

An R&D Blueprint for Neglected Tropical Diseases

Goal: To accelerate the control, elimination and eradication of NTDs.

Objectives: To develop, via a globally collaborative Research and Development platform, new fit-for-purpose tools to prevent, diagnose, treat, control, eliminate and eradicate NTDs that will accelerate attainment of the targets in the [2021–2030 NTD road map](#). These include, by 2030 (1) a 90% reduction in the number of people worldwide requiring interventions against NTDs; (2) a 75% reduction in NTD-related disability-adjusted life years; (3) 100 countries having eliminated at least one NTD; (4) the eradication of Guinea-worm disease and yaws; (5) interruption of transmission of gambiense sleeping sickness in 15 countries, leprosy in 120 and onchocerciasis in 12; and (6) 90% of countries including NTD interventions in their funded package of essential services.

Outcomes of an R&D Blueprint for NTDs: (1) Greater shared awareness of R&D priorities amongst stakeholders, (2) increased investment for impact from NTD R&D, (3) strengthened coordination and capacity building, (4) reduced research waste, (5) greater agility in response to emerging challenges, and (6) more rapid translation from innovation to widespread real-world application.

Outputs

1. An agreed list of R&D priorities and related actions to encourage and support R&D for NTDs.
2. Effective, funded systems for the dissemination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and review of NTD R&D priorities.

Context: NTDs are a diverse set of 21 diseases and disease groups that affect more than 1.6 billion impoverished people worldwide. They include bacterial, viral, parasitic and fungal diseases, and the non-communicable disease snakebite envenoming. With relatively limited tools, much is already being achieved. Concerted R&D efforts against these long-overlooked diseases is likely to yield significant social return on investment.

Over the past two decades, WHO has undertaken a process of standardization and harmonization of strategies to tackle NTDs. In November 2020, after an extensive global consultative process, the [road map for NTDs for 2021–2030](#) was finalized and endorsed by the 73rd World Health Assembly. To reach the road map's 2030 targets, innovation is critical. Some urgent needs are identified in the road map, but a more complete, prioritized list would help all stakeholders to direct resources to areas of greatest urgency.

The R&D Blueprint for NTDs will have global scope across the 21 NTDs, with all types of basic, clinical, social science and epidemiological research, including health product development and operational and implementation research, eligible for inclusion.

Activities: The Blueprint will be drawn up through a broad-based consensus-building process led by NTD-endemic countries, using an adaptation of the [CHNRI](#) methodology. In addition to being published by WHO as a formal technical product, the R&D priorities in the Blueprint will be curated on WHO's [Global Observatory on Health R&D](#). Following primary publication in early 2025, twice-yearly re-assessment of the identified R&D priorities and their progress will be undertaken.

This approach to development, publication, dissemination and review is intended to drive progressively greater consensus on the R&D questions of highest priority and thereby influence the actions of governments, researchers, research funders and policymakers.

Governance: A Steering Group will be asked to set the values for the Blueprint and oversee the work. It will be Co-Chaired by WHO's Director NTD, [Dr Ibrahima Socé Fall](#) and WHO's Chief Scientist, [Sir Jeremy Farrar](#); and will include representatives of health ministries in NTD-endemic countries; senior scientists from NTD-endemic countries; a patient group representative; and an economist. Global NTD Programme staff will act as Secretariat to support governance and implementation.

Contributors: representatives of health ministries, academic institutions, civil society organizations, funding bodies, endemic communities and people affected by NTDs, following screening for conflicts of interest.

