

# Neglected Tropical Diseases

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

**Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) are a group of 17 infectious diseases and conditions afflicting more than 1 billion of the world's poorest people and threatening the health of millions more.**<sup>1</sup> NTDs are responsible for over 500,000 deaths each year.<sup>2</sup>

**NTDs disproportionately affect poor and rural populations who lack access to safe water, sanitation, and essential medicines.** NTDs cause sickness and disability, compromise maternal health and fetal growth, inhibit children's mental and physical development, and can result in blindness and severe disfigurement. A number of NTDs are fatal without treatment.

**Since Fiscal Year (FY) 2006, the U.S. has been a leading partner in advancing control and elimination efforts for seven NTDs: lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis, soil transmitted helminthes (ascariasis (roundworm), trichuriasis (whipworm), and hookworm), and trachoma.** Cumulatively, the U.S. government has supported the delivery of over 1.6 billion treatments to over 743 million people through the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) NTD program.<sup>3</sup>

**The program is celebrating its 10-year anniversary of leading large-scale implementation of integrated treatment programs for NTDs and has supported 33 countries and regional programs** in Africa, Asia, and the Americas to reach treatment targets and to monitor and evaluate the achievement of global NTD goals.

**Since 2014, the USAID NTD Program has been investing in research and development (R&D) to ensure that promising new breakthrough medicines can be rapidly evaluated, registered, and made available to patients.** Other U.S. agencies involved in research and control efforts for NTDs include the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Department of Defense (DoD).

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONGRESS

### **Maintain strong funding levels for the USAID NTD Program:**

The U.S. government needs to support strong funding for this unique and successful public-private partnership so that USAID can maximize the benefits of drug donations and ensure new products are available to address the needs of neglected patients.

**Maintain U.S. leadership in NTD control and elimination** by supporting the commitments of the 2012 London Declaration on NTDs to achieve the 2020 NTD goals and urging other bilateral partners to engage.

**Seek strategic cross-sectoral coordination of NTD treatment and control programs:** In addition to support for the USAID NTD Program, the inclusion of NTD control measures within other USAID programs or among broader U.S. government programming will be necessary to advance NTD control and elimination goals. Opportunities for cross-sectoral coordination may include maternal and child health services delivery platforms (e.g., childhood immunizations, vitamin supplements) and/or WASH projects.

### **Expand investments in product development for NTDs through USAID:**

In order to achieve the goals of disease control and elimination, the U.S. government should address the urgent needs of particularly neglected patient populations, including those suffering from NTDs with the highest death rates, and respond to the potential challenge of drug resistance by developing new tools including drugs, diagnostics, and vaccines.

**Expand current investments for NTD R&D at DoD, CDC, and NIH:** Additional investments in R&D will ensure the availability of new tools and treatments for people living with NTDs.

## WHY THIS INVESTMENT IS IMPORTANT

Many of the most common NTDs are combated using medicines that are safe and effective. USAID funding enables medicines to reach people at risk, which contributes to NTD prevention, control, and elimination. However, treatment options for NTDs with the highest death rates, including human African trypanosomiasis, visceral leishmaniasis, and Chagas disease, are extremely limited. Investments are urgently needed to support R&D for new tools, including diagnostics, drugs, and vaccines for all NTDs. Addressing the link between health and other sectors, along with increased R&D, are necessary to meet the World Health Organization's (WHO) NTD 2020 goals.

Over the past decade, the momentum behind the fight against NTDs has increased dramatically and received widespread bipartisan support from U.S. policymakers. The WHO developed its first Strategic Plan in 2003, and the U.S. government allocated \$15 million in FY2006 for the creation of an integrated NTD control program at USAID. In January 2012, inspired by the WHO 2020 Roadmap for NTDs, a range of public and private partners – including pharmaceutical companies, donor governments, endemic countries, research organizations, the World Bank, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation – announced the London Declaration on NTDs, a coordinated commitment to control and eliminate 10 NTDs by 2020. The USAID NTD Program began investing in R&D<sup>4</sup> in 2014 to ensure that promising new medicines for filarial diseases can be developed and made available. Progress is real and measurable: In USAID-supported countries, 140 million

people are no longer at risk for lymphatic filariasis, 65 million people are no longer at risk for trachoma, and 2.4 million people are no longer at risk for onchocerciasis. Thousands of people at risk of blindness due to trachomatous trichiasis have received sight-preserving, quality surgery.

In addition to USAID, other U.S. agencies have NTD programs. NIH continues to be the largest funder globally of neglected disease early-stage R&D through the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the Fogarty International Center. CDC works on NTDs through control programs, diagnostic research, capacity-building in endemic countries, progress evaluation, and monitoring and identifying new tools. DoD also plays a significant role in NTD R&D for the U.S. military.

It is essential to continue the U.S. commitment to NTD control and R&D programs across agencies. Ongoing investments are needed to ensure that new discoveries make it through the pipeline and become available to people who need them most; if sustained, the U.S. can save lives and reduce suffering for hundreds of millions of people.

### IN USAID-SUPPORTED COUNTRIES:



### Resources

USAID NTD Program <http://bit.ly/2fT8yrC>

Uniting to Combat NTDs: Delivering on Promises and Driving Progress <http://bit.ly/2eRBLQU>

CDC NTD Fast Facts <http://bit.ly/2gQfk1X>

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### Citations

1. The current WHO list of NTDs is blinding trachoma, Buruli ulcer, Chagas disease, cysticercosis, dengue, dracunculiasis, echinococcosis/hydatidosis, endemic treponematoses, foodborne trematodiasis, human African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), leishmaniasis, leprosy, lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, rabies, schistosomiasis, and soil-transmitted helminthes. "Neglected Tropical Diseases," The World Health Organization. <http://bit.ly/1AdBbju>.
2. "Neglected Tropical Disease Fast Facts." <http://bit.ly/2gQfk1X>.
3. "Neglected Tropical Disease Program Results." <http://bit.ly/2hpCzk1>.
4. "2012 G-Finder Report: Neglected Disease Research and Development: A Five-Year Review." <http://bit.ly/2fJ0xFE>.