

NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES AND COVID-19

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

NTDs

According to WHO, 20 communicable diseases affecting more than 1 billion people annually across 149 countries (1)

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) affect marginalized and impoverished populations, lacking adequate healthcare, sanitation and clean water (2). NTDs have historically received little advocacy, funding, treatment, research, and drug and diagnostic test development, however, over the past two decades, control and elimination efforts have increased through global partnerships and awareness campaigns (3).

NTD-ENDEMIC COMMUNITIES FACE INCREASED COVID-19 RELATED RISKS (4)



Inability to implement preventative measures (e.g. hand-washing, social distancing)



Over-burdened, fragile health systems



Increased risk of complications due to pre-existing health conditions, including NTDs



Stigma and social exclusion may limit health-seeking behaviour (5)

EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON NTD PROGRAMS AND PROGRESS

CHALLENGES TO NTD CARE DELIVERY

On April 1, 2020, WHO recommended postponement of "community-based surveys, active case-finding activities and mass treatment campaigns", with continuation of critical interventions for diagnosis and care (6). The pandemic has negatively affected supply chain management (e.g. delivery of medicine and diagnostics), allocation of staff and ability to seek healthcare services (6).

Key control and elimination efforts, including preventative measures and mass drug administration, have been paused. Actions must be taken to prevent a rebound in prevalence of NTDs (3).

Reduction in NTD funding due to diversion of funds towards the pandemic or economic downturn. Lack of funding limits research and development, particularly for rapid diagnostic tests vital to combatting NTDs (3).

DECREASED FUNDING FOR NTD EFFORTS

THE ROAD AHEAD: STRENGTHENING COVID-19 AND NTD RESPONSES

USING NTD PROGRAMS TO COMBAT COVID-19

Established NTD programs can help establish COVID-19 control strategies, spread information, and improve testing, reporting and patient follow-up (7).

STRATEGIES INCLUDE (3,7):

- Using infrastructure from NTD programs to establish large-scale testing, contact tracing, and hygiene education
- Integrating COVID-19 testing with local health services and NTD testing programs

WHO 2021-2030 ROAD MAP FOR NTDs

Guides countries towards prevention, control and eradication targets with a focus on multi-sectoral collaboration, program monitoring and evaluation, and domestic financing of NTD control efforts (8).

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