

The Neglected Tropical Disease Non-Government Development Organisations Network: The Sydney Communiqué

The NTD NGDO Network¹ established in October 2009, provides a global forum for non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) and a wide range of other partners including, donors, governments and a range of sectors covering health, education, water, hygiene and sanitation to share information and approaches on the prevention and control of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). These diseases, which impact on 1.4 billion of the world's most marginalised people, can be controlled or eliminated by preventive chemotherapy and other interventions.

NGDOs, with governments, communities and other partners, implement strategies for NTD disease and morbidity control and disability prevention and management. During their third annual meeting in Sydney, Australia in September 2012², the NTD NGDO Network members present declared their full and unanimous support for the London Declaration on Neglected Tropical Diseases (The London Declaration)³.

The London Declaration was launched in January 2012 by donors, endemic country governments, leaders from the pharmaceutical industry, multilateral organisations and non-governmental development organisations. We all committed to work together to control or eliminate 10 NTDs by 2020, in alignment with World Health Organization targets. This communiqué outlines the important contribution NGDOs can make to the control and elimination targets.

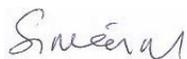
The members of the NTD NGDO Network have a long history of working with people affected by NTDs and have been among the major innovators in mass drug administration for almost 25 years. NGDOs have facilitated the distribution of over 400 million treatments of preventive chemotherapy worldwide in 2011; they are strong advocates for the reduction of morbidity and disability due to NTDs which need to form part of neglected tropical disease programmes; they are strong advocates of preventative measures through behaviour change; they have recognised the critical importance of water, sanitation and hygiene for the prevention, control and elimination of neglected tropical diseases and are seeking this sectors' closer collaboration and integration into programmes; they have worked in collaboration with host government partners and have advocated for the government's ownership of the programmes; and they have developed close relationships with thousands of communities, who have, through community-directed approaches, re-defined the role of communities in preventive chemotherapy for the NTDs.

NGDOs are a critical player in global health and are uniquely placed, given their field-based programmes and experience, to reach the most underserved – those neglected people that The London Declaration is pledging to reach.

As part of their commitment to the London Declaration the members of the Network will support:

- The finalisation of baseline disease mapping: this is a critical issue to achieve the scale up of treatment. If we do not do this we do not know where the at-risk populations are and are unable to treat and the neglect continues.
- The scaling up of mass drug administration coverage: although there has been a dramatic increase in treatments, including those supported by NGDOs, the treatment coverage globally is not reaching the 75% global coverage rate required. This needs to increase rapidly and with a sense of urgency, if we are to meet the elimination and control targets agreed.
- Programming solutions to NTDs informed by clinical and operational research and the best available data, for example baseline mapping, alternative treatment strategies and delivery approaches: the building of local capacity will ensure effective scale up to achieve elimination targets.
- The integration of water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) programmes into NTD programmes where appropriate: WaSH elements are crucial, but often underplayed, as part of the elimination and control of NTDs. This needs to change. WaSH interventions can help break the cycle of disease and also sustain the benefits of preventive chemotherapy.
- Health systems strengthening, especially at the community level: NGDOs have supported the training of over half a million community health volunteers. These volunteers have delivered preventive chemotherapy to millions of people thereby supplementing and reinforcing health systems, while empowering communities to control disease.
- Scaling up efforts to address the need for surgical intervention, home based care, and stigma reduction for those suffering from NTDs: NTD programmes need to go beyond mass drug administration to the endemic communities if they are to alleviate suffering from these diseases.
- Programming approaches which promote gender equity and the inclusion of people with disabilities in all NTD programmes: the NTDs are diseases of neglected people. Neglect should not be perpetuated by denying access to treatment, prevention or morbidity control because of gender or disability.
- The development of clear guidelines as to where and when to stop treatment are essential if elimination targets are to be achieved: Guidelines for post-treatment surveillance and certification and/or verification of elimination need to be agreed urgently.

Signed on behalf of the Network,



Simon Bush
Chair



Kim Koporc
Vice Chair

¹ For members of this Network refer to www.ntd-ngdonetwork.org

² For information and copies of presentations from the meeting refer to <http://www.hollows.org.au/nnn-forum>

³ For the London Declaration refer to www.unitingtocombatntds.org