



World Health
Organization

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Ending the neglect to
attain the Sustainable
Development Goals
*A rationale for continued
investment in tackling
neglected tropical diseases
2021–2030*

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Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals: a rationale for continued investment in tackling neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030

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Dr Mwelecele Ntuli Malecela

26 March 1963 – 10 February 2022

This work is dedicated to Dr Mwelecele (“Mwele”) Ntuli Malecela, who served as Director of the WHO Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases from 2018 until her untimely death on 10 February 2022.

As Director, she led the development of the new road map for 2021–2030 and its launch in January 2021.

Mwele devoted her career to fighting neglected tropical diseases. She was sensitive to the suffering of disadvantaged populations and those affected by diseases that could have been prevented through improved living conditions and more equitable access to health services.

An advocate for “spending more and spending better”, she initiated this work on a rationale for continued investment in tackling neglected tropical diseases and prioritizing investments for the decade 2021–2030. She believed that ending the epidemic of neglected tropical diseases was achievable by working smarter and taking concerted action globally, regionally and nationally.



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Foreword

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The World Health Organization (WHO)’s high-level strategy document, *Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals: a road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030*, also referred to as “the road map”, was endorsed by the Seventy-third World Health Assembly in November 2020 and launched in January 2021. It charts out our exciting but challenging journey towards achieving the 2030 targets for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

It has been a deeply worthwhile experience to collaborate and consult with the global NTD community – countries, partners and international health funders. We have renewed commitments to this shared vision and defined actions for the coming decade. However, the road ahead will be paved with challenges; to achieve the 2030 targets, substantial efforts are still needed to accelerate progress, including to go the last mile to ensure success in the case of diseases close to elimination or eradication. There is now a common understanding that sustainable control must be fostered by mainstreaming NTD programmes into national health systems, by collaborating beyond the health sector, and by developing more efficient and more affordable diagnostic and treatment tools, particularly in the context of those NTDs for which tools are not currently available. Targeted advocacy and communication will also be essential to ensure that the specific health needs of populations affected by NTDs are considered when pursuing the goal of universal health coverage. These elements will also be key to ensuring that target 3.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 3, that of ending the NTD epidemic, is prioritized by international and national health agendas.

Financing the acceleration of the progress needed to

As part of the work of preparing the road map, and in response to the need to raise the funding and resources highlighted by the NTD community, this advocacy document supports the implementation of the road map by presenting a rationale for investing in actions to combat NTDs.^e This rationale was developed in an already complex funding landscape and in the context of a wide-ranging and diverse set of diseases. It was also prepared against a background of unprecedented cuts to aid budgets and shifting international priorities.

This document sets out, therefore, to explain the socioeconomic value of investing in the fight against NTDs and highlights priorities for global investment attention. Our work was guided by the need not only for additional funding and funders but also for the need to understand the current funding climate, in which value for money and the efficient use of resources to fill the most critical of gaps are more relevant than ever.

As well as hoping that we can make the case for investment in NTDs, we want also to make the case for greater economic understanding of the impact of control, elimination and eradication of NTDs.

We must continue to push forward as one unified

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