

# Uniting to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases: Translating the London Declaration into Action

## MEETING REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Conference Overview and Key Themes

In January 2012, an unprecedented group of partners pledged new and extended commitments toward controlling or eliminating 10 neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) by 2020 as part of the London Declaration on NTDs. To discuss how to turn this broad set of commitments into sustainable impact, nearly 500 participants from 65 countries gathered in November 2012 at the World Bank in Washington, D.C. for *Uniting to Combat NTDs: Translating the London Declaration into Action*. The meeting, one of the most comprehensive gatherings of NTD stakeholders to date, included representatives from endemic and donor country governments, academia, industry, NGOs, advocacy organizations and more.

Starting from the opening remarks by Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank, HRH Princess Alexandra, President of Sightsavers and others, several central themes were discussed throughout the meeting. These included:

- **Drug supply** is no longer a major bottleneck for NTD control programs.
- **Implementation efforts** need to be redoubled if we are to reach the 2020 goals.
- A substantial annual **funding gap** of approximately US\$300 million exists and must be filled if programs are to be scaled up appropriately.
- **Integrating NTD delivery programs and coordinating with other sectors** such as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and education are critical to using resources efficiently and increasing impact.
- **New tools and approaches** will be needed as incidences decrease and we strive to reach the endgame for NTDs.

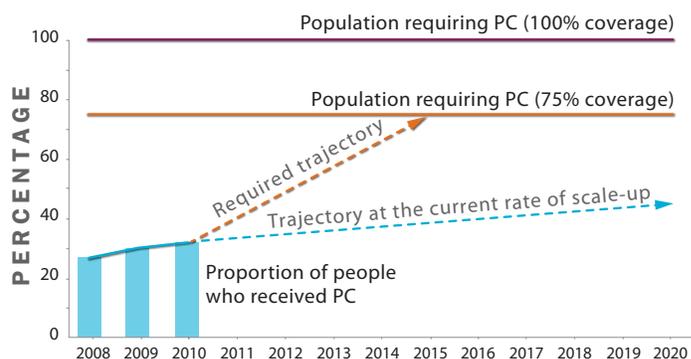
In addition to several high-level plenary remarks, the meeting featured panel discussions and a set of smaller “brainstorming” workshop sessions where participants discussed challenges facing the NTD community and potential solutions (see below). Participants committed to continuing these important discussions in follow-up meetings and by establishing new communication mechanisms to foster ongoing dialog within the community. This will allow the community to follow progress and make course corrections along the way.

### Mobilizing to Reach WHO’s 2020 Goals

**Drug Supply and Delivery:** For the first time, the supply of drugs available to NTD programs is ahead of the capacity to deliver them. The major requirement now is to ensure the treatments reach those in need by scaling up effective delivery programs. To achieve the trajectory needed to reach the 2020 goals, ~50 percent of at-risk populations need to be treated in 2013, a dramatic increase from the ~30 percent currently reached (see Figure 1). New commitment and resources are needed from a variety of partners, including endemic country governments, NGOs, donors and others, to support a scale-up of this magnitude.

FIGURE 1 | **Expanding Access to Preventative Chemotherapy**

If mass drug administration programs are to reach the levels required to achieve the 2020 goals, scaling up must accelerate now. Presented by Dr. Dirk Engels, WHO.

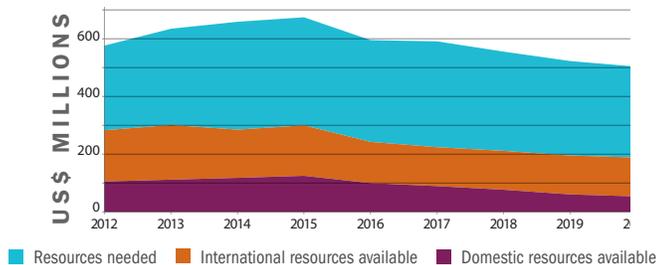


**Funding Gap:** For any of the scale-up identified above to occur, it is essential that programs be adequately funded. The initial estimated total cost of implementation for the 10 diseases covered by the London Declaration on NTDs is roughly US\$600 million per year through 2020, with an estimate of the annual funding gap standing at approximately US\$300 million (see Figure 2). New sources of funding must be found to fill this gap. These include increased commitments from new bilateral donors and endemic country governments, and contributions from private sector organizations, particularly companies operating in endemic countries. For outreach to new donors to be successful, funding requests must be aligned both with national priorities and with the interests of potential donors.

**Research and Development:** While much can be done with existing tools and strategies, additional research is needed in three main areas: drug development, diagnostics, and operations. New drugs or regimens are needed for several NTDs to achieve 2020 targets and address drug resistance if it emerges. Meanwhile, expanding the range of diagnostics available is essential to understand the diseases we are fighting and measure programmatic endpoints. The pharmaceutical industry recognizes it can contribute more in this area by providing support for research and commercialization efforts. To ensure that both new and existing tools are used as effectively and efficiently as possible, operational research must be appropriately funded and supported. It will be particularly important to study how interventions interact as single disease programs are integrated.

## FIGURE 2 | The Global NTD Funding Gap

Preliminary analysis of implementation funding (assuming existing commitments hold steady) identified an annual gap of approximately US\$300 million that must be filled. Additional resources for R&D are also needed. Presented by Dr. Daniel Kress, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.



## Working Together

Effective collaboration is critical to scaling up drug delivery and program implementation, reducing the NTD funding gap and developing new tools. Three areas of cooperation in particular that received significant attention during the meeting were (1) improving coordination within governments and organizations to launch integrated, multi-disease NTD control programs, (2) fostering collaboration between organizations within the NTD community, and (3) building new partnerships between the NTD community and other related sectors.

Many endemic countries are developing and implementing country-specific NTD master plans to ensure that programs operate in harmony with each other. Each plan provides a platform for integrated programming, enhances synergies among NTD initiatives, strengthens partner coordination, and encourages linkages between health and other programs. To promote success there must be support for best practices: providing technical support to countries seeking to develop NTD master plans, or to those attempting to integrate interventions with limited financial and technical resources.

Improving collaboration among donors, NGOs and implementing partners can help realize greater results with constrained resources. In order to achieve this, the NTD community should establish a forum to facilitate coordination and communication among partners. Fostering this dialog will help improve advocacy efforts that are critical to raising additional funds and ensuring effective, high-level engagement from endemic country government partners.

With respect to working with other sectors, numerous opportunities exist to form partnerships between the NTD community and the education and WASH communities. In the case of the WASH sector, the evidence is clear: without proper hygiene and sanitation practices within a community, trachoma, soil-transmitted helminthiasis, Guinea worm disease, schistosomiasis and other diseases will remain prevalent. As for education, improving coordination between health and education ministries will help reduce the current two-year time lag for reporting preventative chemotherapy treatment data. In addition to improving inter-departmental communication, efforts can be enhanced by NGOs and others working with government departments beyond just the health ministry, such as finance, development and others.

## Brainstorming Session Recommendations

*Uniting to Combat NTDs: Translating the London Declaration into Action* was designed to be a working meeting where participants actively discussed challenges and proposed solutions. Before attending the conference, participants completed a questionnaire on the NTD landscape. During the meeting, attendees divided by constituency to discuss their answers.

While over 500 different challenges were identified in survey responses, a number of themes and common recommendations emerged from discussions and survey responses. Some of the most important proposed solutions were to:

- **Create a mechanism for improved partner communication and coordination**, at the global and national levels.
- **Identify new sources of funding for NTDs**, both public and private.
- **Advocate for the prioritization of NTDs** by donors and endemic country governments.
- **Ensure research is driven by the needs of programs**, including operational, drug and diagnostics research.

For more information on these discussions and other meeting sessions, please see the full meeting report accessible at [www.unitingtocombatntds.org](http://www.unitingtocombatntds.org). Continuing these conversations and turning these recommendations into action is essential to achieving the 2020 goals for NTD control and elimination.