



Uniting to Combat NTDs: Coming together to End the Neglect

Summary view of our Strategic Plan

Foreword

Among many important gains made since 2012, 33 countries have eliminated at least one NTD as a public health problem; more than a billion people have been reached with preventive treatment for the last five consecutive years; and tackling NTDs is now recognised as a critical step in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

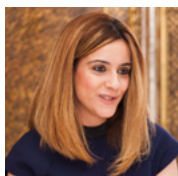
The next decade will be crucial in building on the incredible momentum seen to date. The World Health Organization's (WHO) new NTD road map – *Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals: a road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030* – provides a vital framework for supporting and treating people who are at risk of NTDs, which is one fifth of the world's population. We must build the political will in both donor and endemic country governments, increase endemic country leadership in NTDs and continue to provide a platform for the voices of those affected by NTDs to be heard.

Together we have made significant strides towards beating NTDs. However we know that, to truly end them, we must take multi-sectoral action. Through our new strategy, we will focus even more on the role of partnerships and place a greater emphasis on building multi-sectoral partnerships. By working with partners focusing on other priority sectors, such as experts in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); gender; and disability sectors – we will be able to address some of the systemic issues facing those affected by NTDs and will be better positioned to achieve our elimination targets.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of strong and integrated health systems and ensuring no one is left behind. It has placed global health firmly in the public consciousness and emphasised that, only by working together, can we deliver a holistic approach to disease prevention. This approach will not only have benefits for achieving the goals described in the WHO road map but will also help to strengthen health systems more generally.

Our new strategy is born of extensive consultation with our partners and aligns our work with the WHO NTD road map and the Sustainable Development Goals. This consultation, founded in transparency and collaboration, involved surveying the entire partner network to create a truly inclusive strategy that reflects the priorities of the NTD community and endemic countries. We are deeply encouraged by the level of commitment and engagement demonstrated by our partners throughout this process, enabling the creation of a strong and sound strategic plan.

I would like to thank our partners, the Uniting to Combat NTDs board, Sightsavers for hosting Uniting to Combat NTDs, and WHO and the secretariat for their guidance, time and support in bringing this new strategy to life.



Mona Hammami

*Board Chair, Uniting to Combat NTDs,
Senior Director at the Office of Strategic
Affairs, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Court*

About neglected tropical diseases

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a group of preventable and/or treatable diseases that affect over 1.7 billion people around the world.

NTDs cause immeasurable suffering. They debilitate, disfigure and can be fatal. NTDs most commonly affect some of the most vulnerable people in the world, often those living among extreme poverty and in remote communities.

Currently there are 20 diseases defined as NTDs by the WHO:

Bilharzia (also known as schistosomiasis)	Foodborne trematodiasis	Scabies
Blinding trachoma	Guinea worm disease	Sleeping sickness
Buruli ulcer	Intestinal worms	Snakebite envenoming
Chagas disease	Leprosy	Taeniasis and cysticercosis
Dengue and Chikungunya	Mycetoma	Visceral leishmaniasis
Echinococcosis	River blindness (also known as onchocerciasis)	Yaws
Elephantiasis	Rabies	

NTDs present a tremendous threat to both people's health and socioeconomic development. NTDs thrive in tropical climates and in areas in which people have little or no access to clean water, sanitation or hygiene (WASH). Almost all countries are endemic for at least one NTD. However, approximately 35% of the global population requiring preventive treatment for at least one NTD is in Africa.

By commonly affecting people who live among extreme poverty, NTDs create cycles of poverty and cost developing nations billions of dollars every year.

About Uniting to Combat NTDs

Uniting to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases (Uniting) is a unique global health partnership that supports the work of the WHO and national governments in reaching targets to prevent, control, eliminate or eradicate NTDs.

Uniting was established following the signing of the 2012 London Declaration on NTDs, where partners committed to play their part in supporting the achievement of the goals in the 2012 WHO **NTD road map for implementation**.

The partnership is a coalition of the willing which includes bilateral and multilateral donors, private philanthropists, non governmental organisations, youth networks, pharmaceutical companies, academic and research institutions and other partners. It is an open partnership and welcomes all stakeholders and organisations who are committed to playing their part to support countries in the fight against NTDs. Each partner has their remit and contributes to the fight against NTDs in accordance with their own capabilities and focus.

Strategy and structure

In late 2019, Uniting embarked on the development of this new strategy, taking into account the key gaps and the unique added value the partnership is able to provide to the NTD community. Following extensive consultation with NTD partners, there is agreement that Uniting's new strategy will focus on three strategic aims to support the achievement of the SDG 3 target on NTDs and the targets for all 20 NTDs in the WHO's new road map on NTDs.

This strategy is supplemented by an operational plan which covers the required outcomes, targets, resources and budget for the work of the secretariat and working groups. Both the strategy and operational plan will be flexible to respond to the changing landscape. The strategy will be refreshed periodically to dovetail with the WHO's planned updates to the new NTD road map.

Mission: To create political will and an enabling environment for countries to achieve the WHO NTD road map targets and deliver the SDG goal¹ to end NTDs by 2030.

Added value:

Uniting supports the work of countries, WHO, individual partners and disease alliances by:

- providing a platform for the NTD community for collective advocacy
- facilitating communications and active partnership across all NTDs
- being a trusted and credible voice to open doors at the international level
- using its power to convene partners across and beyond NTDs to raise the profile of NTDs globally

Aims

1

Increase the relevance of NTDs in global and regional agendas

2

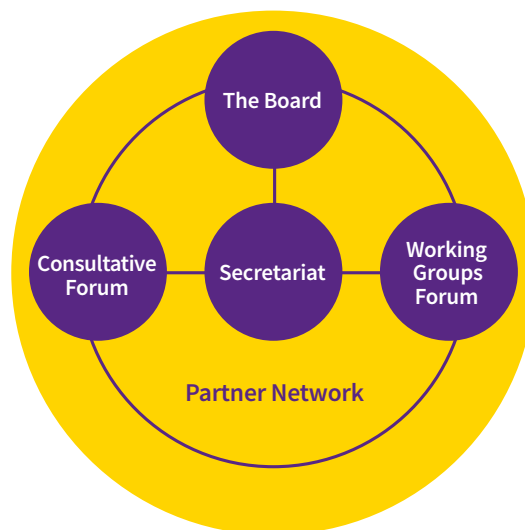
Mobilise international and national resources for NTDs

3

Facilitate an engaged partnership to support NTDs

Structure:

Uniting's work will be implemented by the secretariat and working groups, under the governance of the board and support of the consultative forum.



1. SDG Goal 3.3.5 Indicator – Reduce by 90% the number of people requiring interventions against NTDs

Aims

In consultation with partners, Uniting has identified three aims which support the SDG 3 target for NTDs and the targets in the WHO road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021-2030. These aims guide Uniting's approach and activities, and align with two of the three 'enablers' identified in the WHO's road map:

- 1) advocacy and funding**
- 2) collaboration and multi-sectoral action**





Aim 1

Increase the relevance of NTDs in global and regional agendas

A concerted effort is needed to raise the visibility of NTDs at both global and regional levels, and to create demand from countries and communities. Uniting will promote the relevance of NTDs in global and regional bodies, which is fundamental to mobilising resources for NTDs.

Uniting will work with the partner network to engage with global and regional organisations, institutions and platforms to ensure NTDs are integrated as global and regional policy priorities. Uniting will seek to maximise

existing global and regional accountability frameworks to provide accountability for policy commitments and forge strategic alliances both within and outside the NTD and global health community to cultivate endemic country leaders as champions for NTDs. By working with partners, Uniting can build strong influencing campaigns targeted toward key stakeholders, new and existing donors and endemic countries.

Engagement with multi-sectoral partners including in WASH, nutrition, education and vector control is critical to success.

Working with countries to end the neglect of NTDs on global stage



HE Ernest Bai Koroma, President of Sierra Leone at the African Union



HE Hery Rajaonarimampianina, President of Madagascar and Akinwumi A Adesina, President of the African Development Bank at the African Union



HE Mokgweetsi Masisi, Vice President of the Republic of Botswana at the African Union



Aim 2

Mobilise international and national resources for NTDs

Current commitments for NTDs – including from national governments, the pharmaceutical industry, bilateral and multilateral donors and private philanthropists – have been critical to the success of NTD programmes to date. To reach the 2030 roadmap goals, it will be vital to maintain these commitments, and bring new commitments to the table.

Uniting will look to sustain existing commitments from key NTD donors and the pharmaceutical industry, and mobilise additional resources from key international donors, the private sector, and foundations. Uniting will seek additional resources beyond financing in various forms, such as additional human resource capacity, diagnostics and drug donations, or technical support, and support for NTDs from new multisectoral partners.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the world economy and will significantly impact the volume of Official Development Assistance available for health. Uniting will work with the partner network to engage with other sectors (such as WASH, education and nutrition) in finding areas of mutual benefit and opportunities to collaborate. Uniting will engage with

stakeholders in collaboration with the WHO, to determine which sectors are best suited to partner with to bring in new resources for NTD programmes.

Contributions from pharmaceutical industry partners², have been pivotal to the success of NTD programmes to date and must be maintained to achieve the 2030 road map goals. As Uniting's scope has expanded from ten diseases to include all 20 NTDs³, bringing new pharmaceutical industry partners to support additional donations will be essential.

The new WHO road map calls for a shift towards greater country ownership and financing of NTD programmes. The role of national governments in increasing domestic resourcing will be key. Uniting's approach will be to promote the incorporation of NTDs into countries' UHC packages, national health plans and global progress reports. It will also involve linking up and aligning with other financing and resource mobilisation initiatives that are being led at regional or continental levels, and the Sustainability Framework being developed by WHO.

Ultimately Uniting will build deeper partnerships leading to collaboration, and eventually, resource commitments to beat NTDs.

2. As of August 2020, this includes treatment donations from the following companies: Bayer, Eisai, EMS (Brazil), Gilead Science, GSK, Johnson & Johnson (Jansen), INSud Pharma, Merck & Co. Inc (USA), Merck KGaA (Germany), Mundo Sano Foundation, Novartis, Pfizer, and Sanofi

3. NTDs as defined by WHO

Aim 3

Facilitate an engaged partnership to support NTDs

Uniting has identified three aspects to facilitate an engaged partnership. The first is about communication; to share information and create a unified voice throughout the community while building the partnership. The second is about connection and coordination among partners for collective advocacy and resource mobilisation work. The third is about collaboration. Uniting’s advocacy work will be coordinated with partners to leverage their advocacy and resource mobilisation efforts.

Using this approach, Uniting will endeavour to provide maximum visibility to the new NTD road map and to establish a regular dialogue with partners to ensure it is working effectively to add value to the partner network and achieve the goals set out in the WHO road map and through the Uniting strategy.

Uniting will increase engagement with the partner network, focusing on opportunities for collaborative efforts, such as linking partners with relevant stakeholders outside of the NTD sector and creating opportunities for collaboration. Uniting will aim to leverage the extensive reach and



technical expertise of the partner network which spans advocacy, policy and communications.

A key role for Uniting is to engage the partner network to build both a sense of ownership in the collective work of the partnership and transparency around decision making. Throughout, it will be important to sustain the commitment of the long-term supporters of NTDs.



In July 2020 mass drug administration to protect against trachoma was carried out in Jigawa state, Nigeria, under the Accelerate grant, implemented by programme partner HANDS. This was the first MDA conducted following the COVID-19 pandemic and WHO’s recommendation in April 2020 to pause all mass treatment activities. Following a rigorous approval process to ensure safety, training was given to Volunteer distributors on safety precautions and adapted distribution methods.



Community volunteers in Nimba County, Liberia, chosen for their experience in working on other health campaigns, being trained as community mobilisers. They put up posters and flyers around their communities, held socially-distanced community meetings and safely went to people’s doors to talk to them about the reality and the risks of coronavirus. If they saw anyone displaying COVID-19 symptoms they would refer them for testing.



Conclusion

Our new strategy provides a robust framework to mobilise support for NTDs across multiple sectors to increase funding and help strengthen global health systems. It takes a holistic approach to increasing the relevance of NTDs, and the resources required to tackle them, in global and regional agendas.

The action we take over the next decade will be critical in supporting the achievements of targets described in the WHO road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. This is the opportunity to increase the momentum of the last ten years and explore new partnerships to reach the 1.7 billion people still affected by NTDs.

This is a very important and encouraging moment in the fight against NTDs. If we come together now, we can – and will – beat NTDs within a decade.

For further information on NTDs, Uniting to Combat NTDs and the work of the partnership, please visit www.unitingtocombatntds.org

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