

# Water Sanitation & Hygiene

**for accelerating and  
sustaining progress on  
Neglected Tropical Diseases**

**A GLOBAL STRATEGY  
2015–2020**



World Health  
Organization

# NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES

Buruli ulcer

Chagas disease

Cutaneous leishmaniasis

Dengue

Dracunculiasis (Guinea worm disease)

Endemic treponematoses (Yaws)

Foodborne trematode infections

Human African trypanosomiasis (Sleeping sickness)

Leprosy

Lymphatic filariasis (Elephantiasis)

Onchocerciasis (River blindness)

Rabies

Schistosomiasis

Soil-transmitted helminthiasis (Intestinal worms)

Taeniasis/cysticercosis and echinococcosis/hydatidosis

Trachoma

Visceral leishmaniasis

# FOREWORD

**N**eglected tropical diseases affect over 1 billion people, causing chronic disability and death, primarily among the poorest of the world – the same people who often lack access to even the most basic water and sanitation services. Provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene is critical for the prevention and care for many NTDs, but has often received little attention in NTD control programmes.

The release of the WHO NTD roadmap has given renewed impetus for collaboration between WASH and NTD actors. International organisations, academics, donors, practitioners, and countries have started mobilising efforts to work together. It is time to build on the momentum in the health and development community to reinforce joint WASH and NTD actions to accelerate progress towards control, elimination and eradication of NTDs.

The principle of leaving no one behind is central to the Sustainable Development Goals' agenda, including for sanitation and water. WASH providers must prioritize reduction of inequalities to align with this agenda. This means prioritising service delivery to poor communities who suffer from or are at risk of NTDs. With just five years remaining to meet the roadmap targets, the need for action is urgent.

While acknowledging successes in the fight against NTDs, we must also recognize the changing global health context, characterized by increased fragility and conflict, inequality, and vulnerability to a changing environment affected by climate change and natural disasters.

All these factors mean that we must ensure that the successes achieved are sustained. We urgently need a renewed commitment to collaboration that reaches the most vulnerable – those most affected by NTDs, and those without access to basic water and sanitation services and good quality affordable healthcare.

This strategy builds on existing progress to tackle NTDs, such as the billions of anti-parasitic treatments delivered since 2006, and continued efforts to treat and care for those suffering the chronic effects of these diseases. The joint five-year agenda presented here calls for more effective delivery of WASH alongside other NTD interventions and paves the way for sustainable development and shared prosperity.

**NTDs thrive under conditions of poverty and filth. They tend to cluster together in places where housing is substandard, drinking water is unsafe, sanitation is poor, access to health care is limited or non-existent, and insect vectors are constant household and agricultural companions... This opens opportunities for integrated approaches, for simplification, cost-effectiveness, and streamlined efficiency.**

*Margaret Chan, WHO Director General*



**Dr Maria Neira**  
Director  
Department of Public Health, Environmental  
and Social determinants of Health



**Dr Dirk Engels**  
Director  
Department of Control of Neglected  
Tropical Diseases



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# 2015–2020

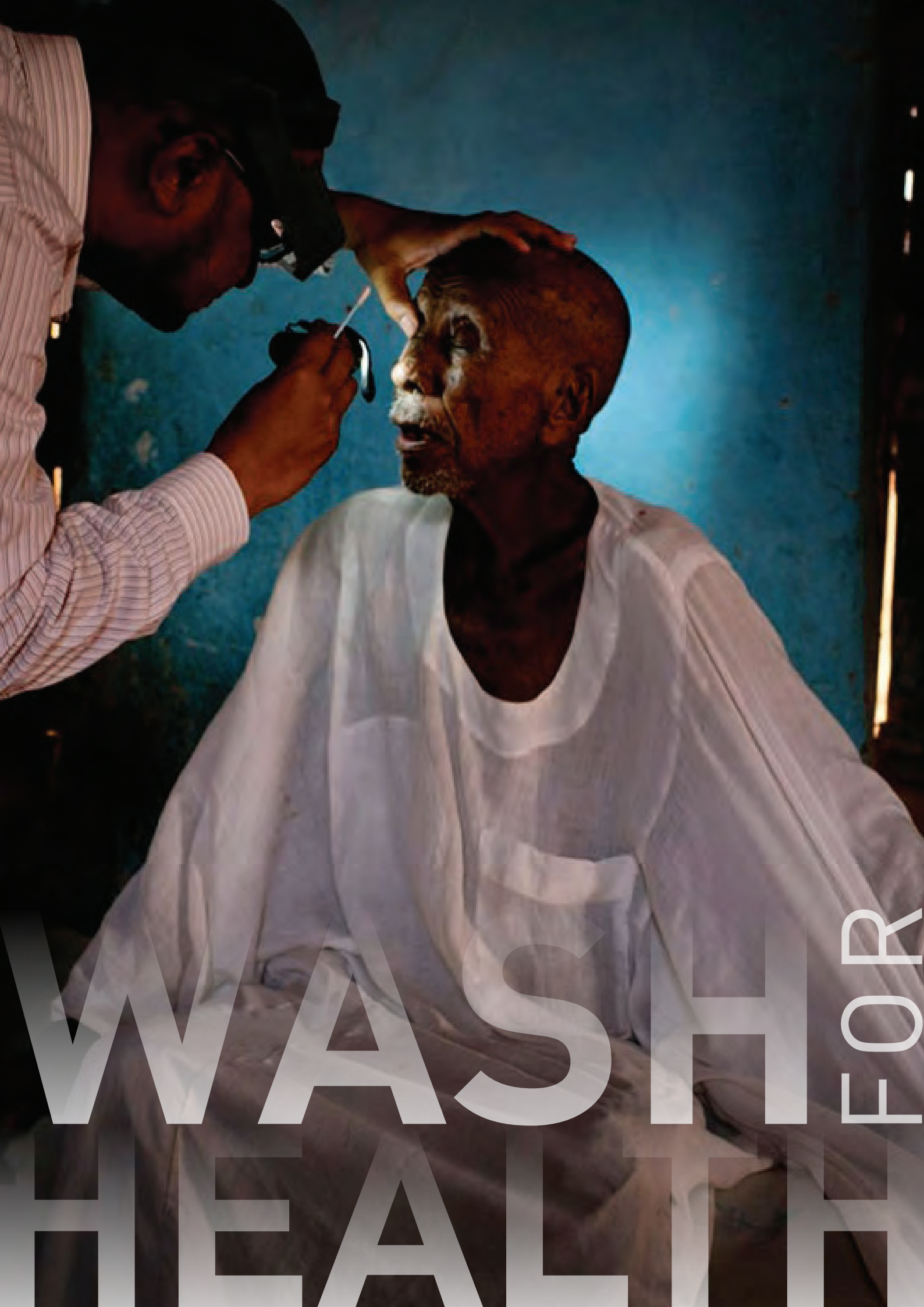
## VISION

Accelerated and sustained achievement of the NTD roadmap milestones, particularly among the poorest and most vulnerable, through better-targeted and joint WASH and NTD efforts.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. **Increase awareness about the cobenefits of joint WASH and NTD action** by sharing experiences and evidence from improved delivery
2. Use WASH and NTD **monitoring to highlight inequalities, target investment, and track progress**
3. **Strengthen evidence on how to deliver effective WASH interventions for NTDs** and embed the findings in guidance and practice
4. **Plan, deliver and evaluate programmes** with mutual inputs from WASH, health and NTD stakeholders at all levels





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# INTRODUCTION

## Why is a new strategy needed?

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) are critical in the prevention and care for all of the neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) scheduled for intensified control or elimination by 2020.

Provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene is one of the five key interventions within the global NTD roadmap. Yet to date, the WASH component of the strategy has received little attention and the potential to link efforts on WASH and NTDs has been largely untapped (1).

Focused efforts on WASH are urgently needed if the global NTD roadmap targets are to be met. This is especially needed for NTDs where transmission is most closely linked to poor WASH conditions such as soil-transmitted helminthiasis, schistosomiasis, trachoma and lymphatic filariasis.

This strategy aims to mobilize WASH and NTD actors to work together towards the roadmap targets. It calls on WASH funders and implementers to target NTD endemic areas and deliver programmes that maximize the effectiveness of WASH interventions for NTD control and elimination.

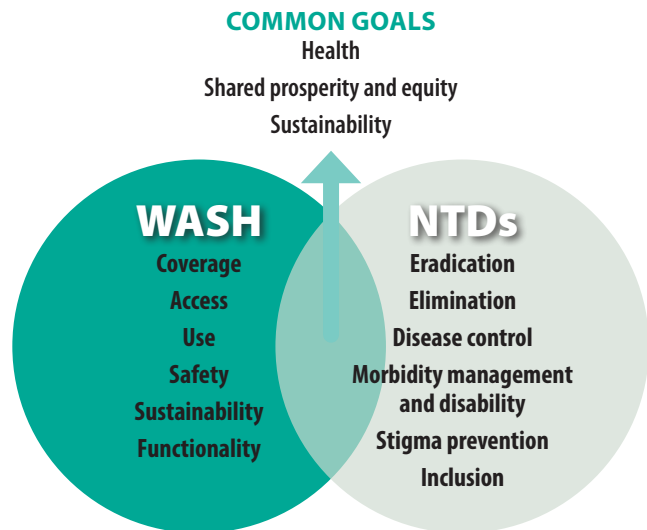
A joint approach that addresses the causes of NTDs is likely to be more cost effective over the long term and more sustainable. It will also ensure that investments in WASH reach those most in need. Beyond the objectives of each sector, collaboration can also serve to achieve common goals such as health and well-being, equity and shared prosperity, and sustainability (Figure 1).

The rationale for collaboration is clear. The challenge now is to foster a strong working relationship between the sectors that benefits from WASH actors' in-depth knowledge of what works in practice and to refine that knowledge for better use in NTD control and elimination.

Although integration is referenced in existing NTD plans and strategies, these rarely offer specific guidance on the way in which collaboration between WASH and NTD stakeholders can be strengthened and there are no monitoring mechanisms that tracks and incentivizes collaboration. WHO works closely with both sectors and is well placed to convene WASH and NTD actors and provide evidence-based guidance on effective collaborative measures.

This strategy comes at an opportune moment, as the global community shifts its outlook towards an agenda of international Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of shared prosperity and equity.

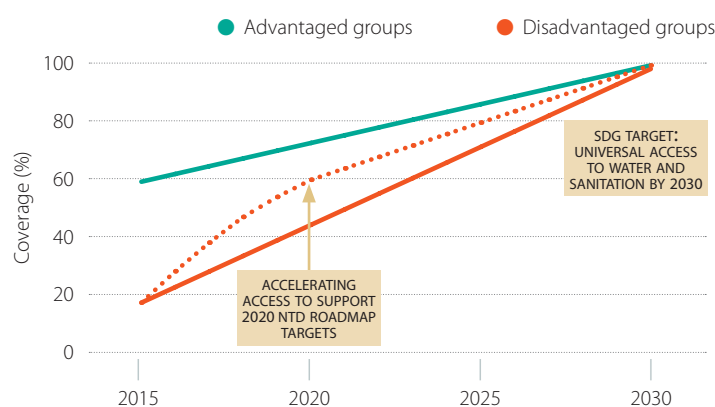
**Figure 1. Common ground for WASH and NTDs collaboration**



The WASH sector is focused on the SDG target of universal access to basic WASH in communities, schools and healthcare facilities by 2030. Achieving universal access requires a focus on the poorest and hardest to reach. These are often the same groups most affected by NTDs. Yet the target date for the NTD roadmap is 2020, ten years sooner than WASH, adding impetus to the need for WASH progress for the most vulnerable (Figure 2). Progress or lack of progress on certain NTDs can therefore serve as a proxy for equity and effective targeting of WASH programmes.

The strategy also contributes to global efforts to strengthen health systems, achieve universal health coverage, address the social determinants of health and ensure equitable access to resources and services that underpin human development.

**Figure 2. Accelerating elimination of inequalities in WASH**



Source: Adapted from *ENDING INEQUALITIES – a cornerstone of the post-2015 development agenda*, WHO/Unicef JMP, 2014.

The post-2015 development goals are a chance for us to get this right. We must put the elimination of inequalities at the heart of our debate and we must sign up to measuring progress.

*Catarina de Albuquerque (2014)  
UN Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation*

### What does Integration mean for WASH and NTDs?

The term **integration** varies in meaning across different sectors and communities. In the context of NTD programmes, it often refers to coordination of drug distribution programmes to address multiple diseases, or the integration of NTD aspects within the primary healthcare system. In this strategy, integration refers to **joint planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities across sectors and programmes** to achieve common goals.

Various degrees of integration are possible (2) depending on the context and nature of the diseases addressed, and it is possible to integrate selected programme components. For example, the facial cleanliness and environmental improvement components of the CAEE strategy for trachoma are likely to require complete integration with WASH programmes. By contrast, the antibiotic component

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