

NNN Statement of Commitment to Safety

Background

Global health programs have a dual obligation to provide benefits to populations and to minimize harm to individuals. During the past 15 years, neglected tropical disease (NTD) control and elimination programs have delivered health and social benefits to hundreds of millions of people around the world. More than one billion people are treated through mass drug administration (MDA) for at least one NTD every year. Millions more experience improved health through clinical care, surgery, and health education messaging on NTD prevention.

As with all health interventions, however, unintended harm and error in delivery sometimes occur. For example, during MDA, incorrect administration of tablets to young children has resulted in fatal choking, and persons with *Loa loa* infection have developed encephalopathy and coma when receiving ivermectin for onchocerciasis elimination.

In general, though, NTD interventions have a high degree of safety, by which we mean protection from injury or harm. NTD programs have been implemented with a strong emphasis on safety, for example, to minimize adverse drug reactions. At times this emphasis has been explicit, and at times implicit.

As NTD programs mature, scale up to full capacity at the global level, and become more fully integrated into national health systems, it is appropriate for the NTD community to recommit itself with even greater vigilance to safety, minimizing harm, and safeguarding health; and to align with World Health Assembly Resolution 72.6 Global Action on Patient Safety adopted in May 2019. Attention to safety is particularly timely as we approach the release of the WHO 2030 NTD Roadmap.



**NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASE
NGO NETWORK**
A global forum for nongovernmental organizations
working together on NTDs

World Patient Safety Day
17 September 2019



Our Commitment

We care about the women, men and children living with neglected tropical diseases. To achieve a world free of NTDs, on World Patient Safety Day 2019, the NNN community commits to:

- **Safety first in scale up.** Our commitment to safeguarding the communities we serve includes a priority to do no harm while scaling up services to reach those in need.
- **Shared learning and evidence-based planning.** Sharing our experiences of promoting safety and embedding cross-sectoral approaches and systems thinking to inform the development of integrated work plans and preferred programming practices.
- **Continuous improvement to strengthen health systems.** Monitoring and measuring safety risks, collecting and analysing safety data, and conducting operational research to strengthen practice and take remedial action.
- **Messaging the importance of safety.** Reviewing key messaging and reinforcing the rights of individuals to consent to treatment.
- **Empowering community health workers.** Providing frontline staff with the skills they need to identify health and safety risks and manage challenging situations.
- **The bigger picture.** Understanding how safety planning incorporates principles from the field of medical errors and local cultural norms.

Our Call to Action

As many partners with one voice, we call on NTD stakeholders to emphasize safety in their 2030 work plans and ongoing activities.

- For WHO: Highlight the importance of safety for NTD programs in the 2030 NTD Roadmap
- For member states: Monitor for programmatic safety; establish or enhance safety processes/protocols, including reporting and response; collect and routinely analyse safety data for continuous improvement
- For implementing partners: Include safety in training modules and microplanning
- For NTD donors: Support efforts to maintain and improve safety.

The BEST approach to safety and safeguarding health



Behaviour

Promoting risk-reducing behaviours, NTD programs can be further strengthened by understanding the cultural context and community attitudes towards health and safety; by rapid reporting, prompt investigation, and timely analysis of serious adverse events; by revising guidelines to prioritise safety; and by ensuring safety in program design and microplanning and training activities.



Environment

Incorporating a robust understanding of the physical, biological, and social environments in which NTD interventions are delivered – whether MDA, surgery, or clinical care – can have a marked effect on patient safety and infection control, and on the uptake of facility-based treatment and care. NTD safety depends on improved Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in healthcare facilities and communities.



Social Inclusion

Participation in NTD interventions is limited by stigma, social exclusion, and other barriers. Empowering and safeguarding the psychological and social health of vulnerable community members and ensuring the safety of persons with disabilities is essential for achieving NTD program coverage.



Treatment and care

Achieving progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) means strengthening health and other systems so they are equipped to deliver comprehensive large-scale treatment interventions safely, and in response to the needs of individuals and communities. Access to WASH in health facilities is crucial to safeguard health against microbial threats. The broad spectrum of NTD interventions – ranging from MDA to surgery, to medical and clinical care, as well as public health measures, including strong NTD-WASH partnerships – positions NTD programs to play a lead role in ensuring safety and safeguarding health within UHC.

-- BEST evidence -- BEST access to treatment and care -- BEST outcomes for the individuals we support and the communities we serve --