

Policy Brief on Canadian Engagement in the Control and Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases

Executive Summary

[The Canadian Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases](#) works with its membership and international partners to increase Canadian engagement and investment towards the prevention and treatment of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) globally. Our primary goal in the first half of 2022 is to seek endorsement and signature for the [Kigali Declaration for NTDs](#), a key global health policy and strategy to raise the commitments and contributions needed to achieve the [WHO NTD Road Map 2030](#) goals, among them being to eliminate at least 1 NTD in 100 countries by 2020. This Declaration and its endorsements will be highlighted during the Malaria and NTDs Summit held in Kigali, Rwanda, one day before the 26th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. The Summit will be attended by Presidents, Prime Ministers, CEOs, philanthropists, scientific experts and champions to highlight the action needed to end malaria and NTDs.

What are NTDs?

Addressing NTDs and ending their neglect in global health is critical to an equitable global health recovery.

Neglected Tropical Diseases:

- Are a group of 20 + conditions that can be found in nearly every country, including in Canada (endemic for scabies, rabies and echinococcus);
- Affect 1.7 billion people globally (1 in 5 people), including more than 1 billion children¹;
- More than a third of those affected live in Sub-Saharan Africa, where more than 600 million people require treatment annually;
- Create greater YLD (years lived with disability) than tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and malaria combined, highlighting the long-term impact of NTDs for the global community².

Neglected Tropical Diseases are both a consequence and cause of poverty, thriving where access to clean water, sanitation and healthcare are limited. NTDs are debilitating, keeping children out of school, adults out of work and limiting people's ability to fully participate in social and community life.

However, it doesn't have to be this way. Addressing NTDs is one of the best buys in global health today. For example, five of the most common NTDs can be prevented and treated at a cost of 50 cents per person per year³.

¹ The End Fund, 2022, <https://end.org/ntds-in-focus/>

² Houweling TAJ, Karim-Kos HE, Kulik MC, Stolk WA, Haagsma JA, Lenk EJ, et al. (2016). Socioeconomic Inequalities in Neglected Tropical Diseases: A Systematic Review. *PLoS Negl Trop Dis* 10(5): e0004546.

³ 5 of the most common NTDs (Schistosomiasis, Soil-Transmitted Helminths, Onchocerciasis, Trachoma & Lymphatic Filariasis) can be treated through preventative chemotherapy, using readily available donated medicine that can be administered through mass drug administration (MDA) programs.

Improved water and sanitation, universal health coverage (UHC) and One Health interventions also contribute to NTD elimination & control.

The WHO 2030 NTD Roadmap outlines a clear strategy to address NTDs in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular goal 3 – Health for All. This document provides the framework for research and development, monitoring and evaluation and treatment and prevention milestones for all 20 NTDs.

Investing in strategies to eliminate and control NTDs results in beneficial public health outcomes. Among them are:

- Community-based approaches used in NTD control activities help to ensure that the communities most in need are reached with preventive chemotherapy and other public health activities
- Drug donation programmes and community-based drug distribution help to avoid financial hardship associated with NTDs, resulting in household savings and increased purchasing power⁴
- NTD programmes include health system strengthening activities, support improved primary health care and are considered an indicator for equity in UHC⁵.
- Improving access to free diagnostics and treatment for NTDs can help avoid the debilitating sequelae of repeated and severe NTD infections, catastrophic health expenditures and out of pocket payments to manage resulting long-term disabilities.

Opportunities for Canadian Engagement in the Global NTD Movement

While NTDs may seem a world away from most Canadians, The Canadian Network for NTDs is made up of more than 155 Canadian and international individual members and 8 Canadian-based organizations that care about the impact that these preventable and treatable diseases have on people and communities. Many are working at home and abroad to address these diseases at the community level, in clinics, in pharmaceutical companies, within their universities, laboratories and non-profits. As a Network we believe that an end to NTDs is achievable within our lifetime.

Despite the vast need for global action to end NTDs, NTDs and the people affected by them have yet to receive proportionate global health funding, resources and political priority. COVID-19 has compromised advances in NTD elimination. This is why greater Canadian engagement by civil society and the Canadian government is urgently needed so that one day we can all see and celebrate an end to NTDs.

Previous NTD commitments made under the London Declaration of 2012 have been credited with much success in NTD elimination and control globally. Under the London Declaration, 44 countries eliminated at least 1 NTD, and more than 1 billion people were treated globally each year for 5 years between 2015-2020. These successes in global health have only been possible through partnership across multiple sectors and across borders.

⁴ The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021 <https://wormfreeworld.eiu.com/report/>

⁵ Engels, D., Zhou, XN. Neglected tropical diseases: an effective global response to local poverty-related disease priorities. *Infect Dis Poverty* 9, 10 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40249-020-0630-9>

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Canadian Network *for* NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES

The Kigali Declaration launched this January ahead of World NTD Day builds on the achievements of the London Declaration, and supports the WHO NTD Road Map 2030 goals (via commitments, contributions and collaboration). This declaration has been developed through a collaborative process led by NTD endemic countries, with contributions from diverse stakeholders. Throughout 2021, the international community, including Canadian civil society, government and parliamentarians were invited to participate in developing the Kigali Declaration, which resulted from a broad consultative process. This Declaration is available for endorsement here:

<https://100percentcommitted.com/commitments-and-endorsements/>

To date, The Kigali Declaration has been endorsed by the governments of Rwanda, Nigeria, Tanzania, Germany and the African Union. **We hope that Canada will follow suit in endorsing the Kigali Declaration in support of the WHO NTD Road Map 2030 goals.** Signing the Kigali Declaration would allow Canada to better track its current NTD engagement, investments and celebrate its contributions towards ending NTDs as part of its contribution to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Conclusion

Together, we call on the Canadian Government to be 100% committed to ending neglected tropical diseases by signing the Kigali Declaration on NTDs. Canada can help strengthen health systems and an inclusive global health recovery through collaboration and by making commitments and contributions towards achieving the WHO NTD Road Map 2030 goals. We can end NTDs and create a world where the 1 in 5 people affected by NTDs can lead full and healthy lives.