

World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day: WHO calls for equitable health services for all

30 January 2022 GENEVA - To mark World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day (WNTDD), the World Health Organization (WHO) is calling on everyone, to rally to confront inequalities that characterize NTDs and ensure that the poorest and marginalized communities who are mostly affected by neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) receive the health services they need.

In his message for World NTD day, WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the COVID-19 pandemic has thrust millions of people deeper into poverty and affected those who already have limited access to health services. “He urged the global community - the countries, partners, and colleagues - to continue their work during the pandemic

WNTDD is an opportunity to re-energize the momentum to end the suffering from these 20 diseases that are caused by a variety of pathogens including viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi and toxins. WHO and the global NTD community have been holding several events to mark World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day, which this year, coincides with World Leprosy Day (observed on the last Sunday of January).

WHO held 2 events (World NTD Day 2022: Achieving health equity to end the neglect of poverty-related diseases and Mobilizing the World to Defeat Neglected Tropical Diseases) this week and partners gathered government leaders and industry under the ‘100% committed’ campaign on Thursday to launch the 100% Commitment Campaign that aims to support the achievement of the road map for neglected tropical diseases for 2021-2030.

“Progress achieved over the last decade is the result of the excellent public-private partnership with countries endemic for NTDs and the unfaltering support of partners who endorsed the London Declaration in 2012” said Dr Gautam Biswas, acting Director, WHO Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases. “It is exciting to see political will gearing up around the Kigali Declaration to achieve the new road map targets for 2030.”

Partners have been instrumental in supporting the implementation of disease programmes that is largely due to the availability of medicines, donated by several pharmaceutical companies representing an average of 1.6 billion tablets annually.

Several other celebratory events are being held, including the illumination of iconic building to raise awareness about these diseases that normally do not get the attention they need.

Neglected tropical diseases

NTDs are a diverse group of 20 conditions that are caused by a variety of pathogens including viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi and toxins. They cause devastating health, social and economic consequences to more than one billion people.

The epidemiology of NTDs is complex and often related to environmental conditions. Many of them are vector-borne, have animal reservoirs and are associated with complex life cycles. All these factors make their public-health control challenging.

NTDs are prevalent mainly in rural areas, in conflict zones and hard-to reach-regions. They thrive in areas where access to clean water and sanitation is scarce - worsened by climate change. Addressing these diseases requires cross-sectoral approaches and tackling associated mental health and other issues such as stigma and discrimination.

WHO’s road map for 2021-2030, aligned with those of the Sustainable Development Goals, sets out ambitious targets in tackling many of these diseases in an integrated manner.

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