



## GLOBAL NTD MESSAGING FRAMEWORK (2025)








### Why This Framework? Why Now?

- Aid cuts are imperiling 20 years of progress. Recent funding withdrawals, most notably the U.S. cessation of NTD program support and European Union and UK reductions, have delayed nearly 50 treatment campaigns, putting 143 million people at renewed risk.<sup>1</sup>
- Service disruptions mirror pandemic setbacks. Over 70% of WHO country offices report health service disruptions comparable to COVID-19 peaks, with NTD programs among the hardest hit. Stockouts and layoffs are already occurring in affected communities.<sup>2</sup>
- This is an inflection point, not a retreat. With global attention shifting toward security, migration, and climate change threats, we must reassert the relevance of NTDs to these broader issues as well as maintaining NTD's positioning as one of the highest ROI investments in health, delivering measurable elimination wins and strengthening systems in alignment with equity agendas.
- This is a rare leverage moment. NTDs combine cost-effectiveness, measurable impact, and moral purpose. This makes them uniquely fundable in a strategy-driven aid architecture that prioritizes return, resilience, and reputational value.

### Intended use

This framework offers a unified messaging backbone for the NTD Policy and Advocacy Community, aligning partners on strategy, values, and evidence-based narratives that resonate with today's decision-makers. As a common framework for partners, it ensures consistency of message but should also be tailored and adapted as necessary and appropriate for specific opportunities. Of note, it also derives key insights from the [Global Perceptions Hub](#), the [Escape the Neglect series](#) and reflects input and alignment across partners in the NTD Policy and Advocacy Community.

## Included in this framework:

-  Topline Narrative >
-  Message 1. Investments in NTDs Benefit Everyone >
-  Message 2. Health System Sustainability & Resilience >
-  Message 3. The Promise of Innovation >
-  Message 4. Economic Self-Sufficiency >
-  Message 5. Local Leadership, Accelerated Progress >
-  Call to Action >

## Background

Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) are defined not only by their biology—they are a diverse group of 21 preventable infectious diseases—but by neglect itself. They have traditionally been overlooked in global health policy and financing, despite their devastating toll. They both reflect and reinforce the geography of inequality—concentrated in the poorest, most marginalized communities, where health systems are weakest. A stark reminder of systemic neglect and disempowerment NTDs affect over a billion individuals and are a major obstacle to economic development. Eliminating NTDs is therefore an essential component of reducing poverty.



Concentrated in tropical and sub-tropical regions, where social and environmental conditions allow them to thrive, NTDs are transmitted by various parasites and bacteria that can spread through dirty water, soil, bites from insects like mosquitoes and sandflies, or close contact with other people. The population requiring interventions for at least one NTD is estimated at 1.5 billion, representing a staggering global health burden.

These diseases are painful and debilitating and can have wide-ranging effects on people's lives. NTDs cause severe outcomes such as blindness, disability, and stigma and hinder educational and economic opportunities.

## Topline Narrative

NTDs remain one of the biggest—but most solvable—challenges in global health for disadvantaged populations. Thanks to historic progress, as of December 2025, 58 countries have eliminated at least one NTD, and more than 860 million people received treatment in 2023 alone. But now, that progress is at serious risk, making the 2030 road map targets unachievable.<sup>3</sup>

We've hit a critical crossroads:

- Funding is falling short, with a \$2.5 billion gap putting efforts to end diseases like trachoma, river blindness, and schistosomiasis in jeopardy.<sup>4</sup>

- Cuts to development aid for health have led to treatment delays, expired medicine stockpiles, and more pressure on health systems in over 26 countries.<sup>5</sup>
- NTDs are increasingly being sidelined as attention and resources shift toward more visible or politically urgent health challenges in an evolving landscape of global health, which is diverting funding and jeopardizing decades of progress in NTD control, elimination, and eradication.
- NTDs are spreading to new locations, fueled by climate change, conflict, and displacement—putting more communities at risk.

And yet, NTDs are one of the smartest investments in global health. Every \$1 invested can return up to \$25 by boosting productivity, supporting women’s health, and strengthening universal health coverage.<sup>6</sup>

This is a solvable problem, but strong advocacy with a unified voice is essential for NTDs to receive adequate attention within national and global health priorities.

### **Topline Message:**

NTDs are diseases of neglect, thriving where poverty is deepest and health systems are weakest. This neglect is unacceptable, but reversible. With proven tools and growing momentum, countries are showing that elimination is possible. But NTD financing is in crisis, and urgent action is required to maintain investments and progress. With sustained commitment from international donors and national governments, we can Escape the Neglect.

## **Message 1. Investments in NTDs Benefit Everyone**

### **Core message:**

Investing in the fight against NTDs improves health security for everyone, because health threats know no borders. Too often deprioritized, sustained investments in the elimination of NTDs creates healthier, more stable communities, stronger economies, and more secure societies for us all.

### **Sub-messages:**

- A. In a tense global context fraught with complex challenges and worrying trends, we must remind ourselves of our interconnectedness—global public health presents an opportunity to renew our sense of collective responsibility toward each other.
- B. Fundamentally, NTDs are an issue of equity—an expression of a deeply unequal world. Good health is a baseline need for all of humanity; amidst deep political and cultural divides, it is something that unites us all, and it is a prerequisite for a thriving and peaceful global community.
- C. Eliminating NTDs is inseparable from realizing universal human rights. Beyond the right to health, NTDs intersect with rights to adequate housing, safe water and sanitation, education, and decent work. A human rights-based approach means ensuring that the most marginalized communities have equal access to the services and conditions that enable health, dignity, and opportunity.
- D. NTDs contribute to destabilizing communities, countries and regions, affecting global trade, security, and migration. Investments in NTDs abroad also help donor countries: improving trade environments, reducing economic forced migration, and lowering long-term emergency response costs.

- E. Eliminating NTDs in developing countries also safeguards developed countries, whose health systems are not well equipped to handle these diseases if they spread across borders.
- F. Supporting NTD control and elimination enhances global health security and pandemic preparedness by building disease surveillance capacity.

### Proof points:

- In 2025, **47 mass drug administration campaigns were delayed due to sudden donor withdrawals**, including the U.S. halt of funding and EU reductions. This affected at least **143 million people in endemic countries**, disrupting disease control efforts and threatening resurgence of previously contained NTDs—with implications both within and across borders.<sup>7</sup>
- By strengthening disease surveillance systems for trachoma, onchocerciasis, and leishmaniasis, NTD programs also build **early detection capacity applicable to emerging zoonotic and pandemic threats**.
- **Climate change is significantly increasing the threat** of vector-borne NTDs by expanding their geographic range, altering transmission patterns, worsening extreme weather events, vector and pathogen adaptation, and straining public health systems. For example, a northward shift of the dengue-epidemic belt in parts of Europe and the northern U.S. has been predicted, with projected changes in dengue transmission in lowland areas of the Western Pacific and Eastern Mediterranean regions.<sup>8</sup> By controlling the current spread of vector-borne NTDs, it reduces the risk of future outbreaks.
- Integrated NTD platforms in countries like Ethiopia and Nigeria have **enabled dual-use logistics** for COVID-19 vaccine rollouts and NTD treatment campaigns, reinforcing health security through shared infrastructure.
- Global mass treatment campaigns, such as the WHO-led NTD week, **have mobilized millions of health workers and volunteers** across dozens of countries, creating a truly global movement for health equity.
- NTDs have some of the highest returns on investment in global health, **up to \$25 for every \$1 spent on treatment**, representing a 30% annualized rate of return.<sup>9</sup>
- Migration corridors affected by NTD burdens often lead to **higher displacement pressures**. Stability through disease control contributes to reduced out-migration risk.

In 2025, at least

**143 million people**

were affected by delays in drug administration campaigns due to donor withdrawals.

## Message 2. Health System Sustainability & Resilience

### Core message:

Eliminating NTDs strengthens health systems and builds resilience to future shocks, from climate change to conflict.

### Sub-messages:

- A. NTD programs improve access to health care for underserved communities and help strengthen



primary healthcare systems, a backbone of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), ensuring no one is left behind. The NTD index can be used to measure equity in progress towards UHC.<sup>10</sup>

- B. Strong political leadership from endemic country governments is critical, evidenced through the integration of NTDs into national development plans and sufficient financial support to national NTD programs.
- C. Climate-sensitive NTDs are at risk of resurgence. By investing in vector-borne NTDs control today, it builds the foundation for health systems to prevent, prepare, and respond to future outbreak threats.
- D. The newly adopted WHO Pandemic Agreement highlights the One Health approach as a core strategy to address future pandemic risk. Since many NTDs are spread by animals, efforts to control them have provided valuable experience in applying One Health. NTD programs continue to serve as a testing ground for new tools and methods to reduce disease risks.

### Proof points:

- In Nigeria, integrating NTD services into the PHC revitalization strategy has increased access to health services for rural populations, with **over 80,000 health workers** trained to deliver integrated care, including for NTDs.
- Ghana's integration of NTD indicators into the DHIS2 improved planning and surveillance, **enabling data-driven targeting** of praziquantel treatments for schistosomiasis and **mapping progress toward elimination**.
- Following severe flooding in Mozambique in 2022, **NTD teams were among the first responders**, using trained community drug distributors to monitor disease outbreaks and support resilience efforts alongside humanitarian response.
- **Leishmaniasis outbreaks in Kenya's arid regions have increased due to climate variability.** Kenya's use of a One Health platform has enabled coordinated veterinary and human health responses to control disease reservoirs.



## Message 3. The Promise of Innovation

### Core message:

Investing in better tools, systems, approaches, and partnerships today will reduce health costs, dependency, and disease burdens tomorrow.

### Sub-messages:

- A. Innovation takes many forms: innovation in disease integration, in partnership models, in interventions, in multi-sectoral approaches. Innovations in these areas are crucial to beating such a wide array of pathogens and vectors.
- B. Innovative public-private partnerships have scaled-up critical NTD interventions, with pharmaceutical companies donating 30 billion treatments between 2011 and 2024.<sup>11</sup>

- C. Smarter investments (not just new ones) are making NTD programs faster, cheaper, and more scalable.
- D. Increased innovation would be a game changer for NTD elimination. However, due to limited commercial interest, R&D in tools for combating NTDs need public funding support.
- E. Investing in optimized delivery (e.g., integrated platforms, digital tracking, training) reduces per-treatment cost, minimizes wastage, and increases coverage, all delivering value for money.

### Proof points:

- Since 2007, Merck KGaA has **donated over 1.5 billion praziquantel tablets** to combat schistosomiasis, **one of the largest and most impactful medicine donation programs** in global health. These contributions have helped reach millions of school-aged children across endemic countries, contributing to significant reductions in disease burden. With improved diagnostics, demand generation, and alignment between supply and country readiness, even more of this valuable pipeline can be utilized to reach the communities most in need. In some settings, operational barriers, such as delivery bottlenecks or fragmented data systems, have limited full deployment. Addressing these gaps will not only enhance the impact of existing donations but also strengthen national health systems and reinforce the value of public-private partnerships.
- In Burkina Faso, national schistosomiasis control **reduced prevalence among school-age children from nearly 60% to under 7%** between 2004 and 2006, demonstrating the power of mass drug delivery.<sup>12</sup>
- India's National Leprosy Eradication Programme **uses AI-based mapping tools to detect high-risk clusters**, reducing new case detection delay by 35% in pilot districts.
- In Benin, the **introduction of mobile-based adverse drug reaction** tracking during ivermectin distribution campaigns allowed real-time responses to side effects, improving trust and uptake.
- New single-dose triple-drug therapies (e.g., IDA for lymphatic filariasis) tested in countries like Papua New Guinea and Indonesia have **shortened treatment cycles from 5 years to 2 years**.
- In Kenya, a new Skin NTDs App, powered by AI, **has shown promising preliminary results in effective diagnostic capability** for 12 skin-related NTDs, showing an average sensitivity of 80% when compared with the diagnoses provided by three board-certified dermatologists.<sup>13</sup>



## Message 4. Economic Self-Sufficiency



### Core message:

Healthy children go to school. Healthy adults go to work. Diseases rob people of opportunity. NTDs rarely kill quickly, but leave people with long-term pain, disability, and stigma, leading to children missing school and adults prevented from working—often for years. Breaking this cycle not only restores health but also reduces poverty, unlocks education, productivity, and independence from aid.

**Sub-messages:**

- A. Left untreated, NTDs trap families in cycles of illness, lost productivity and social hardship thereby perpetuating generational poverty
- B. Unburdening individuals from NTDs allows them to support their families, participate in—and contribute to—the economy.

**Proof points:**

- In Niger, the 2023 elimination of onchocerciasis freed up tens of thousands of hectares of fertile riverside land in Dosso and Tillabéri regions. These lands, once abandoned due to blackfly infestations and risk of blindness, are now being reclaimed for rice, millet, and vegetable farming, boosting food security and incomes in rural communities. **Land productivity and value have risen substantially in post-elimination zones.**<sup>14</sup>
- The annual income lost due to NTD-related out-of-pocket health costs and missed work is **estimated at over \$33 billion globally**, limiting families' ability to save, invest, or escape poverty.<sup>15</sup>
- The economic benefits of global NTD elimination from 2015–2030 are projected at **\$342 billion in avoided health expenditures and increased productivity.**<sup>16</sup>

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**\$33+ billion**

of lost income annually from out-of-pocket health expenses and missed work due to NTDs.

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**Message 5. Local Leadership, Accelerated Progress****Core message:**

Communities living with NTDs are leading the way in defeating them with expertise, innovation, and determination. This momentum shows that elimination is not only possible, it's happening faster than ever before.

**Sub-messages:**

- A. Domestic ownership and financing of NTD programs are increasing, a key step toward graduation from donor dependency.
- B. Country ownership is critical to increasing resource optimization through disease integration and mainstreaming NTDs in national health services.
- C. Endemic countries have deep reservoirs of expertise and leadership to fight NTDs, working in collaboration and cooperation with national and international partners.
- D. The local expertise developed in fighting these diseases is of critical value to our collective ability to tackle a diverse range of future and existing public health concerns around the globe.
- E. Active engagement of direct beneficiaries and communities in NTD-affected localities is empowering, increases programme outputs and preserves public health gains using context-appropriate approaches.
- F. As a testament to the power of local leadership in partnership with global actors, eliminations are coming faster than ever—58 countries now having eliminated between 1 and 4 NTDs.

### Proof points:

- **Togo is the first country in the world to eliminate four NTDs** (Guinea worm, lymphatic filariasis, sleeping sickness, and trachoma) driven by national ownership, empowered community drug distributors, and sustained political commitment.<sup>17</sup>
- Nigeria developed and launched its 2023–2027 NTD Master Plan with a strategic focus on **reducing donor dependency and scaling domestic financing**.
- Rwanda, Ghana, and Kenya have formally **integrated NTDs into broader UHC strategies**, with co-financing mechanisms across government ministries.
- Togo, Ghana, and Benin have **integrated NTD platforms with immunization, school health, and WASH services**, optimizing delivery across diseases.
- In Côte d'Ivoire, onchocerciasis, lymphatic filariasis, and trachoma programs were successfully **bundled through local planning**, reducing campaign costs.

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As of December 2025,

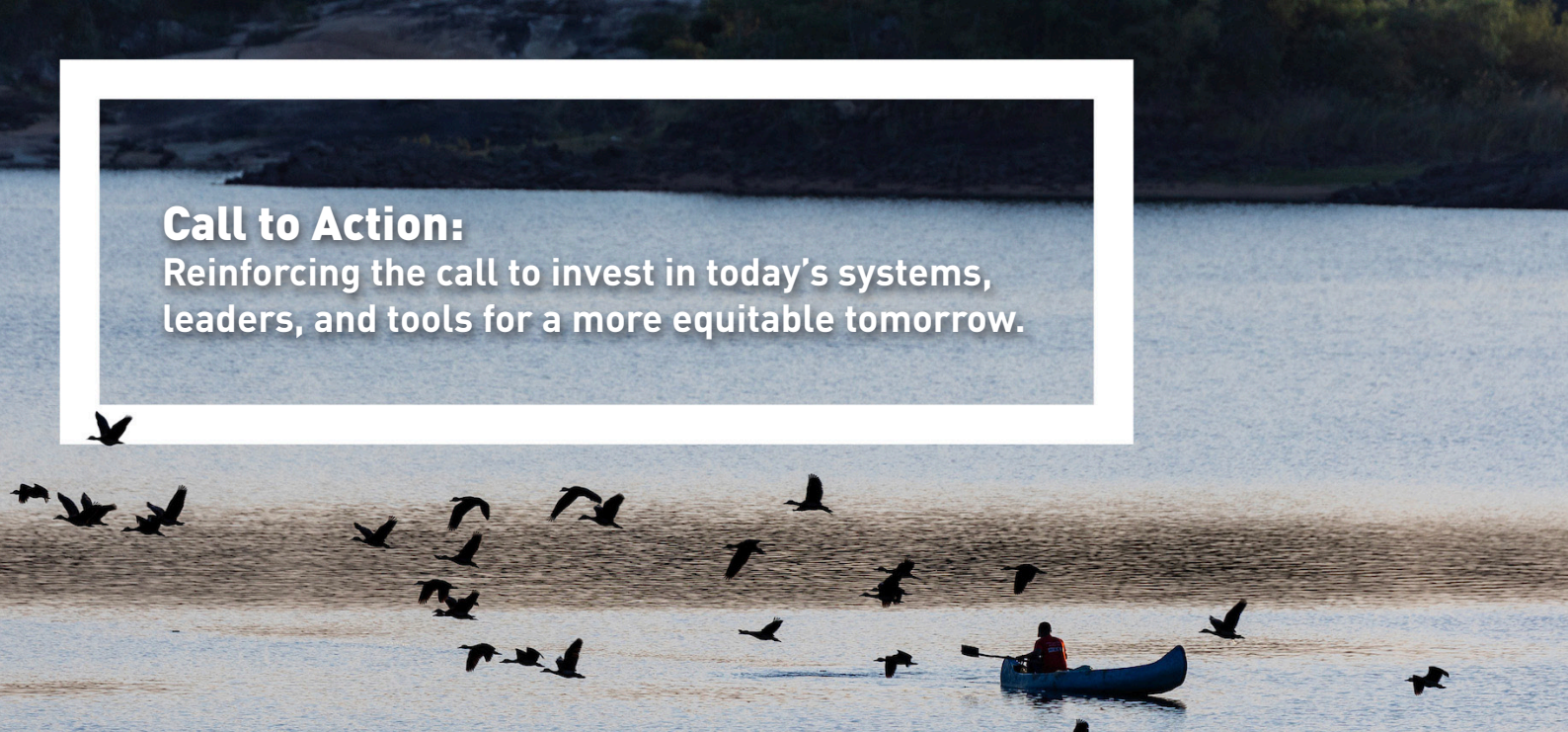
**58**  
**countries**

have eliminated at least one NTD.

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**Call to Action:**  
Reinforcing the call to invest in today's systems,  
leaders, and tools for a more equitable tomorrow.

We must align our advocacy with the audiences that shape the future of NTD elimination. The messages above form a shared narrative. Below are tailored calls to action that partners can adapt depending on context and target:

#### **For Policymakers:**

- Integrate NTDs into national PHC/UHC packages and ensure budget allocations are reflected in domestic health financing.
- Endorse and implement the Kigali Declaration and embed NTD targets in national development plans.
- Champion NTD goals across ministries, including water, education, and finance.

#### **For Multilaterals and UN Agencies:**

- Safeguard funding lines for NTDs in the face of budget reallocations.
- Elevate NTDs within One Health and climate resilience strategies and the WHO Pandemic Agreement.
- Support WHO and ESPEN in delivering country technical support and integrated surveillance.

#### **For Multilateral Development Banks:**

- Create dedicated disease elimination tracks within IDA21, AfDB, and other platforms.
- Support cross-sector investments (e.g., WASH, education, infrastructure) that also advance NTD goals.
- Finance health system strengthening that enables integrated delivery of NTD and UHC services.

#### **For Philanthropic and Private Sector Donors**

- Support country-led and owned national plans for NTD elimination.
- Acknowledge and sustain the vital role of pharmaceutical donation programs that have enabled over 30 billion treatments, a rare example of long-term global solidarity.
- Invest in innovation, including diagnostics, treatments, and delivery models.

- Support catalytic platforms like the Reaching the Last Mile Fund and Accelerate.
- Mobilize athlete and influencer engagement through campaigns like Move the Goal Post.
- Go beyond the support to NTDs covered by preventive chemotherapy and address new challenges posed by vector-borne NTDs, skin NTDs, and other neglected conditions.



### **For Advocates and Civil Society**

- Share local success stories that demonstrate feasibility and community leadership.
- Call attention to reversals due to funding cuts and demand action to protect progress.

**Without renewed commitment, the world risks undoing one of the most extraordinary public health victories in recent history. NTD elimination is a solvable challenge, and a test of our global priorities.**

## Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.who.int/news/item/04-06-2025-neglected-tropical-diseases-further-neglected-due-to-oda-cuts#:~:text=Early%20reports%20shared%20with%20the%20World%20Health,million%20people%20from%20the%20burden%20of%20NTDs>
  - 2 <https://www.who.int/news/item/04-06-2025-neglected-tropical-diseases-further-neglected-due-to-oda-cuts#:~:text=Early%20reports%20shared%20with%20the%20World%20Health,million%20people%20from%20the%20burden%20of%20NTDs>.
  - 3 <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-ntd-day/2025/brief-outline#:~:text=In%202023%20alone%20C%20over%20860,those%20who%20need%20them%20most>.
  - 4 WHO NTD Department, June 2025: <https://www.who.int/news/item/04-06-2025-neglected-tropical-diseases-further-neglected-due-to-oda-cuts>
  - 5 WHO NTD Department, June 2025: <https://www.who.int/news/item/04-06-2025-neglected-tropical-diseases-further-neglected-due-to-oda-cuts>
  - 6 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK525199/>
  - 7 <https://www.who.int/news/item/04-06-2025-neglected-tropical-diseases-further-neglected-due-to-oda-cuts#:~:text=Early%20reports%20shared%20with%20the%20World%20Health,million%20people%20from%20the%20burden%20of%20NTDs>.
  - 8 <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8725488/>
  - 9 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK525199/>
  - 10 Fitzpatrick C, Bangert M, Mbabazi PS, et al. Monitoring equity in universal health coverage with essential services for neglected tropical diseases: an analysis of data reported for five diseases in 123 countries over 9 years. *Lancet Glob Health*. 2018; 6(9):e980–e988.
  - 11 <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-ntd-day/2025/brief-outline>
  - 12 <https://schisto.stanford.edu/pdf/Burkina%20Faso.pdf>
  - 13 <https://www.who.int/news/item/04-12-2024-the-who-skin-ntds-app-shows-encouraging-results-in-kenya-study>
  - 14 <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/a-historic-milestone%21-who-verifies-niger-free-of-oncho-cerciasis-as-the-first-country-on-the-african-continent?>
  - 15 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK525199/#ch17.sec8>
  - 16 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK525199/#ch17.sec8>
  - 17 <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-08-2022-who-director-general-congratulates-togo-on-becoming-first-country-to-eliminate-four-neglected-tropical-diseases?>
- <https://www.who.int/en/teams/control-of-neglected-tropical-diseases/data-platforms-and-tools/country-profile>