies to spread medicines and awareness.

**India** - India too shares a large proportion of NTDs, attributed to its tropical climate. India has prioritized programs to combat diseases like lymphatic filariasis and leprosy. The government collaborates with WHO and NGOs to implement mass drug administration (MDA) and improve healthcare infrastructure in rural areas.

**Brazil** - This country is also a hotspot of NTDs and is at the forefront of addressing Chagas disease and leprosy within its borders. Similar to India, the country invests in research and public health campaigns to reduce the prevalence of NTDs in impoverished regions.

**WHO** - The World Health Organization has been leading the fight against the NTDs with its NTD Roadmap 2021–2030, which outlines strategies for reducing the burden of these diseases. The organization provides technical support, monitoring, and advocacy to endemic countries.

**United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)** - Has been a key integral member against the fight of NTDs through providing water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure, which is essential for preventing diseases like trachoma and soil-transmitted helminths.

## Relevant UN Resolutions

### Road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030<sup>4</sup>.

*“The Seventy-third World Health Assembly, having considered the report on neglected tropical diseases,<sup>1</sup> and recalling resolution WHA66.12 (2013) on neglected tropical diseases, and WHO’s road map for accelerating work to overcome the global impact of neglected tropical diseases (2012–2020), and Member States’ commitment to Sustainable Development Goal target 3.3 (by 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, waterborne diseases and other communicable diseases), decided:*

*(1) to endorse, and urge Member States to implement, the new road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030, “Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals: a road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030”;*

*(2) to request the Director-General:*

*(a) to advocate for, and provide technical assistance and guidance to Member States and partners in the implementation of, the new road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030 towards reaching Sustainable Development Goal target 3.3;*

*(b) to continue to monitor progress of the road map and under a substantive agenda item, to report biennially to the Health Assembly, through the Executive Board, on the implementation of the road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030, starting at the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly until the Seventy-ninth World Health Assembly, and then from the Eighty-second World Health Assembly to the Eighty-fourth World Health Assembly.*

*Third plenary meeting, resumed session, 13 November 2020”*

## Previous attempts to solve this issue

### Global Eradication Efforts<sup>5</sup>:

- Guinea Worm: 20 countries mainly in Africa were affected by this disease. Over 3.5 million cases were evident in 1986, but due to the Guinea Worm Eradication Programme

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<sup>4</sup>World Health Organisation. “Road Map for Neglected Tropical Diseases 2021–2030.” *WHO*, World Health Organisation, 13 Nov. 2020, [apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA73/A73\(33\)-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA73/A73(33)-en.pdf). Accessed 15 Dec. 2024.

<sup>5</sup>CDC. “Global NTD Programs.” *Neglected Tropical Diseases*, 2024, [www.cdc.gov/neglected-tropical-diseases/programs/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/neglected-tropical-diseases/programs/index.html).

led by the Carter Center, the number of cases have reduced to 7. They worked with health ministries, CDC, and others to build local, national, and international partnerships.

Children's Investment Fund Foundation<sup>6</sup>:

- CIFF Committed over 50 million dollars to combatting against NTDs, and supports alliances like African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA) to develop NTD scorecards, a form of monitoring of NTD progress. To this date at least 21 countries have eliminated 1 or more NTD.

## Possible Solutions

- **Encourage collaboration across borders:**
  - Foster a culture of teamwork, support and strengthened international relations to find adequate resolutions.
  - Support the spread of awareness across countries, education of NTDs and medication uses.
- **Strengthen public infrastructure:**
  - Enhancing access to essential medicines, via expanded distribution of MDA (mass drug administration) and Partnering with pharmaceutical companies to ensure affordable or free treatments.
  - Promoting hygiene and sanitation by providing access to clean water and sanitation facilities, educating communities on personal hygiene practices, such as but are not limited to: handwashing and proper food preparation.
- **Addressing Vector Control:**
  - Stopping NTDs at its core by distributing insecticide-treated nets and promoting indoor spraying in malaria-prone areas and various other biological control methods.
- **Supporting Research and Innovation:**
  - Encourage NGOs and organisations leading research and innovation against NTDs.

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<sup>6</sup>Macvicar, Robbie. "UNITE. ACT. ELIMINATE NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES - Ciff." *Ciff*, 30 Jan. 2024, [ciff.org/news/global/unite-act-eliminate-neglected-tropical-diseases/](https://ciff.org/news/global/unite-act-eliminate-neglected-tropical-diseases/). Accessed 15 Dec. 2024.

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