Neglected Tropical Diseases

Summary
Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) are tied to nearly every major global health issue faced today, including water and sanitation, malnutrition, and maternal and child health.

The U.S. government has played a key role in NTD control and elimination since 2007 by supporting the cumulative delivery of over 600 million treatments to over 251 million people in 25 countries through USAID’s NTD program.

Addressing the link between health and other sectors of development, along with increased research and development (R&D), is necessary to meet the 2020 control and elimination goals. These efforts could improve – and in some cases – save the lives of over 1 billion people across the developing world, assisting them to climb out of poverty and live healthy, productive lives.

Overview

- 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.¹
- NTDs disproportionately affect poor and rural populations who lack access to safe water, sanitation and essential medicines; they are most prevalent in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.
- 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.
- NTDs can lead to poverty and have an impact far beyond the health sector, undermining efforts to improve education, empower women and girls, and foster economic development. These diseases disable and debilitate their victims, keeping children out of school and preventing adults from working.
- Since 2006, the U.S. has been an essential leading partner in advancing control and elimination efforts for seven targeted NTDs: lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis), onchocerciasis (river blindness), schistosomiasis (snail fever), soil transmitted helminthes (ascariasis (roundworm), trichuriasis (whipworm) and hookworm) and trachoma.
- The NTD program administered by USAID has made important and substantial contributions toward the global fight to control and eliminate these seven NTDs by 2020. Leveraging more than $4 billion in donated medicines, USAID has supported the distribution of over 600 million treatments in 25 countries.²
- While the most common NTDs have treatments that are easy to use and effective, for the NTDs with the highest death rates, including human African trypanosomiasis, visceral leishmaniasis and Chagas disease, treatment options are extremely limited. New investments are urgently needed to support research and development for new tools, including diagnostics, drugs and vaccines, for all NTDs.
- As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the spread of disease across national borders poses a threat to all countries. NTDs, including Chagas disease and dengue, have an increased prevalence in the U.S.
- In addition to USAID, other U.S. agencies involved in research and control efforts for NTDs include the National Institutes for Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department of Defense (DoD).
Making Progress

- Over the past decade, the momentum behind the control and elimination of NTDs has increased dramatically. The World Health Organization (WHO) developed its first Strategic Plan in 2003 and the U.S. government first allocated $15 million in FY2006 for the creation of an integrated NTD control program administered by USAID. The British government followed in 2008, with the development of its own NTD control program.

- 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 and Melinda Gates Foundation, announced the London Declaration on NTDs, a new coordinated commitment to control and eliminate 10 NTDs by 2020. By the end of 2012, over 40 countries had developed NTD master plans outlining their strategies for achieving NTD control and elimination targets.

U.S. Response and Strategy

Support for NTD control has grown in recent years and has received widespread bipartisan support from U.S. policymakers. Several U.S. agencies have programs focusing on NTDs:

- USAID’s NTD program, in coordination with WHO and global partners, supports interventions for the control and elimination of seven targeted NTDs including assistance for NTD program implementation led by Ministries of Health; drug and diagnostic procurement; advising and training health personnel and community-based workers; disease mapping; monitoring and evaluation for integrated NTD programs; and policy development.

- 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 to reduce the burden of NTDs through control programs, diagnostic research, capacity building in endemic countries, progress evaluation and monitoring and identification of new tools.

- DoD plays a significant role in NTD research and development for the U.S. military and is the only U.S. agency that oversees research – from basic science through product development.

It is essential that the U.S. continue its commitment to NTD control and elimination and to R&D programs across government agencies. Investments are needed in late-stage product development to ensure that new discoveries make it through the pipeline and become available to people who need them most. With investments like these, the U.S. can save and improve hundreds of millions of lives and create a more economically prosperous global community.
Recommendations

- **Congress and the Administration should maintain strong funding levels for the USAID NTD Program.** For USAID to maximize the benefits of increased drug donations received from the pharmaceutical companies, the U.S. government needs to support strong funding for this unique and successful public-private partnership.

- **The U.S. government should 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.

- **USAID should seek strategic cross-sectoral coordination of NTD treatment and control programs.** 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 water and sanitation projects.

- **USAID should invest in late-stage product development for NTDs.** Investments are needed in R&D, particularly late-stage product development for new technologies, in order to achieve the goals of disease control and elimination; 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. Late stage product development efforts could be made through the USAID NTD program or other USAID programs.

- **The DoD, CDC and NIH should expand current investments for NTD research and development.** Additional investments in R&D will ensure the availability of new tools and treatments for people living with NTDs.

Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Vietnam.
