Neglected Tropical Diseases

FY2014 Recommendation: $125 million

Purpose

Funding for Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) helps to prevent, control, eliminate and eradicate 17 diseases that infect 1 billion of the world’s poorest people. One in six people worldwide suffer from NTDs such as dengue, rabies, river blindness, leprosy, trachoma and hookworm. These diseases are deadly, debilitating and can cause blindness, disfigurement, disability, cognitive developmental delays and social stigma.

Justification

Each year, 400,000 people die from NTDs. But as little as 50 cents per person per year can provide prevention treatment against the most common NTDs. Over the past five years, the U.S. government has leveraged taxpayer dollars and $3.1 billion in donated medicines to provide 584.6 million safe and effective NTD treatments to approximately 257.9 million people.

The World Health Organization estimates that in addition to industry contributions – such as pharmaceutical drugs – it would only cost $2 billion to prevent and treat all individuals at risk of contracting an NTD from 2012 to 2015. It is critical that the ongoing NTD control programs be supported and continued in order to reach all those afflicted, in addition to supporting research for new tools to fight NTDs.

Currently, NTD research and development (R&D) programs are underfunded. R&D for new tools is essential to ultimately combating NTDs; however, USAID – which plays a unique and critical role in product development for new NTD technologies – does not fund NTD R&D. Unfortunately, many current NTD medications have severe side effects. Research into these diseases could lead to new vaccines, better drugs and improved diagnostic tools. Strong support for successful control and elimination programs, combined with robust funding for NTD R&D is the key to success against NTDs.

For more information, contact:

Erin Jeffery
Advocacy and International Development Coordinator
InterAction
ejeffery@interaction.org
Success Story:
Education Campaigns Help Stop Neglected Tropical Diseases

Maroua, the bustling capital of the Far North Region of Cameroon, is an extremely hot, dry and dusty city with a population of approximately 250,000 people. Recently, the city has struggled to achieve high coverage rates for various public health initiatives.

Launched in 2010 and continuing today, a campaign by the Neglected Tropical Disease Control Program to combat onchocerciasis and lymphatic filariasis reaches Maroua and all 28 health districts of the Far North Region. Knowing that social mobilization strategies would be essential to achieve high coverage rates, Helen Keller International and the Ministry of Health use a variety of innovative channels to communicate the need for everyone to participate in drug distribution events. Ministry leaders appear on popular radio programs, traditional storytellers spread the word, and engaging posters catch people’s attention on nearly every street corner.

One poster used during the campaign pictures a man with a very swollen leg, one of the symptoms of lymphatic filariasis. A man who was suffering unknowingly, from lymphatic filariasis saw the poster and noticed that his leg looked just like that of the man in the poster. Armed with this new information, he immediately visited his health center and was happy to learn that drugs to alleviate the symptoms of his disease would be distributed to him for free. Thanks to the public awareness campaign, not only did this man seek and receive treatment, but now he also is an active community health educator who travels house-to-house and mobilizes his neighbors to participate in the campaign against lymphatic filariasis and onchocerciasis so that others do not suffer like he has.

Due to social mobilization strategies, significant progress has been made in reaching vulnerable populations in Maroua. As a result, 84% of the people at risk of lymphatic filariasis have received essential treatment in 2011. These results would not be possible without crucial funding from USAID.

References