

Advancing the Fight Against Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) in Francophone Countries

Progress, Challenges,
and the Path Forward
for Sustainable Action



Introduction

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a group of preventable and treatable diseases that cause immeasurable suffering for some of the world's most vulnerable populations.

These diseases can cause severe disability, disfigurement, and death; the burden they place on countries prevents their citizens from reaching their shared potential. The impact of NTDs extends beyond health, limiting the economic growth of nations and costing billions of dollars in lost productivity every year. Of the more than 1.6 billion people worldwide that require interventions against NTDs every year, a significant percentage reside in Francophone countries that are concentrated in regions heavily burdened by these diseases, such as sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia.

This report focuses on the Francophonie as a critical platform for addressing these diseases. Francophone countries share unique linguistic, cultural, and historical ties that can facilitate powerful collaboration and collective action. By leveraging a common language and existing political and organisational platforms, Francophone countries can work together to more effectively combat NTDs. In particular, the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) is a unified institution for advancing advocacy efforts, strengthening political commitment, and boosting cross-border collaboration to help end NTDs.

Recognising the critical role of the Francophonie in addressing NTDs, on 16 October 2018, at the 17th OIF Summit in Yerevan, Armenia, 57 member states of the OIF adopted a resolution to commit to strengthening the fight against NTDs within the Francophonie. This resolution committed member states to promoting and reinforcing the fight against NTDs in the Francophone community. It focused specifically on securing increased funding, integrating NTDs into other health strategies, improving water and sanitation, and strengthening health systems to ensure universal access to essential services for populations at risk of NTDs.

Six years after this landmark resolution, this report provides an overview of progress, challenges, opportunities, and important emerging themes related to NTDs in the Francophone world. It seeks to provide important information to politicians, policy makers, administrators, partners, donors and communities, and to ensure that NTDs are prioritised on the global agenda as we collectively push towards the targets outlined in the WHO NTD road map 2021-2030* and Sustainable Development Goal 3. It showcases several countries that have recently eliminated diseases and highlights the need for innovative financing to support control and elimination programmes and new ways to integrate NTD activities into other health programmes. It also discusses how climate change puts new regions at risk for NTDs and changes patterns of transmission in ways that make the diseases more difficult to combat.

Ending the burden of these neglected diseases is critical to reducing global poverty and inequality, and will benefit both Francophone countries and the broader global community. By working together and pledging the necessary resources, Francophone countries can drive collective action to improve health and quality of life for millions of people around the world. Now is the time to unite, act, and eliminate NTDs.

In this report, the member states of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie have been used when compiling data for Francophone countries.

*World Health Organization: Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals. A road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030.

The theme for World NTD Day 2025 is: **Unite. Act. Eliminate NTDs.** This rallying cry calls on all partners to **unite** to achieve our collective goals, commit to the resources and action needed to **act** effectively, and highlight successes and challenges on the path to **eliminate NTDs.**



THE 2018 RESOLUTION

Key points of the 2018 resolution on NTDs, adopted at the 17th Summit of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie

- 1 Ensuring that NTDs are included in domestic health strategies and the efforts to eliminate these diseases are adequately funded with a dedicated budget;
- 2 Allocating adequate funding in order to provide medication through mass drug administration;
- 3 Working towards providing safe water, sanitation and hygiene, which are essential for preventing and managing NTDs;
- 4 Driving progress towards Universal Health Coverage by strengthening health systems to deliver essential quality health services and prioritising coverage of populations at risk of NTDs.



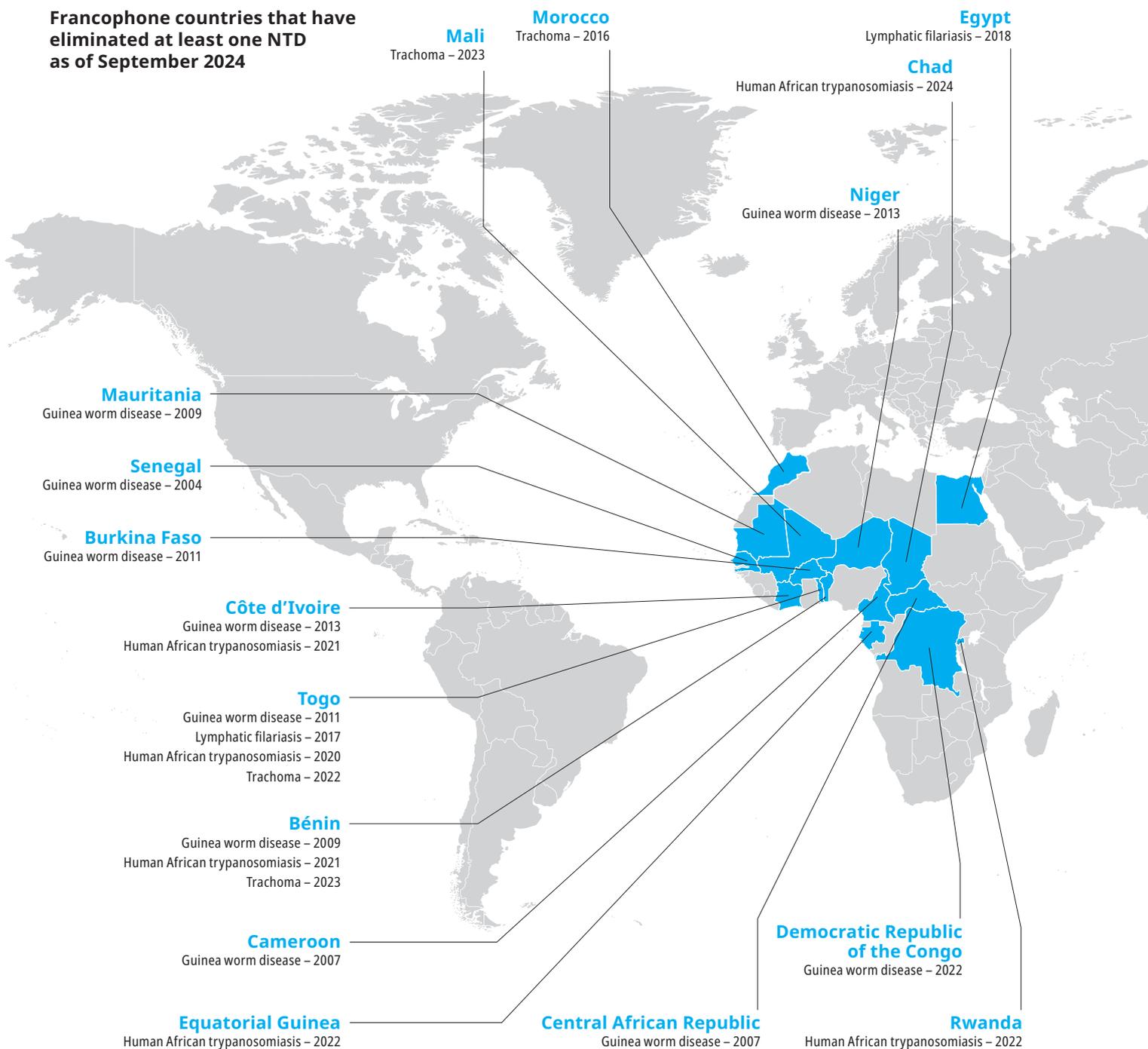
Progress and challenges

Eliminating NTDs

Elimination of NTDs is a critical milestone, as it marks a definitive step towards improving health, quality of life, and economic stability for those living in an affected area. Recent achievements in Francophone countries showcase the impact and return on investment of sustained efforts of fighting NTDs. By the end of 2023, 20 Francophone countries had eliminated at least one NTD as a public health problem. In 2023 alone, three Francophone countries eliminated an NTD: trachoma was eliminated in Benin and Mali, and lymphatic filariasis in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. Globally, 52 countries have eliminated at least one NTD – more than halfway towards achieving the WHO NTD road map goal of eliminating at least one NTD from 100 countries by 2030*.



Francophone countries that have eliminated at least one NTD as of September 2024





Increasing treatment coverage

Mass drug administration is the large-scale distribution of medicines to at-risk populations within an endemic area. It can be an extremely cost-effective method of preventing, controlling, and/or eliminating some NTDs, particularly when medicines for more than one NTD can be delivered at the same time.

This approach is a core strategic intervention against five NTDs – lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis, soil transmitted helminths and trachoma. The NTD Coverage Index was developed by the World Health Organization and uses an average (geometric mean) of the national coverage percentage for these five diseases and helps to show countries that are on track with their treatment programmes. The goal, presented in the WHO NTD road map 2021–2030, is a 75% integrated treatment coverage index for mass drug administration.

9 Francophone countries that have shown significant increases in their NTD Index

Country	Index score 2021	Index score 2022	Increase in index score from 2021-2022
Vanuatu	10	93	83
Burkina Faso	18	82	64
Mali	25	86	61
Cabo Verde	0	59	59
Niger	11	56	45
Guinea	20	62	42
Guinea-Bissau	4	45	41
Madagascar	7	47	40
Togo	53	87	34

Note: The NTD Index is a number and cannot reveal all the complexities of a national NTD programme, such as delayed arrival of medicines requiring postponement of mass treatment activities. Comparisons between countries and within countries over time are therefore illustrative.



The challenge ahead

Despite significant progress in combating NTDs over the last decade, millions of people in Francophone countries continue to live under the threat of these debilitating diseases.

Globally, the number of people needing interventions against NTDs dropped by approximately 26% between 2010 and 2022, from 2.19 billion people requiring interventions in 2010 to 1.62 billion in 2022. While the number of people in Francophone countries requiring interventions against NTDs has decreased by 23.3% – from 275 million in 2010 (with a peak of 297 million in 2013) to 211 million by 2022 – there remains more work to be done.

To achieve the ambitious global goal of a 90% reduction in people requiring interventions by 2030 – the goal set out in the WHO NTD road map 2021–2030* – will require concerted political, financial and social action. Francophone countries, in particular, must strengthen their commitments to ensure that the progress made is not only sustained but accelerated.

Overarching global targets for 2030

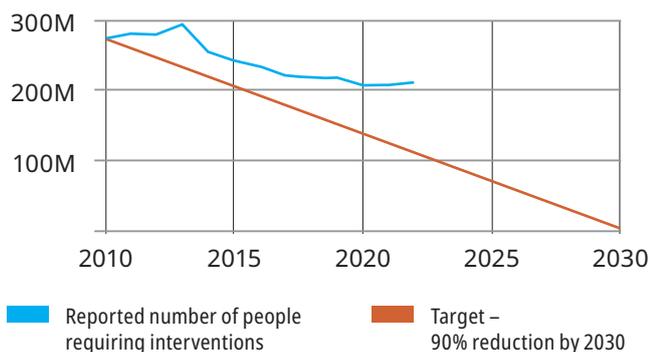
The global road map for NTDs, 2021–2030* set the following goals:

- 90% reduction** in people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases
- 75% reduction** in disability-adjusted life years related to neglected tropical diseases
- 100 countries having eliminated at least one neglected tropical disease

*World Health Organisation: Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals. A road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1277958/retrieve>).

** Compared to 2010.

Reported number of people requiring interventions against NTDs in Francophone countries



Elimination of NTDs

Significant progress has been made in the fight against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), with elimination being the ultimate marker of success – it demonstrates the effectiveness and impact of sustained efforts by endemic countries, partners, and donors.

Achieving elimination not only ends the cycle of disease, but also boosts a country's productivity – children can attend school, family members can work, and government spending is freed up for other pressing issues.

The momentum is particularly strong among Francophone countries, where milestones have been reached across member states. Sleeping sickness has been eliminated as a public health problem in eight countries globally, with Chad being

the latest to reach this achievement. Lymphatic filariasis has been eliminated in 19 countries worldwide, with the Lao People's Democratic Republic joining these ranks in 2023. And trachoma has been eliminated in 18 countries, Mali and Benin (2023) being the two Francophone countries to achieve this milestone most recently.

The impact of elimination has a ripple effect, as some countries have gone on to eliminate multiple NTDs. Togo became the first country in the world to eliminate four NTDs, while Benin and Ghana have each eliminated three, earning recognition at the ECOWAS Heads of State Summit in 2023. This progress showcases the effectiveness of coordinated action and the commitment of the international community to freeing millions from the burden of NTDs.

HOW TOGO HAS TRIUMPHED OVER FOUR NTDs

Over the span of just 13 years, Togo has eliminated four neglected tropical diseases (NTDs): Guinea worm in 2011, lymphatic filariasis in 2017, sleeping sickness in 2020, and trachoma in 2022. This remarkable achievement shows how sustained political will, robust community engagement, and the strategic use of resources can transform public health.

Togo's strategy has been two-pronged – interrupting transmission and preventing new infections, alongside treating and managing the diseases to alleviate suffering. At its heart has been mass drug administration, facilitated by an extensive network of community health workers.

These 13,000 community health workers support Togo's population of nearly 8 million people, covering urban, rural and remote areas. As well as administering treatments, identifying and managing cases, and conducting health education campaigns, they work alongside town criers, tribal chiefs and religious leaders to build awareness and mobilise communities.

The first of Togo's successes against NTDs was the elimination of Guinea worm in 2011, with transmission of the disease being interrupted by providing safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, and by systematically identifying and treating cases. This was followed by the elimination of lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem in 2017 – Togo being the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to reach this milestone. The strategy in this case was sustained, mass drug administration with ivermectin and albendazole.

In 2020, sleeping sickness – human African trypanosomiasis – was eliminated through intensive surveillance and treatment campaigns, supported by community health workers. And in 2022, Togo became the fourth African country to eliminate trachoma, by the rigorous implementation of the SAFE strategy (Surgery for trichiasis, Antibiotics, Facial cleanliness, and Environmental improvement) where needed across the country.

Strong political leadership has been vital to achieve these milestones. The government has integrated NTD programmes into the broader health system, and has supported community health workers. Health leaders have held annual press conferences to garner public support for mass treatment campaigns. And local leaders have mobilised communities.

The impact of these efforts has been profound. Freed from the burden of these debilitating diseases, people can now lead healthier lives, children can attend school regularly, and adults can work productively.



Innovation and integration

While significant progress has been made against NTDs in recent decades, innovative, integrated ways of delivering NTD programmes are vital to accelerate progress.

Traditionally, NTDs have been tackled in a disease-specific way, through community-based mass campaigns and clinical management. But integrating NTD programmes with other health initiatives and primary healthcare systems is a critical step toward improving the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of NTD interventions.

A variety of different methods of integration are being used. Different NTD programmes are being integrated together, such as mass drug administration (MDA) for schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminths, lymphatic filariasis and onchocerciasis, and the coordinated diagnosis and treatment of skin NTDs such as Buruli ulcer and yaws. NTD programmes are being integrated with those for other categories of diseases, such as combined control measures for mosquitos (as they are the vectors not only for malaria, but also for dengue, chikungunya and lymphatic filariasis). And, during routine immunisation campaigns, healthcare workers can administer medicines to treat or prevent NTDs, reducing the need for separate, disease-specific campaigns.

The root causes of disease can also be tackled by integrating NTD programmes with other services. For example, by improving access to clean water and promoting better hygiene practices alongside NTD treatments, reinfection rates of diseases like schistosomiasis and trachoma can be reduced significantly. This approach reduces the frequency of NTD treatment campaigns and enhances the overall health of communities, creating a more sustainable solution to controlling and eliminating these diseases.

Integrating NTD programmes into primary healthcare systems is also essential for building more resilient and sustainable health infrastructures. When NTD treatments become part of routine health services, such as antenatal care or regular health check-ups, it ensures that interventions are accessible year-round and are not dependent on specific funding cycles or vertical programmes. It helps to ensure that NTD control and elimination efforts are sustained over the long term, ultimately helping countries achieve broader public health goals.



KEEPING SCORE: RWANDA'S INTEGRATED MALARIA AND NTD SCORECARD

Rwanda has made significant progress in reducing the burden of both malaria and NTDs in recent years. This has been greatly assisted by their integrated Malaria and NTD scorecard, which is used to review progress and identify and address bottlenecks. The improved data management has enabled evidence-based decision-making and has led to the implementation of targeted, innovative and high-impact interventions in the fight against NTDs.

The integration of NTD and malaria activities began in Rwanda in 2012, with the scorecard being developed in 2017 and key programme indicators added in 2019. The scorecard, a simple yet comprehensive tool to communicate the status of malaria and NTD control to a range of stakeholders, is now one of the main tools used by the Malaria and Other Parasitic Diseases Division (MOPDD) and its partners.

Integrated Malaria and NTDs Scorecard, January-March 2024

District	(1) Proportion of STH	(2) Number of Schisto cases	(3) Rabies deaths	(4) Snake bites cases DPD	(5) Malaria proportional morbidity	(6) Coverage of LLINs in EPI	(7) Coverage of LLINs in ANC	(8) Malaria Incidence	(9) Proportion of severe malaria to total malaria cases
Bugesera District	2.0%	1	0	89	1.3%	100%	99%	16	0.4%
Burera District	18.2%	1	0	15	0.7%	100%	99%	9	1.0%
Gakenke District	8.8%	0	0	17	0.5%	100%	100%	9	0.2%
Gasabo District	0.7%	0	0	19	2.4%	69%	49%	18	0.4%
Gatumba District	1.8%	2	0	19	0.1%	100%	100%	2	0.6%
Gicumbi District	13.5%	1	0	12	1.4%	98%	98%	29	0.4%
Gisagara District	4.8%	3	0	26	1.2%	100%	100%	16	0.4%
Huye District	15.8%	5	0	17	0.2%	99%	98%	2	1.2%
Kamonyi District	1.9%	1	0	4	0.3%	100%	97%	4	0.3%
Karongi District	16.4%	3	0	20	0.7%	101%	100%	11	0.8%
Kayanza District	1.2%	0	0	20	0.4%	101%	100%	2	0.8%
Kicukiro District	2.3%	8	0	25	2.6%	63%	67%	20	2.9%
Kirehe District	2.2%	3	0	42	0.4%	101%	99%	5	0.3%
Muhanga District	8.1%	2	0	17	0.6%	100%	100%	18	0.0%
Musanze District	14.3%	4	0	23	0.7%	97%	82%	5	2.1%
Ngoma District	2.7%	2	0	76	0.1%	101%	100%	1	0.9%
Ngororero District	16.8%	0	0	100	0.3%	96%	90%	5	0.9%
Nyabihu District	23.0%	1	0	9	0.3%	102%	98%	1	1.6%
Nyagatare District	7.5%	2	0	50	2.1%	99%	99%	21	0.3%
Nyamagabe District	33.0%	0	0	17	4.6%	99%	100%	44	0.3%
Nyamatahe District	14.3%	2	0	30	4.6%	94%	94%	38	1.5%
Nyanza District	11.1%	1	0	6	0.5%	100%	100%	5	1.6%

In all five provinces of Rwanda, members of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have been using the scorecard since 2020. They use the data to guide their planning, mobilise resources, implement social behaviour change interventions and mobilise their communities. The CSOs discuss the scorecard with community health workers and others at the community level and request funds from the Ministry of Health, through the MOPDD, for improvements if some aspects are underperforming.



Use of the scorecard is also leading to increased advocacy and resource mobilisation for NTDs at the national level. The Government of Rwanda committed additional funding for mass drug administration and – with the scorecard showing high case numbers of soil-transmitted helminthiasis in Q4 2019 – for the training of 42,000 community health workers in the diagnosis and treatment of NTDs. Drug donations from new partnerships have increased too: 29.4 million tablets of mebendazole for mass deworming of adults and children were donated by Johnson & Johnson for the 2021 and 2022; 16 million tablets of praziquantel for mass deworming of adults were donated by Merck, also for 2021 and 2022 (a commitment that runs until 2025); and Vitamin Angels have donated 1.7 million doses of albendazole each year for preschool aged children in districts with a high prevalence of soil-transmitted helminthiasis.

A range of other outcomes have also been triggered by the scorecard. For schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminthiasis surveillance, 20 surveillance sentinel sites have been equipped, and nurses, lab technicians and community health workers have been trained to help raise awareness of these diseases in their communities and support patient follow-up. And in cases of emergency, the use of drones from the Zipline company have supported the delivery of campaign and routine but emergent medical products (post exposure prophylaxis for rabies and antivenom for snake bites) in remote areas when there was a stockout or emergency cases.

Financing

Sustainable, long-term financing is crucial to ensure success in the fight against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

NTDs disproportionately impact the world's most vulnerable populations, leading to severe health consequences and limiting people's ability to earn a livelihood. The economic toll is immense, with out-of-pocket health expenditures and lost wages due to NTDs estimated to be more than \$33 billion (USD) every year. For households already living in poverty, this financial strain perpetuates cycles of inequality and hinders national economic growth.

Significant progress has already been made against NTDs, the investments leading to lives saved, disabilities prevented and diseases eliminated. Indeed, investments in NTDs are one of the most cost-effective approaches in global health. NTD interventions, such as mass drug administration, provide a significant return on investment (ROI), with an estimated net benefit of about US\$25 for every US\$1 invested. They are not only affordable, but can also be implemented successfully as public health interventions even in low-income countries. Tackling NTDs is recognized as a development 'best-buy', offering both measurable impact and scalable solutions.

But to achieve the goals of the WHO NTD road map 2021–2030, existing donors must sustain or increase their funding, new donors need to be attracted, and innovative strategies to mobilise new resources must be implemented, with affected countries playing a central role. Sustainable, predictable, long-term financing mechanisms for NTDs are crucial – their lack has hindered progress, particularly with declines in official development assistance and the growth of demands on limited budgets. Integrating financing for NTDs into broader global health agendas – such as infectious disease elimination, health systems strengthening, pandemic preparedness, and climate change – will ensure that NTDs remain a priority. This approach fosters a deeper understanding of their interconnectedness with other global challenges, and helps safeguard the progress made in combating these debilitating diseases.

REAFFIRMED COMMITMENTS: INVESTMENTS BY CANADA AGAINST TRACHOMA

Through research, advocacy and strategic investments, Canada has been a steadfast contributor in the global fight against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). In September 2023, at the 78th United Nations General Assembly, Canada reaffirmed this commitment by announcing a \$15 million (CAD) investment to eliminate trachoma as a public health problem in the Americas.

Trachoma is the leading cause of infectious blindness worldwide, affecting 1.9 million people and endangering the vision of millions more. The disease is particularly prevalent in areas with poor sanitation and limited access to clean water. In the Americas, trachoma is still a significant health issue, especially in the rural and indigenous communities of countries like Brazil, Colombia and Peru. Globally, as of April 2024, an estimated 103 million people in 39 countries live in areas at risk of vision loss due to trachoma, with the burden in Latin America being the focus of Canada's latest initiative.

The new funding, in partnership with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), is the first financial commitment made by Canada following its endorsement of the Kigali Declaration on NTDs in June 2022. The investment targets ten countries in Latin America; through this initiative, over 5.6 million people will be freed from the risk of vision loss due to trachoma, and an additional 4 million people will receive necessary support to prevent future infections.

The Canadian Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases (CNNTD), representing 300 individuals and 13 organisational members, has also played a vital role in advocating for Canada's increased investment in NTDs. Over the past six years, the CNNTD has raised awareness and mobilised Canadian resources for NTDs to further Canada's significant influence in global health investments and partnership to date. This recent investment not only highlights Canada's dedication to ending NTDs but also reaffirms the value of partnership to achieve ambitious global NTD elimination goals by 2030.

UNITED FRONT: GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AGAINST NTDs IN NIGER

Financial and political backing from the Niger Government is helping the country make significant strides in combating NTDs.

Despite the country's high burden of 14 NTDs – 72 districts are endemic to at least one of these diseases – Niger's concerted efforts have led to notable achievements. In 2013, the country was certified free of transmission of *Dracunculus medinensis*, the cause of Guinea worm disease. Onchocerciasis is under surveillance and the elimination dossier has been submitted to the WHO for verification. And the prevalence of lymphatic filariasis, trachoma and soil-transmitted helminthiasis has dropped in prevalence due to sustained mass drug administration campaigns, vector control measures and other interventions.

With integrated programmes that address multiple diseases simultaneously, an integrated communication plan for malaria and NTDs, and close connections with the community, Niger's approach shows the benefits of collective action and long-term investment in public health.

This was boosted when, in 2019, Niger's NTD scorecard tool for accountability and action was officially launched by former President His Excellency Mahamadou Issoufou. The scorecard tracks 12 indicators to monitor the progress against key NTDs, and has indicators on advocacy, behaviour change communication and programme management. Fifty national deputies, members of the National Assembly of Niger, were then trained on the use of the scorecard in 2022. The training strengthened the deputies' awareness around advocacy for mobilising internal resources for NTD control.

Following this training, the National NTD Coordinator was invited to present the national NTD situation and gaps to Parliament. He advocated for a new, specific NTD budget line to be included in the national budget, a proposal that was supported by Members of Niger's Parliament.



This led to the creation, in 2023, of a budget line for NTDs, and the Niger Government contributed USD 291,000 USD to support the National NTD programme, the National Program for the Devolution of Onchocerciasis and the Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis, the National Program for the Fight Against Schistosomiasis and Soil-Transmitted Helminths, and the National Eye Health Program. The funding supports operational costs, capacity-building initiatives, some NTD interventions including supervisions and surveillance, and the procurement of essential medicines and supplies. In 2024, the government of Niger has allocated domestic resources of 524,000 to NTD programs.

Alongside financial developments, new policies include the NTD Master Plan for 2022–2026 and the national advocacy plan for NTD control for 2022–2025. And the Government's new Health and Social Development Plan for 2022–2026, which aims to ensure that 'the population benefits from universal access to quality social and health services that meet their needs', now includes NTDs.

Climate change and NTDs

Climate change poses a growing threat to global health, particularly through its impact on NTDs. Rising temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events are altering the habitats of disease vectors, such as mosquitoes and molluscs, potentially expanding the range of NTDs like dengue, chikungunya and human and animal schistosomiasis into new regions.

WHO's recent scoping review on climate change, NTDs, and malaria emphasises that these shifts could reverse decades of progress in controlling these diseases. Without immediate action, the hard-won victories of the past two decades may be at risk. To protect this progress, we must integrate climate resilience into health systems, ensuring that NTDs are part of the broader climate and health conversation.

Predictive modelling is essential for an understanding of how disease patterns might shift due to climate change. It allows health systems to plan ahead, enhance their infrastructure, invest in targeted

research, and foster cross-sector collaboration. Strong early warning and detection systems, trained health workers, and climate-resilient health services all need to be prioritised. Furthermore, it is vital that the health impacts of climate change, including the spread of NTDs, are made visible to decision-makers, as this will unlock much-needed funding and drive critical action.

Not only is more funding needed but higher-quality investments in climate and health solutions are also required. Currently, only a small fraction (0.05%) of multilateral climate funding is dedicated to human health projects, an allocation that must grow significantly if we are to safeguard the future health of populations worldwide. Mobilising resources and political will now is essential to protect against the predicted expansion of NTDs and to ensure continued progress in disease elimination efforts.

RISING LEVELS: CLIMATE CHANGE AND DENGUE IN HAITI

Dengue virus is a climate-sensitive disease, as it is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito and its association with water storage. In Haiti, climate change is associated with a surge in cases of dengue.

In the last fifty years, the incidence of dengue fever has increased 30-fold by one estimate, to an annual rate of 390 million infections worldwide, 96 million of which are symptomatic cases*. An estimated 3.9 billion people, in 129 countries, are at risk of infection.

For the already stretched Haitian health system, increasing numbers of dengue cases present another difficult challenge. For example, there were only 90 suspected cases in 2018, but 6298 in 2021**. And this is a trend that is continuing across the Caribbean region today – in the first half of 2024, the total number of reported cases for the Caribbean had reached nearly 57,000, a 469% increase over the same period in 2023.

In Haiti, both temperatures and rainfall have changed in the last few decades. Mean temperatures have increased by 0.45°C since 1960, and mean annual rainfall has decreased by 5 mm per month per decade in the same period. The typical temperature range in Haiti is suitable for the development of mosquitos throughout the year, increasing temperatures with the onset of rains leads to more mosquitos over the summer. And while rainfall is required to create

breeding sites, drought can lead to increased use of artificial water storage, which may also increase vector abundance. Looking forward, the weather in Haiti is projected to become even warmer, with decreased rainfall. It is likely the dengue season will occur earlier with more cases. The regions affected may change, however – the spread of dengue in Haiti is anticipated to shift from the western regions toward the central areas of the country.

This shifting and spreading of the areas threatened by dengue are occurring in Africa and Europe too. With ongoing climate change anticipated to further extend the range of the mosquitoes that carry dengue, the population at risk of the disease in several Southern and Central African countries is likely to increase, as it is in areas of western, central and eastern Europe.

*WHO: Dengue and severe dengue (<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/dengue-and-severe-dengue>).

**PAHO/WHO Data – National Dengue fever cases (<https://www3.paho.org/data/index.php/en/mnu-topics/indicadores-dengue-en/dengue-nacional-en/252-dengue-pais-ano-en.html>).

Calls to action

Based on this assessment of progress and challenges in Francophone countries' fight against NTDs, the following three calls to action urge leaders to renew their commitments and take decisive steps to accelerate progress toward eliminating these diseases once and for all.

CALLING FOR

We urge all Francophone countries to endorse the Kigali Declaration on NTDs and commit to ending the burden of these diseases.

Signatories of the Kigali Declaration on NTDs are united in a shared mission to adopt people-centred approaches and work across sectors to meet and sustain the NTD targets set in the Sustainable Development Goals and the WHO NTD road map. This Declaration places individuals, communities, and countries at the heart of the NTD response, with each

signatory playing a crucial role in ending these diseases.

Six Francophone countries – Canada, Djibouti, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Rwanda, and Vanuatu – have already taken the lead by endorsing the Declaration. Now, it is time for all Francophone countries to join this global movement. By endorsing the

Kigali Declaration, countries can demonstrate the strength, commitment, and solidarity of the Francophone world – uniting governments, NGOs, foundations, research institutes, and the private sector in the fight against NTDs.



CALLING FOR

We call upon Francophone countries to take decisive action in the fight against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) by contributing to the Reaching the Last Mile Fund expansion (RLMF).

The RLM Fund expansion is a 7-year, \$500M program, operational from 2024 through 2030. The expansion builds on the success of the RLM Fund, which was launched in 2017 as a proof of concept for ending river blindness in Africa and supported a select number of countries in their efforts towards the elimination of river blindness and lymphatic filariasis, where co-endemic.

The Fund is in alignment with the African Union Continental Framework and Common Africa Position for an Africa Free of NTDs,

endorsed by AU Heads of State in 2023, the 2021–2030 NTD road map endorsed by WHO Member States through World Health Assembly decision 73(33), and the Sustainable Development Goals (3.3).

The RLMF presents an unprecedented opportunity to make history, but we face a significant funding gap to reach the fundraising target.

While \$380 million of the \$450 million donor target has been secured, endemic countries have raised only \$3 million of their

\$50 million goal. As Francophone countries, many of you represent countries affected by these NTDs, and your leadership is crucial. We urge you to contribute financially to the RLMF and to help reach the \$500 million total target.

Additionally, we ask all members to advocate for this cause, raise awareness, and implement supporting policies within your borders.

CALLING FOR

We urge Francophone countries to advocate for innovative funding mechanisms to provide robust, predictable, long-term financing for NTDs.

As we reflect on the progress made in combating NTDs, it is imperative that we confront a critical challenge: the absence of sustainable, predictable, long-term funding mechanisms for NTDs. In an era of constrained official development assistance (ODA) funding, innovative and integrated financial solutions are more necessary than ever to ensure that NTD programmes are sufficiently resourced to meet the targets of the WHO

NTD road map 2021–2030.

We call on all partners to advocate for the establishment of a dedicated disease elimination funding track within the 21st replenishment of the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA21), and to support the expansion of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (GFATM) to include NTD funding beyond co-morbidities and co-infection to health system strengthening.

By rallying behind these initiatives and pledging the necessary resources, action, and collaboration, we can end the burden of NTDs once and for all. Together, we can unite, act, and eliminate NTDs.

The Kigali Declaration

The Kigali Declaration is a high-level, global commitment that seeks to accelerate the fight against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) by mobilising political will, securing sustainable financing, and driving collaborative action to eliminate NTDs and improve health outcomes for the world's most vulnerable populations.

Building on the progress of the London Declaration on Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) and putting individuals and communities at the centre of the NTD response, the signatories of this declaration come together to commit to ending NTDs and deliver on our commitments and contributions by:

- Working to ensure that people affected by NTDs, – particularly women and girls, persons with disabilities, and minority and underrepresented groups – are at the centre of NTD programmes and decision-making processes.
- Being champions and ambassadors for tackling NTDs by increasing the recognition and relevance of NTDs locally, nationally, regionally and globally and ensuring NTDs are a priority at the highest levels.
- Sustaining a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach to tackling NTDs, including One Health, that recognises the interactions of human, animal and environmental health and mitigates against the impact of climate change on NTDs.
- Increasing the provision of services that enable equitable access to the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and morbidity management of NTDs.
- Unlocking domestic resources, including strengthening public health infrastructure to deliver effective NTD services, complemented by external resources.

- Identifying sustainable financing opportunities and being stewards of the resources available to maximise impact and value for money.
- Working in a coordinated and integrated manner that is rooted in primary healthcare and is embedded within resilient national systems that serve affected communities.
- Investing in research and innovation in new drugs and diagnostics for areas prioritised in the WHO 2030 NTD road map and, as appropriate, facilitating technology transfer and financing to ensure there is a sustainable supply of commodities for NTDs.
- Improving the collection and use of data to guide programmes, increase their effectiveness and accelerate progress.
- Transparently monitoring and reporting on the progress made on the commitments and contributions laid out in this declaration, to hold each other to account while supporting national ownership of country NTD programmes.

By working together, adopting people-centred approaches and working across sectors, we can meet and sustain the NTD targets in the SDGs and the WHO 2030 NTD road map. We can eradicate two diseases, eliminate at least one disease in 100 countries, and decrease the number of people requiring interventions for NTDs by 90%. These commitments will help relieve suffering, decrease the health-related drivers of poverty, reduce disability and stigma, and improve mental wellbeing and inclusion in society.

The full text of the Declaration is available at: <https://unitingtocombatntds.org/en/the-kigali-declaration/the-declaration/>



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Unite. Act. Eliminate.

UNITING TO COMBAT NTDs

Uniting to Combat NTDs is a global advocacy organisation that exists to end neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) by mobilising resources in support of the World Health Organization's NTD roadmap and the Sustainable Development Goals. We envision a world where no-one suffers from these preventable and treatable diseases. We work with over 150 partners around the world to create the political will and an enabling environment for change to collectively address the NTD crisis. Together, we champion investment for NTDs.



unitingtocombatntds.org

AFRICAN LEADERS MALARIA ALLIANCE (ALMA)

Founded in 2009, ALMA is a coalition of 55 African Heads of State and Government working to eliminate malaria in Africa by 2030. Its mandate also supports progress in reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, nutrition and neglected tropical diseases.



alma2030.org

SPEAK UP AFRICA

Speak Up Africa is an African organization committed to building an Africa where growth and sustainable development are driven by African citizens themselves. We unite, inspire, and advocate. With a focus on strategic communications, policies, and advocacy, we are dedicated to helping African leaders and citizens actively participate in identifying and developing solutions to address major challenges on our continent such as malaria, neglected tropical diseases, vaccination, sanitation, gender equality, and global health research and development.



www.speakupafrika.org