



**UNITING TO COMBAT**  
NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES

# UNITING TO COMBAT NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES UPDATED STRATEGY 2020-2030



---

# A new vision for sustainable NTD resource mobilisation

An update to Uniting to Combat NTDs' 2020-2030 strategic plan

“We can—and we will—triumph over these diseases.”



## Foreword

Over the past two decades, remarkable achievements have been made in the fight against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). As of September 2023, 50 countries have now been validated by the World Health Organization (WHO) for having eliminated at least one NTD, which is a testament to the power of collective action. The global context, however, continues to pose significant challenges.

Global events such as the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the resulting financial and cost of living crises, cuts to Official Development Assistance (ODA), and the enduring conflicts around the world, including Russia and Ukraine, have disrupted the provision of NTD services and led to reductions in available funding for NTDs and other essential health services. These challenges not only jeopardize the well-being of the 1.65 billion people worldwide requiring treatment and care for NTDs but also put in peril achieving the targets set out in the WHO NTD road map and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.3. It has become evident that we need innovative and novel approaches to resource mobilisation, with a central focus on supporting endemic countries to lead the way.

In 2020, Uniting's Board approved a visionary ten-year strategy aligned with the WHO NTD road map and SDG targets for NTDs. In February 2023, the Board conducted a mid-term review of the strategy's continued relevance in light of the substantial global challenges that have emerged since its inception. While the strategy's continued importance was reaffirmed, we recognized the imperative of intensifying our efforts in resource mobilisation to address persistent funding gaps, the absence of predictable, long-term funding for global NTD programmes, and significant changes to the global health architecture.

This important update to Uniting's ten-year strategy includes a deeper emphasis on addressing the critical funding needs that threaten global progress, shaped by insights from the NTDs Indaba held in January 2023. The updated strategy includes critical inputs from leaders and experts from endemic and donor countries, multilateral and philanthropic organizations, civil society, and industry partners. This strategy also draws from a comprehensive donor landscape analysis conducted by the secretariat, combined with valuable insights shared by our Board and partners.

This strategy document outlines our unwavering commitment to mobilise international and national resources for NTDs, focusing on a range of critical areas. We will prioritize funders with the most potential and set specific resource mobilisation targets for the next five years. Our efforts will engage various stakeholders, from donor governments and multilateral institutions to endemic countries and industry partners.

---

We have devised strategies to achieve these targets, ensuring that the necessary secretariat resources are allocated to the opportunities offering the most promise and, more importantly, laying out a clear timeline for delivering tangible results.

As we embark on this renewed journey, I want to emphasize that the heart of our strategy lies in our collective dedication and commitment to the 1.65 billion who require treatment and care for NTDs and our shared vision of a world where these preventable diseases are no longer a threat to people's lives. By leveraging our expertise, fostering collaboration, and championing resource mobilisation, we aim to overcome the funding challenges and propel our mission forward.

Together, we can continue the momentum of the last two decades and explore new partnerships to reach all who are still affected by NTDs. This moment is of profound significance in our fight against NTDs, and by standing united, we can—and we will—triumph over these diseases.

Thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to our shared mission.

Sincerely,

Thoko Elphick-Pooley

Executive Director of Uniting to Combat NTDs

---

## About NTDs

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a group of preventable and treatable diseases that affect about 1.65 billion people around the world. The World Health Organization currently classifies 20<sup>1</sup> diseases as NTDs. NTDs cause immeasurable suffering. They debilitate, disfigure and can be fatal. By most commonly affecting some of the most marginalised people in the world – who often live in remote communities – NTDs create generational cycles of poverty and cost developing nations billions of dollars every year.

NTDs are a forgotten priority in global development and health financing. Although NTDs are specifically mentioned in SDG target 3.3, alongside HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, they do not benefit from the same level of prioritisation and resourcing.

<sup>1</sup> NTDs include: Buruli ulcer, Chagas disease, dengue and chikungunya, dracunculiasis (Guinea-worm disease), echinococcosis, foodborne trematodiasis, human African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), leishmaniasis, leprosy (Hansen's disease), lymphatic filariasis, mycetoma, chromoblastomycosis and other deep mycoses, onchocerciasis (river blindness), podoconiosis, rabies, scabies and other ectoparasitoses, schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminthiasis, snakebite envenoming, taeniasis/cysticercosis, trachoma, and yaws and other endemic treponematoses.

---

## About Uniting to Combat NTDs

Uniting to Combat NTDs exists to end NTDs by mobilising resources in support of the WHO's NTD road map and the SDGs. We envision a world where no-one suffers from these preventable and treatable diseases.

Uniting supports the work of countries, WHO, and partners 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 international level
- Using its power to convene partners across and beyond NTDs to raise the profile of NTDs globally

---

## Our Strategy

Our mission is to create political will and an enabling environment for countries to achieve the WHO NTD road map targets and deliver the SDG NTD goal to end NTDs by 2030.

Our aim is to mobilise international and national resources for NTDs. We will achieve this by sustaining and increasing the volume of funding available from major sources, set out in the strategy visual below including multi-lateral development banks (IMDBs) and global funds, endemic countries, industry partners, and international donors.

### Mission

To create political will and an enabling environment for countries to achieve the WHO NTD road map targets and deliver the SDG goal\* to end NTDs by 2030

### Aim

Mobilise resources for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs)

### Outcomes

**Multilaterals and global funds** deploy funding

**Endemic countries** increases sources

**Industry partners** meet / expand commitments

**Donor countries** increase funding

### Intermediary Outcomes

NTDs are adopted in global, regional and national agendas

Countries call for funding for NTDs and celebrate successes (demand-generation)

### Enabler

Partners collectively and coherently champion investment in NTDs

### Accountability

Commitment Tracker is used as an accountability mechanism for commitments and peer influence

\* SDG Goal 3.3.5 Indicator - Reduce by 90% the number of people requiring interventions against NTDs

---

## Our outcomes

In consultation with partners, we have identified four primary outcomes that will guide our work going forward.

### Outcome 1: Multilaterals and global funds deploy funding

*The demands and competition for dwindling finances for new and existing global health initiatives such as pandemic preparedness and response funds (PPR), climate financing, replenishment of existing financing mechanisms for global health e.g. the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM), CEPI, Global Polio Elimination Initiative (GPEI), Global Financing Facility (GFF), limits the potential of donors making significant contributions to NTDs that we need.*

We will:

- Seek to maximise funding from existing financing mechanisms for NTDs and make a case for the inclusion and integration of NTD interventions in these existing funds where NTDs are currently excluded. This is a win-win both for people requiring treatment and care for NTDs as well as for these funds, that can make their dollars go that much further by achieving synergies across disease areas. For example, there is a strong case to be made for the inclusion of schistosomiasis treatment within the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria. If untreated, schistosomiasis in women can lead to female genital schistosomiasis, which can triple the risk of HIV infection. Over 200 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are at risk of schistosomiasis. By integrating the treatment of schistosomiasis, for which there is already a free drug donated by pharmaceutical partners, cases of new HIV infections can be reduced and life-long morbidities from schistosomiasis eliminated.
- Proactively engage in fostering new strategic relationships with leaders of multi-lateral agencies and global funds to make the case for NTDs. By building these partnerships, we aim to align efforts and create synergies that enhance our ability to mobilise funding and resources for NTD programmes.
- Work with countries to generate demand for the inclusion of NTD interventions in their applications to multi-lateral agencies and to global funds by proactively briefing endemic country Ministers of Health, NTD Programme Managers, and partners on opportunities to include NTDs in country applications for funding.
- Work to build and collate the evidence base, including gathering comprehensive data on co-morbidities and co-infections, as well as the intersections of NTDs with PPR, climate, and One Health. To achieve this, we will employ rapid evidence reviews and produce thematic papers to consolidate the evidence, inform decision-makers, and reinforce the case for increased funding. This strategy will include a specific focus on Africa and key thematic areas where there is an opportunity to unlock financing for NTDs, including PPR, climate, and One Health.

Funding entities to be targeted include the GFATM, World Bank Pandemic Fund, Multilateral Development Banks, Access to the Health Infrastructure Fund at the Africa Development Bank, and the GFF. Additionally, we are exploring innovative new approaches, such as debt restructuring and identifying how NTDs can be included as key performance indicators in these debt swaps.

---

## Outcome 2: Volume of domestic resources from endemic countries increased

*A number of affected countries have already endorsed the Kigali Declaration on NTDs – a high-level political declaration which seeks to mobilise resources for NTDs.*

Building on this, we will:

- Work with countries to quantify and showcase their existing and new investments into NTDs. Many countries are already investing millions of dollars into their NTD programmes through contributions to essential infrastructure within their Ministries of Health and to staff costs, but these investments are currently not quantified.
- Use Uniting’s Commitment Tracker to track domestic investments. The Governments of Rwanda and Vanuatu have already shown leadership by inputting their domestic investments into NTDs on the Commitment Tracker, demonstrating that this is possible for counties to do.
- Collaborate with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) such as ECOWAS, SADC, and COMESA and continental bodies such as African Union, AUDA-NEPAD, and Africa CDC to use their political muscle and political convening to support resource mobilisation efforts and adopt the elimination of NTDs as a flagship programme.
- Launch and execute high-impact continent-wide campaigns to bring the issue of NTDs to the forefront.
- Establish a network of champions consisting of country leadership, including Heads of State, Ministers of Health, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and Ministers of Finance. These influential leaders will be engaged to create dedicated moments for NTD discussions within their existing meetings, including those convened by WHO AFRO and RECs.
- Establish partnerships and fund networks of civil society organisations and youth organisations, who can generate demand at national levels for NTD services and programmes.
- Collaborate with Kikundi to enhance the capacity of NTD Programme Managers, empowering them to become powerful advocates and active contributors to the development of national strategic plans and other critical instruments for NTD resource allocation.
- Employ media interventions, including Pan-African and national media in Africa, to raise awareness and support for NTD programmes.
- Embed NTDs within existing and ongoing resource mobilisation efforts for health in Africa, such as the Africa Leaders Network (ALN), and leverage the Common African Position and Continental Framework as essential advocacy tools to demonstrate the demand for NTD initiatives through compelling storytelling and media campaigns.
- Celebrate country elimination moments by curating high level moments where elimination wins can be celebrated. We have seen the power of such high profile moments and the positive peer-to-peer influence they can have.

---

## Outcome 3: Commitments from industry partners are met and exceeded

*The drug donation programme has been the backbone of the NTD programme and its success story.*

Recognising that the populations most in need of medicines to target NTDs are those least able to support and sustain them financially, the pharmaceutical industry created mechanisms for donating medicines and expertise to affected countries through partnerships with the WHO, development agencies, non-governmental organisations, and philanthropic donors. In the last 30 years, companies have established programmes to donate 17 different medicines to overcome the burden of NTDs. Billions of tablets, capsules, intravenous and oral solutions have been donated, along with the manufacturing, supply chains and research necessary to support these efforts. Industry engagement has stimulated other donors to support NTDs with funds and oversight so that the ‘health benefit’ return on investment in these programmes is truly a ‘best value in public health’.

The WHO NTD road map goals and the SDG 3 target of reducing by 90% the number of people requiring an intervention against an NTD, will not be met without this drug donation programme.

We will work with our partners to ensure that industry partners not only meet but also expand their commitments to combat NTDs, focusing on maintaining drug donation programmes, sustaining their dedication to NTDs, and supporting access and local manufacturing.

Specifically, we will:

- Engage closely with industry partners to determine the most effective interventions, leveraging its extensive networks and convening power to spotlight the contributions of these partners.
- Create opportunities for industry partners to showcase their commitment, including stage moments and communication opportunities alongside Heads of State, such as joint op-eds and field visits.
- Foster collaboration with pharmaceutical companies on strategic projects and initiatives, thereby ensuring that industry partners remain actively engaged in the fight against NTDs and continue to support these critical endeavours.





---

## Outcome 4: Donor countries increase funding

*Increasing funding for NTDs from donor countries in both the Global North and South, employing a multifaceted approach.*

Investments in NTDs are amongst the best buys in development and yield one of the best returns of any global health investment. For example, USAID calculates that for every US\$1 it invests in NTD programmes, US\$26 is leveraged in donated medicines. What's more, these investments produce results. For example, 13 of the 26 programme countries supported by the US Government in Africa, Asia, and Latin America eliminated at least one NTD as a public health problem. The platforms set up to manage NTDs have also proven pivotal in dealing with disease outbreaks and emergencies such as COVID-19, contributing to pandemic response and global health security.

However, in order to sustain these investments from USAID and to secure their long-term investment, it is essential that we can bring new donors to the table.

We will:

- Continue to support existing national coalitions and explore new ones, with a specific focus on coalition efforts in France.
- Support proposal development efforts to organisations such as ESPEN.
- Ensure representation on boards and influential decision-making bodies and forums enabling Uniting to advocate for increased NTD funding.
- Capitalize on NTD moments, both existing (e.g. the Reaching the Last Mile forum) and newly created ones (e.g. MENA roundtable), to attract donor attention.
- Engage in key global agenda-setting moments, such as G7, G20, BRICS, TICAD, and SDGs.
- Forge south-south partnerships with countries such as Brazil and Egypt.
- Align with major thematic issues, including PPR, universal health coverage (UHC), primary healthcare (PHC), climate, and One Health, while supporting public campaigns to garner further support.
- Actively participate in discussions about the future of vertical funding within the context of new global health architectures.
- Engage in storytelling and the celebration of commitments, including those from influential donors like USAID, to showcase the impact of increased funding.
- Harness and expand our network of champions to advocate for greater funding commitments.

---

## How we will deliver

Uniting's work will be implemented by the secretariat and working groups, under the leadership of the Board and support of the Consultative Forum.

This strategy is supplemented by an operational plan which covers the 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. They will be periodically updated to align with the planned WHO reviews of the road map.

Our strategic approach is based on expediting the most salient recommendations and insights from the Indaba process and donor analysis, including the landscaping and reform of the global financing architecture and vertical funding mechanisms.



Photo credit: Danilo Vaz.

### **Pictured from left to right:**

*His Excellency, Patrice Talon, President of the Republic of Benin*

*His Excellency, Umaro Sissoco Embaló, President of Guinea Bissau and Chair of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government*

*His Excellency, Nana Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana*

*His Excellency, Omar Alieu Touray President of the ECOWAS Commission*

*Thoko Elphick-Pooley, Executive Director, Uniting to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases*

---

# Meet the Board and Uniting ambassadors



**Dr Helge Braun**  
Member of the  
Bundestag



**Dr Silvia Gold**  
President, Mundo  
Sano Foundation



**Rebeca Grynspan**  
Former Chair of Uniting  
to Combat NTDs, now  
Uniting ambassador



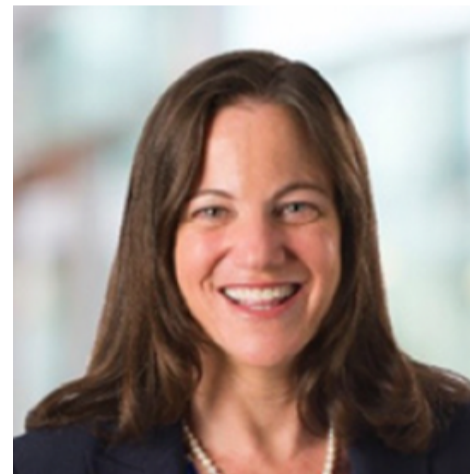
**Dr Mona Hammami**  
Partner, McKinsey &  
Company



**Rieko Suzuki Kitaoka**  
Chair, SDGs Promise  
Japan (SPJ)



**Professor Francisca  
Mutapi**  
Deputy Director, NIHR  
Global Health Research  
Unit TIBA and co-Director,  
Global Health Academy,  
University of Edinburgh



**Dr Katey Einterz  
Owen**  
Director for Neglected  
Tropical Diseases, The  
Bill & Melinda Gates  
Foundation



**Michael Schöttler**  
VP and Global Head  
Pharma Public Affairs  
(retired)



**Peter Stevenson**  
Pfizer (retired)



**Jeremy Lefroy**  
Uniting to Combat  
NTDs Ambassador

---

# Meet the team



**Thoko Elphick-Pooley**  
Executive Director



**Stuart Halford**  
Director of Advocacy and Resource Mobilisation



**Louisa Tribe**  
Director of Communications



**Matt Turney**  
Head of Operations



**Dirk Engels**  
Senior Policy Advisor



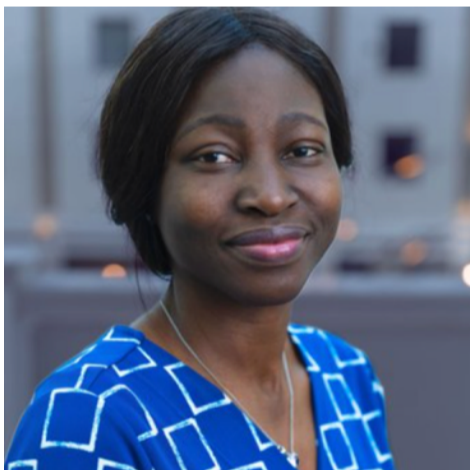
**Emily Fiddy**  
Communications Manager



**Talia French**  
Senior Comms Officer



**Jordi Knight**  
Project Assistant



**Opeyemi Alabi-Hundeyin**  
Partnerships Officer



**Sheila Shawa-Musonda**  
Senior Partnerships Specialist (seconded to the Africa Union)



**Victoria Sykes**  
Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer



**Denise Turley**  
Finance Manager



**Marc Wormald**  
Senior Policy Adviser, Donor Countries and Global Bodies

---

# Thank you to our funders

Thank you to our generous funders,  
whose partnership makes our work  
possible.

BILL & MELINDA  
GATES *foundation*



ديوان ولي العهد  
CROWN PRINCE COURT

 CHILDREN'S  
INVESTMENT FUND  
FOUNDATION

**GSK**

 **Sightsavers**

**REACHING** *the*  
**LAST MILE** 

---

## Conclusion

Uniting's new strategy marks a pivotal moment in the fight against NTDs. Sustainable long-term funding is imperative to continued success in the fight against NTDs and creative solutions are required. Mobilising international and national resources and diversifying funding are instrumental to achieving the targets outlined in the WHO roadmap for NTDs 2021–2030 and the SDGs. This is our opportunity to build upon the progress of the past two decades and forge new paths to reach the 1.65 billion people who still require treatment and care for NTDs.

## About Uniting to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases

Uniting to Combat NTDs exists to end NTDs by mobilising resources in support of the WHO's NTD road map and the SDGs. We envision a world where no-one suffers from these preventable and treatable diseases.

Uniting was established following the signing of the London Declaration on NTDs in 2012, when a diverse group of stakeholders came together with one objective: beating NTDs. 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.

# UNITING TO COMBAT NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES UPDATED STRATEGY 2020-2030