



Reaching new frontiers

powering a new generation of leadership and
cross-sectoral collaborations to end NTDs

NNN Conference 2023



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Welcome from Outgoing Chair, Girija Sankar

The excitement was palpable and the energy was contagious in Tanzania! It was my distinct honour and pleasure to welcome everyone to the 14th annual NNN conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The 2023 annual conference was a testament to the power of partnership and collaboration in the NTD community, and demonstrated once again that the NNN is the only global platform that has the ability to bring a diverse group of stakeholders together, united by our common goal to end suffering from NTDs.

Member of Parliament and Deputy Minister of Water and Irrigation, Honorable Maryprisca Winfred Mahundi inaugurated the conference on behalf of the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, H.E. Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan - an extraordinary opportunity to celebrate Tanzania's remarkable achievements in the fight against NTDs and raise the public profile of the NTD programme with the highest levels of governmental leadership.

We were thrilled to host the Honourable Mr. John Malecela, former prime minister and first vice president of the United Republic of Tanzania, and honour the legacy of his daughter Dr. Mwele Malecela, the former Director of the Department of NTDs at the World Health Organization, Geneva, through the Mwele Malecele Mentorship programme.

Dr. Ibrahima Soce Fall, the current Director of NTDs at WHO, raised our collective ambitions when he said, "No journey can be walked alone. Collaboration and partnership are our guiding stars... a multi-sectoral approach means casting our net wide, inviting stakeholders from every sphere to join this mission."

What we hope to have achieved by inviting leaders from the highest levels of government is to elevate the visibility of NTD work in Tanzania but also to demonstrate to national government partners that there is a global community of practitioners and organizations to support their aspirations.

During the three-day conference, we hosted in-person meetings for the NNN disease-specific and cross-cutting working groups, supported 12 competitively chosen workshops, and 19 rapid-fire sessions.

In keeping with the 2023 conference theme of "Reaching new frontiers - powering a new generation of leadership and cross-sectoral collaborations to end NTDs," we hosted two youth-led special events to highlight the importance of youth and young professional voices to the NTD movement. Young professionals challenged the conference delegates to think outside the box through poetry slams, panel discussions, interpretive dances, and public pledges of our commitment to beat NTDs.

With 365 in-person delegates and 95 delegates online representing 54 countries and 206 organizations, the mood at the conference was one of camaraderie, celebration, and a sense of belonging. This was all made possible with the support of 23 sponsors who helped us achieve a record level of funding for the conference.

At the end of three days of sharing, storytelling, and communing, we committed to:

- Enhancing partnerships and regional networks — between governments, international organizations, academia, the private sector, and civil society to end suffering from NTDs
- Recognizing and valuing the pivotal role youth and young professionals play in the fight against NTDs
- Fostering a new generation of changemakers in the fight against NTDs.



Girija Sankar, 2022/2023 Chair

These commitments allow us to inject new energy and spirit to the stellar work already supported by NNN members in support of national programme goals and ambitions.

The Dar-es-Salaam conference broke new ground in many ways - we hosted our first regional meeting for Africa; organized the first ever in-person gathering of NNN members, and provided a platform for youth and young professionals. I believe this year's conference demonstrated what is possible when we truly embrace the vision of the NTD 2030 road map and create the space for a more inclusive NTD community.

I am re-energized by the youth leadership, inspired by the wisdom of the elders, and hopeful that we can indeed reach new frontiers by powering a new generation of leadership in ending suffering from NTDs.

In solidarity,
Girija Sankar, NNN Chair 2022-2023
Head of NTD Programmes
CBM International

Workshop Summaries



1.1. A New Tool for a New Frontier: An Introduction to the WHO Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Soil-Transmitted Helminthiasis and Schistosomiasis Control

Session Overview

The WHO 2030 NTD road map necessitates that STH and SCH control programs monitor the diseases' epidemiology to achieve elimination targets. This shift towards evidence-based programming is new for STH/SCH programs that have traditionally relied on deworming drug coverage. However, formal guidance on monitoring programs has been insufficient. This workshop presented the draft WHO guidelines for integrated STH and SCH monitoring and evaluation.

Main Learning Point

Co-presenters Denise Mupfasoni and Amadou Garba Djirmay provided overview of the decision trees for STH and SCH, respectively. Paul led the audience through a poll that actively sought input from the attendees on the acceptability and feasibility of some of the topical areas in the draft STH/SCH M&E guidance.

Real World Implication

WHO will release the SCH STH M&E framework in early 2024 and countries to use this guideline.

Next Steps and Implementation

When the manual is completed, visit the WHO website to download a copy and contact them for hard copy.



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Co-Presenter:

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1.2. Global perspectives for mainstreaming NTD MMDP services into national health insurance schemes and improving universal health coverage.

Session Overview

This session provided an overview of UHC within the context of NTDs. Speakers shared examples from Africa and Asia where activities have been implemented related to community led advocacy, assessing the integration of NTD services into the UHC package of benefits, and initiating policy dialogues to further mainstream NTDs into the UHC package of benefits. Participants engaged in table breakouts to share experiences and other examples of UHC activities.

Main Learning Point

This session highlighted the importance of including NTDs, specifically MMDP components, in UHC discussions and planning. The NNN and partners have a role to play in ensuring people at risk of, or affected by NTDs, have equitable access to high-quality health services.



Addressing Social Determinants of Health

Real World Implication

Given the emphasis placed on UHC in the WHO 2030 NTD road map for NTDs, there is a need for on-going discussions, funding, and collaboration to support mainstreaming and UHC objectives. Countries and partners must continue to improve access to services and make progress towards UHC to benefit those impacted by NTDs and ensure morbidity management and disability prevention (MMDP) services are adequately included.

Next Steps and Implementation

Breakout groups discussed several successes, challenges and opportunities related to the topic including:

- The need for more pre-service and in-service training opportunities for health workers. There are several good examples of this (Ghana, Philippines etc.) to learn from.
- There is a need to understand both the supply and demand sides of health facility services for NTDs and MMDP care.
- NNN and other partners could support advocacy and engage in efforts to support the most vulnerable with access to essential services.

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1.3. Sustainability of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) programmes through increased country ownership

Session Overview

The workshop brought together NTD Program Managers and stakeholders worldwide to explore the sustainability of NTD initiatives. The workshop highlighted the Continental Scorecard for Accountability and Action as an essential resource to advocate for greater visibility, mainstreaming of NTDs, and resource mobilization within national governments, with the emphasis on the role of End Malaria-NTD councils & Funds in convening senior leaders from across sectors and priority segments such as women to mobilize advocacy, action, resources, and accountability.

Main Learning Point

The session was useful in highlighting new NTD indicators suggestions for the ALMA continental scorecard for accountability and action. Some of the indicators suggested include, budget line for NTDS, proportion of NTD masterplan budget funded domestically and inclusion of NTDs in the national health plan/policies and UHC.

Real World Implication

Insights from the session will be used to strengthen NTD indicators on the ALMA Continental Scorecard for Accountability and Action, helping improve monitoring, action and delivery of health services to communities.

Next Steps and Implementation

Next step primarily involves a review of the ALMA Continental Scorecard for Accountability and Action based on insights received from the workshop



**Health
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2.1 The NTD Inclusion Score Card (NISC) Launch/Unveiling – A tool for leadership and accountability to enhance inclusion and meaningful participation of persons affected by NTDs in NGOs

Session Overview

The session took participants through the NISC development process, from concept inception to the delivery of the final product – the NISC assessment tool. Details on the From Words to Action project, including funding, aims, outcome and impact was shared with workshop participants. The NISC, developed through funding by ILEP, is a self-assessment tool that enables NTD organisations to track and measure their performance in terms of inclusion and meaningful participations of persons affected in policy and decision-making processes.

Main Learning Point

Real action needs to be taken to ensure inclusion and meaningful participation of persons affected by NTDs in policy and decision-making processes. The NISC as a tool enables this process. However, courageous change managers are required to drive this process within NTD NGOs.



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Real World Implication

More effective and successful interventions would be realized as more persons affected by NTDs are included and meaningfully participate in policy and decision-making processes in NTD organizations.

Next Steps and Implementation

- NTD NGOs to consider conducting the NISC assessment in their organizations. Support to implement this is available. Please contact Bernice or Robin if you are interested.
- Improve on NISC, add more language translations based on feedback from workshop participants.
- Promote tool among organizations to encourage its use.

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2.2 Reaching new frontiers by Leaving No One Behind - ensuring equitable NTD services for "must-reach" communities

Session Overview

Ensuring equitable NTD services for hard-to-reach communities presents a unique set of challenges that require careful planning, coordination, and execution. These challenges may include limited access to affected communities, compromised safety and security of program staff and community members, mistrust and suspicion of external actors, and unreliable data for programme execution. This workshop presented country specific experiences in implementing NTDs programmes in complex humanitarian settings within the NTD community.

Main Learning Point

- Appropriate planning and assessments for implementation
- Communication and engagement with various stakeholders at all levels
- Local capacity building
- Carry out advocacy activities prior and during project implementation
- Use of technology in project implementation
- Updates on developing security situations

Real World Implication

The workshop looked at the implementation of NTD programmes in conflict areas, ensuring no-one is left behind. It also engaged the audience to bring in their own experience. Based on the discussions during the workshop: Planning, communication, advocacy and stakeholder engagement were some ideas presented.

Next Steps and Implementation

- Highlighting key issues for implementation in conflict areas for researchers and programme teams to look into
- Raising points for collaboration within the NTD community
- Opening avenues for tech-based advancement in NTD programme implementation.



Advancing Health Equity for hard-to-reach communities

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2.3 Innovate to Eliminate- Lessons drawn across NTDs

Session Overview

This session acknowledged that the objective of MDA is to maintain low-level infection (in cases of control/ EPHP) or to arrive at a point where the disease can no longer sustain itself (in cases of elimination of transmission). As programs reach the last mile towards control or elimination, there remain gaps/ barriers in relation to programs achieving these goals. Four such notable barriers include: validation of elimination, persistent infection in some isolated areas, the need for refinement of interventions and the need for alternate assessment strategies. Four short rapid-fire presentations were given on these gaps/ barriers.

Main Learning Point

Although efforts control/ eliminate NTDs can be challenging, NTD programs need to be flexible and pivot to the use of innovative new methods to overcome last mile challenges that cannot be addressed through typical programmatic means

Real World Implication

Each example addressed a different last mile challenge and illustrated a different way of innovating - and spanned all five PC NTDs (LF, Trachoma, Onchocerciasis and SCH/STH). Nevertheless, the relative cost implications of some of the innovative methods are not clear and/or are prohibitive, a challenge in resource-limited settings.

Next Steps and Implementation

The Q&A session focused on particular questions audience members had on how to navigate certain situations in implementing some of the innovative methods. It also discussed and helped navigate some of the challenges that organizations have been facing.



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3.1. Strengthening health systems at the national and subnational levels for sustainable NTD services

Session Overview

In line with the 2030 NTD road map and Sustainability Framework for Action, some countries have developed NTD sustainability plans to complement strategic or master plans and guide strategies to enhance country leadership, advocacy and financing of NTD services. These plans take a systems strengthening approach based on each country's unique context. Decentralization is an important contextual factor in most countries, with funding allocations made from the national level to districts or similar local levels, and the local level determining priorities.

Main Learning Point

This workshop shared results and lessons learned from four countries in Africa that are working to strengthen health systems at the national and subnational levels to sustainably achieve their NTD goals. At the national level the countries have conducted sustainability assessments and developed sustainability plans, which they are now implementing. At the district or local level, they are engaging with decentralized planning and budgeting processes to allocate resources for priority NTD services.

Real World Implication

The workshop provided very specific examples of how different components of monitoring and evaluation have been strengthened to inform improvements in NTD programs. These strategies can be leveraged by partners and governments across NTDs to help in the achievement of program specific goals.

Next Steps and Implementation

- The NTDP in Niger has prioritized decentralized ownership of the sustainability plan implementation by engaging local development authorities to include NTDs in Municipal development plans.
- The NTDP in Senegal and the national agency for UHC (ANACMU) has implemented a phased approach towards the integration of NTDs into the UHC policy.
- The NTDP and Ministry of Health in Tanzania is pursuing greater visibility and advocacy for NTD services at all levels.
- The NTDP and Ministry of Health in Uganda conducted a funds flow analysis data to inform planning, budget allocation, advocacy, and resource tracking.



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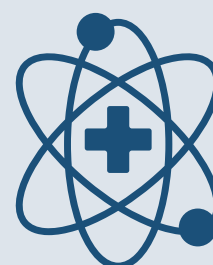
3.2. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation for NTD programs towards the achievement of WHO NTD 2030 goals.

Session Overview

This workshop provided concrete examples from NTD programs across various geographies that have tried and tested several mechanisms to improve core components of M&E of NTD interventions, including real-time data collection during mass drug administrations, strengthening supportive supervision, and using innovative geostatistical based modeling to inform program targeting, among others.

Main Learning Point

It is critical that NTD programs leverage innovation and technology to robustly monitor and evaluate programs to strengthen programming, as well as assess impact, in an effort to make progress towards achieving the 2030 NTD road map goals.



**Technological
Innovation &
Solutions**

Real World Implication

The workshop provided very specific examples of how different components of monitoring and evaluation have been strengthened to inform improvements in NTD programs. These strategies can be leveraged by partners and governments across NTDs to help in the achievement of program specific goals.

Next Steps and Implementation

- Workshop presenters shared specific examples innovations in monitoring and evaluation approaches for NTD programs that other partners and governments can leverage
- Workshop presenters also shared key lessons learnt in the application of innovative monitoring and evaluation approaches that others can learn from when designing their monitoring and evaluation strategies.

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3.3. Developing implementation plans for an Essential Care Package (ECP) on Mental Health and Stigma for NTDs

Session Overview

This workshop updated participants on progress around the ECP, and to consider together how best to implement and make the ECP operational within different country contexts. As part of this, an overview of the ECP was provided; case studies were presented of countries in which mental health and stigma reduction have been successfully integrated into national health systems; and group work was undertaken to develop strategies for implementation/operationalisation of the ECP under the guidance of national programmes.

Main Learning Point

Mental health and stigma reduction interventions can and should be integrated within national NTD programmes. Policy makers, programme managers and health staff should work together to ensure that the Essential Care Package (ECP) of mental health and stigma reduction interventions for persons affected by NTDs is implemented and scaled up within national health systems.

Real World Implication

The Essential Care Package (ECP) of mental health and stigma reduction interventions for persons affected by NTDs, which the DMDI CCG has developed together with WHO, makes a significant contribution toward integration of mental health and NTD services within health systems, based on growing strength of evidence, policy guidance through WHO's Roadmap, and effective communication of the importance of mental health and stigma within the delivery of NTD care.

Next Steps and Implementation

Learnings and outputs from the group work of the session will directly inform development of the implementation plans for the Essential Care Package (ECP) on Mental Health and Stigma for NTDs. These relate to various levels of the health system, including health services and advocacy, population, and the family and community level. For each of these three levels, the following were identified through the group work: problems/gaps to address, objectives, activities/tasks, and type of personnel required / platform responsible.



**Mental Health,
NTDs &
Quality of
Life**

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4.1. Best practices in peer support groups: Developing a common framework and theory of change for implementation

Session Overview

This session addressed best practices in peer support groups from different regions, with the aim of blending current evidence and practical experience into a practical theory of change. Key findings and recommendations from available literature and primary data collection were presented. The main focus areas that emerged from this research included: self-care; mental health; livelihood; and behavioural, organizational and structural considerations.

Main Learning Point

Participatory approaches to the development and implementation of peer support group models can improve communication among people affected, strengthen the existing health system, improve health-seeking behavior, ensure better disease management and facilitate improved psychosocial wellbeing. Peer support groups should be encouraged to cover multiple domains in order to promote a holistic approach to wellbeing.

Real World Implication

Peer support groups are recognized as an important resource for people affected by skin-related NTDs, but there is currently a great deal of heterogeneity in their implementation. There is a need for further research to identify best practices, particularly with the increasing interest in integration of multiple skin-related NTDs in peer support groups.

Next Steps and Implementation

Key steps necessary for the development of impactful peer support groups were developed in small groups, addressing the focus areas of self-care, livelihood, mental health and behavioural, organizational and structural considerations. Contributions from the group discussion will be incorporated into the findings of the report being developed by the UPLIFT study, which was presented during the session and results will be incorporated into the harmonized peer support group model currently being developed for implementation.



**Building
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4.2 How One Health & Sustainable Systems collaborations can sustainably tackle NTDs

Session Overview

An interactive workshop on supporting collaborations between One Health and sustainability movements. Achieving sustainable action on NTDs requires the whole system to function –going beyond just human health, to deliver action on livelihoods, nutrition, water, sanitation, ecosystem health, climate change, and more. During the session, participants completed a problem tree exercise, starting through identification of stakeholders with shared interests and areas of common ground (forming the leaves of the problem tree). Then root causes and barriers to collaboration before discussing some of the potential solutions (fruits).

Main Learning Point

We need better systems evaluation to capture impact of cross-sector, One Health working and value sustainability. Institutional structures and governance can create the enabling environment needed for One Health Systems Strengthening.



Cross-Sectoral Streams

Real World Implication

Key areas preventing better cross-sectoral working include siloed mindsets, particularly with funding and long-standing institutions/programmes. Reframing and systems mapping can help to identify common ground between stakeholders for new collaborations. Shared objectives can achieve efficiencies and improve effectiveness.

Next Steps and Implementation

A write up will be published and outputs used to inform the work of the NNN's One Health Cross-Cutting Group and the Enhancing Sustainable Systems CCG.

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Guest for closing comments:

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4.3 Leprosy related stigma in African settings: impact on physical, mental, and social wellbeing

Session Overview

The session focused on impact of stigma on the well-being of persons affected by Leprosy in Namibia, Lesotho, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Uganda. A team from Niger then presented preliminary findings from their study about Leprosy stigma in the country and its effects on psychosocial, health and economic well-being of people affected. This was followed by a panel discussion consisting of a 3-person panel with lived experiences and experience of stigma. The panel helped solidify understanding of the lived experiences of persons affected by Leprosy.

Main Learning Point

The session provided attendees with an understanding of the types of Leprosy stigma in multiple countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the different lived experiences of persons affected by the disease, and various approaches to successfully overcoming Leprosy stigma.



**Mental Health,
NTDs &
Quality of
Life**

Real World Implication

Understanding the lived experiences of persons affected by Leprosy and the factors that strengthen their resilience are important for the development of intervention to address stigma and to help improve the lives of those affected by Leprosy. The common primary factors for supporting the physical, emotional, and social well-being of persons affected.

Next Steps and Implementation

- Leprosy stigma affects people across generations, therefore interventions need to include patients as well as their families and their offspring.
- Leprosy stigma from the community affects people to different degrees, depending on the visibility of the sequelae of the disease on the patient (i.e. resulting physical deformities and disabilities). However, internalized stigma is similar across all individuals affected.

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Rapid Fire Sessions



RF1 | Bringing primary healthcare home

Presenters: Dr. Shyamala Anand, Dr Suresh Munuswamy

HRL and ALM present the impact of COMPREHENSIVTM, a smartphone-based digital platform that narrows the gap between surveys and service by sourcing reliable data that enables continuous real-time disease management at home by trained available local human resource, and evidence-based advocacy for essential service provision.

RF2 | Revolutionizing existing practices of care for NTDs

Presenter: Dr. Indra Napit

Different studies under RIGHT Project are trying to evaluate the effectiveness of different options of ulcer treatment eg. L-PRF in Leprosy foot ulcers (TABLE), Honey Experiment on Leprosy Ulcer (HELP), Health Needs Assessment for Buruli Ulcers (HABU) and Removable Off-loading device in healing of Neuropathic planter ulcers.

RF3 | Breaking the Barriers

Presenters: Dr. Shyamala Anand, Dr Suresh Munuswamy

This heartwarming film presented the hidden lives of persons affected by leprosy. It accounts for firsthand experience from healthcare providers who are committed to breaking down barriers, and supporting national efforts to end leprosy in Nepal by 2030.

RF4 | How can we drive investment in NTDs? The role of the Kigali Declaration and Commitment Tracker

Presenter: Victoria Skyes

The session focused on how the Kigali Declaration and Commitment Tracker support the drive for investment, with a practical example from an endemic country.

RF5 | WASH and NTDs: New tools and resources for improved collaboration

Presenter: Yael Velleman

An overview of recent developments in WASH and NTDs collaboration, including the revised WHO and NNN toolkit: "WASH and Health working together – a 'how to' guide for NTD programmes", the forthcoming Open WHO course on WASH and NTDs, and further opportunities for collaboration and lesson-sharing.

RF6 | Advancing health equity in NTDs and addressing social determinants through cross-sectoral interventions

Presenter: Nikita Sarah

A pathway for addressing social determinants of health through cross-disciplinary interventions targeted towards ensuring easy access to quality and affordable health care, employment and income, and social inclusion and non-discrimination.

RF7 | Good practices in the fight against NTDs in Guinea

Presenter: Salomon Yedidiya Dopavogui

The video retraced some of the major achievements in the fight against NTDs in the Republic of Guinea between 2018-2021. It highlighted the reforms made by the government and NGOs in the fight against disinformation and the stigmatization of NTD victims.

RF8 | Electronic tablets as a simple tool to improve field staff's work in the jungle

Presenter: Alba Lucia Morales

The session highlighted the effectiveness of equipping field workers with electronic tablets to improve their performance with results from initiative implemented amongst the Yanomami people who live in the jungle and are one of the least transformed human groups in the world.

RF9 | From sparse and heterogenous datasets to a million patients: Solutions to pool and harmonise individual participant data for effective and equitable reuse of data to generate new evidence in an open science framework

Presenter: Julia Halder

The talk showcased experiences and progress focusing on equitable individual participant-level data reuse which maximises the value of data and the resources available for research and implementation.

RF10 | Crowdsourced Image-based Morbidity Hotspot Surveillance for Neglected Tropical Diseases (CIMS-NTDs)

Presenters: Dr. Shyamala Anand, Dr Suresh Munuswamy

Parasitology and Public Health Society of Nigeria (PPSN) presented the Crowdsourced Image-Based Morbidity Hotspot Surveillance for NTDs (CIMS-NTDs) under "Building Evidence of Action" theme. It focused on improved surveillance method for NTDs with varied advantages over the traditional NTDs surveillance method.

RF11 | Collaborating with local teaching institutions to improve MDA training quality in Ethiopia.

Presenter: Aemiro Asmare Meseret

Considering constraints of skilled human power to supervise each district cascading training from both MOH/RHB and RTI, local institutions having the desired teaching institutions considered to have conversant personnel that can support in strengthening program activities if they get sufficient orientation and coordination.

RF12 | Sustainable Financing for Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs): Approaches and Lessons from Kenya

Presenter: Florence Wakesho

Using approaches and experiences from Kenya, this presentation looked at the role of budget advocacy in public and private engagements for sustainable financing for NTDs to optimize available health resources.

RF13 | Comprehensive Rehabilitation: What next after RFT 'Release from Treatment'?

Presenter: Nikita Sarah

This video highlighted outcomes of the FOUND project implemented by The Leprosy Mission in Nepal which offered sustainable employment, capacity building, and mentorship to reintegrate its beneficiaries into society by implementing ENROL-ENHANCE-EMPOWER (3E) approach.

RF14 | From Policy to Practice: Cross-sectoral approaches to integrate NTDs into routine health services

Presenters: Dr. Lamine Lamah & Prospère Diouf

The presentation looked at contextual approaches from Guinea and Senegal to mainstream NTDs into existing service delivery platforms as a follow on to the introduction that was given at NNN in 2022. It looked at different phases of cross sectoral integration, including incorporating NTDs into policy, convening cross sectoral stakeholders to develop the approach, and the preliminary results from implementation.

RF15 | Advancing health equity for refugee populations in Niger through integration of trachoma program prevention into routine health services

Presenters: Dr Ibrahim Garba Dandano

This session explores how The Programme National pour la Santé Oculaire (PNSO) in Niger has developed a strategy to expand trachoma prevention to the Sayam refugee camp. It will present the cross sectoral approach that was used to define the MDA in the camp, the results of the pilot in Sayam, and opportunities for scale up to other refugee camps in the country.

RF16 | Crowdsourced Image-based Morbidity Hotspot Surveillance for Neglected Tropical Diseases (CIMS-NTDs): Preliminary Report from Nigerian Pilot

Presenter: Uchechukwu Chukwuocha

The CIMS-NTDs is an innovative, real-time, inexpensive, population-inclusive and subjects involving surveillance method for NTDs. It is developed in support of the WHO 2030 NTDs elimination agenda for NTDs. This presentation will focus on the project methodology and some of its preliminary results from a pilot study site in Nigeria.

RF17 | Upscaling Social Mobilization for Quality Mass Drug Administration in Western Kenya

Presenter(s): Clare Amuyunzu

The session described a social mobilization (SM) process that was piloted and scaled up in the western region of Kenya on soil transmitted helminths and schistosomiasis. The SM process aimed to increase demand, uptake, and acceptability of community-based treatment/ mass drug administration campaigns for deworming medicines.

RF18 | The use of photography to support trachoma elimination and long-term surveillance

Presenter: Cristina Jimenez

As more countries reach trachoma elimination and cases are harder to find, new methods for training trachoma graders are needed. This presentation focused on a new photography database developed to address this challenge, and its use by the Tropical Data service to develop new training methods to support health ministries obtain accurate trachoma data during prevalence survey.

SPECIAL SESSIONS



Regional Meeting for Africa

Since its inception in 2009, the NNN has grown to more than 90 member organizations. With this increasing membership base comes the challenge of ensuring all members are collaboratively engaged with the NNN, are represented in the Working Groups and supported within and outside of the network. Regional networks are a tried-and-tested way of engaging organizations from the same geographical area, create a platform where those with shared challenges, opportunities, and conditions can come together and build their voice and capacity.

In May 2023, the NNN held its first ever Regional Network meeting, for South East Asia. Hosted virtually, the meeting saw attendance from more than 15 different organizations working on NTDs in the South East Asia Region. Building on this success, the NNN invited the representatives from the Africa Region and beyond, to meet in Tanzania, East Africa during the 2023 Annual Conference in September.

The first part of the event saw NTDs practitioners present about some of their initiatives within the African Region and share common challenges and opportunities that comes with the geographical location. The second half of the meeting was a panel discussion, titled Facilitating Engagement of Regional Members to Collaborate, Implement and Learn. The panel constituted of Mr. Inigo Laso, General Manager of Anesvad Foundation and Mr. Gilbert Baayenda, Senior Trachoma Advisor for the Fred Hollows Foundation, and was moderated by Ms. Arielle Dolueigi, Immediate Past Chair of the NNN 2022//23.

Rapid Fires at the Regional Meeting for Africa

RF1 | The Power of Storytelling in Health Advocacy: From neglect to hope for leishmaniasis patients

Presenter: Mercy Mumo

Centering on a DNDi documentary on the lives and work of three health workers from Kenya, Colombia and India, this presentation examined the impact of storytelling in raising awareness of leishmaniasis, which can serve as an example for Network members working to humanize their advocacy, make complex information more accessible, and inspire action.

RF2 | Sustainable Impact of Socio-economic Interventions: Developing a Model/Framework for Practice and Research

Presenter: Onaedo Ilozumba

Living with an NTD worsens the already precarious economic situation of affected people. To address this need, international and local organisations have sought to develop and implement socio-economic interventions, such as self-help groups, which aim to improve economic outcomes for people living with various NTDs. In this presentation, empirical and data-driven evidence was presented on the sustainability and sustained effects of self-help groups and suggestions were given towards building a model for practice and research.

RF14 | Innovative Approaches to Advocacy, Knowledge Management, and Storytelling for inspiring action in the battle against Neglected Tropical Diseases globally

Presenter: Monzur Patwary

By combining geospatial data, multimedia elements, and narrative structures, StoryMap enables users to create interactive, engaging stories that convey complex information and inspire action. The presentation will showcase the StoryMap designed to chronicle the history and progress of the STH Program in Bangladesh and how tools can drive change for NTDs across the globe.



Youth Led Sessions

Storytelling Lab for NTDs

On Day 1 of the 2023 NNN Conference, One Health Society of Tanzania and the NNN held a collaborative Storytelling Lab for NTDs where young artists, performers and advocates shared their stories of their fight against NTDs, highlighting struggles, motivation and hopes for the future.

The lab explored new mediums of storytelling that can be adapted in communications. Instead of only relying on traditional communication practices and strategies, the 1-hour session focused on different forms of communication, such as dance, music and spoken word. Throughout the session, youths inspired members and delegates to continue to engage in new and changing ways of sharing messages that highlight the need and urgency to take action against NTDs.

The session featured the Educate Arts Group of Tanzania who presented a cultural dance on the burden of NTDs and the collaborative effort require to end NTDs. This was followed by Gloria Swilla's and Christiner Haule's poetry on mental health and the devastating consequences of poor mental health. We also had presentations from Papa Momar, Program Officer from Speak Up Africa on Youth Leadership Initiative in Senegal. Following the presentations, all artists sat down for a discussion on what inspired them to talk about NTDs through their different artforms.

Youth Panel | Demand Generation: The role of youth in creating a movement to end NTDs

On Day 2 of the 2023 NNN Conference, Youth Combating NTDs and the NNN held a collaborative panel discussion on "Demand Generation: The role of youth in creating a movement to end NTDs". The discussion conducted in collaboration with youth networks within Africa, paved the way for conversations on how to champion existing youth-initiatives to end NTDs.

Youth Combating NTDs is a youth-focused and led initiative, designed to mainstream the participation of young people within the NTD community across all its activities. The discussion gathered young practitioners from the NTD space, who showcased their significance as professionals, and put forth their perspectives on the role of young people in advocacy-building, demand-generation for NTD services, as well as creating meaningful change in the NTD space. Through the event, these young practitioners, experts and advocacy leaders in the NTD space discussed ideas and initiatives which could help shift the focus of the broader NTD discussion from research to practice, by showcasing the lived experiences of young people in various contexts.

The discussion was hosted by two YCNTDs Advisory Board members, Mary-Jean Nleya and Joachim Mabula, with the panel including young NTD advocates and practitioners, Hooria Amiri from YCNTDs, Yuya Kondo from NTDs Youth Organization in Japan, Dr. Suwash Baral from The Leprosy Mission in Nepal, and Ambakisye Mhiche from Research Triangle International. The discussion concluded that as the heirs to the global health systems, youth carry an added responsibility to generate demand to end the neglect of NTDs. As a result, youth championship and leadership in the NTDs space should be an end goal in itself.

Morning Sessions

Morning Session 1 - GIZ TZ & EAC Secretariat

On Day 2 of the Conference, GIZ TZ & the EAC Secretariat conducted a one-hour special session involving members of the East African Community. The session carried on the discussions from the Regional Meeting for Africa the day before, and went deeper into creating a space for collaboration and learning. The session focused on NTDs organizations working in Africa and discussed some of the common challenges of working in NTDs in Africa. Discussions were also focused on how NTD NGOs within East Africa can collaborate effectively and share resources to eliminate NTDs in Africa.

Morning Session 2 - Organizations of Persons Affected by NTDs

On Day 3 of the NNN Conference, a one-hour special session was hosted by Organizations of Persons Affected by NTDs. The session titled "Organisations of persons affected: Improving participation, empowerment, and reducing disease burden" highlighted the importance of organizations of persons affected by NTDs in improving participation, empowerment and reducing disease burden. The session also showcased existing people's organizations and discussed collaboration strategies. With the aim of stimulating interest and support for the development of people's organizations across different NTDs communities, the session focused on promoting inclusion, equality, and meaningful participation of persons affected by NTDs.

Conference Highlights



Message from Incoming Chair, Dr. Jemish Acharya

Hi Everyone,

As the incoming Chair of the NNN, I promise to support this platform dedicated to tackling the pressing challenges posed by neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) today. The NNN stands together with 100 members spread across the globe today. This network here is a testament to the power of collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and our unwavering commitment towards global health.

NTDs transcend borders, underscoring the need for collaborative efforts on a global scale. We will together explore the power of partnerships and networks – between governments, organizations, academia, the private sector, and civil society – as we work together to amplify our impact and create synergies that accelerate progress.

We will aim to work together to empower communities working with and living with NTDs, advocate for sustainable solutions and foster a sense of ownership over health outcomes. May our deliberations be fruitful, our interactions meaningful, and our shared commitment resolute. Together, we can turn the tide against neglected tropical diseases and pave the way for a healthier and more equitable world.

The phenomenal success of our 2023 NNN Conference demonstrates the dedication, passion, and can-do attitude of the NTD NGO community. We are stronger together, and together, we can do more - to support countries in mobilizing resources, to advocate for increased attention to NTDs from donors, and to amplify the voices of people and communities living with NTDs.



Dr. Jemish Acharya 2023/24 CHAIR

Thank you

Dr. Jemish Acharya, NNN Chair 2023/2024

Head of Programs and Learning

The Leprosy Mission Nepal

Conference in numbers

The 2023 NNN Conference was the first of its kind for the NNN. Deviating from the standard 3-day model, the conference spanned over 4-days, mixed with special sessions highlighting the voices of youths, persons affected by NTDs, and regional NGOs. The conference continued the hybrid model set-up during the 2022 Conference and helped NTDs professionals worldwide to be a part of the conference.

This year, a total of 367 delegates made it to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, representing 122 organizations and 45 countries. Those who could not make it in person, joined us virtually. A total of 104 delegates streamed the conference virtually, taking the total attendance to 471 Delegates. We were pleased to see representation from people's organizations, youths, and regional NGOs in encouraging numbers.

Representation from North America and Africa was felt strongly as 54 delegates arrived from the United States of America and 52 delegates joined the conference from Nigeria. We also welcomed 43 delegates from Tanzania, 36 from the United Kingdom, 27 from Kenya, 24 from Ethiopia, and 15 from Nepal.

For the first time, this year's NNN Conference had four special sessions. The Inaugural Regional Meeting of Africa was NNN's first ever in-person regional meeting to bolster regional collaboration amongst NNN members to find common grounds amongst organizations facing similar geographical challenges in eliminating NTDs. Youths took center stage at the 2023 NNN Conference with two special sessions, a Storytelling Lab for NTDs and a Youth-Led Panel Discussion on Demand Generation in NTDs. Both of these sessions were celebrated by delegates and the call to enhance youth participation in NTDs elimination was heard and understood.

"Throughout the conference, we have seen youths striving to lead, learn, and connect. Because of this, we are reminded of the power of a platform such as the NNN. The NNN commits to putting youth at the forefront of our efforts, amplifying your creativity and unwavering spirit to end NTDs. The 2023 Annual Conference was a step in the direction."

Excerpt from the NNN 2023 Communique

Continuing NNN's commitment for meaningful participation of persons affected by NTDs, the 2023 Conference hosted special breakfast sessions to highlight the importance of lived experiences and how best to incorporate them in plans to eliminate NTDs.

The opening plenary of the conference had the highest attendance, with 325 delegates joining the conference in-person and 30 tuning in virtually. As with the 2022 Conference, rapid fire sessions continued to garner attention from delegates with 250 delegates attending the session in-person and 28 delegates joining virtually.

As we look towards the future, we will continue to ensure that we take an approach that not only encourages and allows for equitable participation and representation, but reflects who we are as the NNN- a unified NGO voice, here to enhance our community of practice towards the control and elimination of NTDs.

Who is who in the NNN in 2023 / 2024

2023/2024 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is the NNN's leadership team

Chair: Dr. Jemish Acharya (The Leprosy Mission Nepal)

Vice-Chair: Gilbert Baayenda (The Fred Hollows Foundation)

Immediate Past Chair: Girija Sankar (Christian Blind Mission)

NNN administrative support: Subin Adhikari (The Leprosy Mission Nepal), Opeoluwa J Oguntoye (Christian Blind Mission) & Ismat Zehra Juma (Christian Blind Mission)

Executive Committee (ExCo)

NNN is governed by the ExCo, composed of the Steering Committee, and representatives from disease-specific groups and cross-cutting groups. The ExCo oversees the management of the network and ensures it is meeting its objectives in line with its terms of reference.

Disease-Specific Groups

Lymphatic Filariasis

Chair: Asrat Mengitse (CDT-Africa at the College of Health Sciences, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia)

Vice-Chair: Benoît Dembele (Hellen Keller International)

Leprosy

Chair: Geoff Warne (International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations - ILEP)

Onchocerciasis

Chair: Francesca Olamiju (MITOSATH)

Vice-Chair: Lindsay Rakers (The Carter Center)

Schistosomiasis & Soil-transmitted helminths

Chair: Mariana Stephens (Children Without Worms)

Vice-Chair: Cosmas Ndellejong Ejong (Sightsavers)

Trachoma

Chair: PJ Hooper (International Trachoma Initiative)

Vice-Chair: Michaela Kelly (Sightsavers)

Alternate: Aparna Barua Adams (International Coalition for Trachoma Control)

Cross-Cutting Groups (CCG)

CCGs focus on issues of common concern to the NTD community at large.

They have an action-oriented approach and work together to identify challenges, develop solutions, advocate/socialise them widely.

Conflict & Humanitarian Emergencies

Chair: Angelia Sanders (The Carter Center)

Co-Chair: Katie Eves (The Mentor Initiative)

Disease Management, Disability & Inclusion (DMDI)

Chair: Danny Haddad (CBM Global)

Vice-Chair: Maya Semrau (Brighton and Sussex Medical School)

Ensuring Sustainable Systems

Chair: Kate McCracken (Evidence Action)

One Health

Chair: Dr. Gabrielle Laing (SCI Foundation)

Skin-related NTDs

Chair: Dr. Rie Yotsu (International Foundation of Dermatology)

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Chair: Sarity Dodson (The Fred Hollows Foundation)

Communications

Chair: Subin Adhikari (The Leprosy Mission Nepal)

Immediate Past Chair: Kat Gulyas (Global Schistosomiasis Alliance)

NNN Representation

Uniting to Combat NTDs Consultative Forum

- Madelle Hatch (The Carter Center)

ESPEN Steering Committee

- Juliana Amanyi-Enegela (Christian Blind Mission)
- Lynsey Blair (SCI Foundation)

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Acknowledgements from Outgoing Chair

As we begin the transition in the Steering Committee for the year 2023-2024, I would like to extend my appreciation and gratitude to Arielle Dolegui, as she steps down from her role as Immediate Past Chair to enjoy her NNN retirement. In her three years on the NNN Steering Committee, Arielle has raised the bar with her high standards for excellence at the annual conference. I thank the following past chairs of working groups who have completed their tenure this year:

- Dr. Igor Pilawski- One Health and we welcome Dr. Gabrielle Laing as the new Chair,
- Michele Murdoch- Skin Related NTDs and we welcome Dr. Rie Yotsu as the new Chair,
- Aparna Srikantam- Disease Management and Disability Inclusion and we welcome Danny Haddad as the new Chair,
- Kat Gulyas- Communications and we welcome Subin Adhikari as the new Chair,

The NNN thrives on the engagement of our working groups, and we are grateful for your service and the expertise you bring to these groups.

It takes a whole village to put a conference of this scale together. This was a monumental effort and mission. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of those that made it possible.

First and foremost, I would like to express my profound gratitude to Janine Lancaster, the fearless leader of Maximize Your Time, our professional conference organizer. Many thanks to Hazel Dupont, Debbie Jackson-Cole, Debbie Bielby, Eva Natcheva, Russell Thorne, Nick Harrison, David Hall, Carys Ellis and the entire Maximise Your Time team in-person and online for their incredible and unwavering support to pull this one-of-a-kind conference together.

Allow me to also recognize the NNN Executive Committee, who have contributed to the development, shaping and running of this conference.

We had an incredible group of NNN volunteers this year who planned and delivered the opening and closing plenaries and special events.

I would like to thank all those who volunteered and worked with us over the last year. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the following individuals:

- Bunmi Oluloto
- Caitlin Mensah
- Monzur Patwary
- Nikita Sarah
- Rajni Kant Singh
- Subhojit Goswami
- Susan D'Souza
- Teyil Wamyil-Mshelia

Special thank you to Opeoluwa Oguntoye, and Ismat Zehra Juma from CBM and to Subin Adhikari from TLM Nepal for supporting the steering committee through the year, for assisting with conference preparations, and for leading the youth events at the conference. The conference committee this year did a terrific job before and during the conference. I would like to thank two individuals in particular: Mariana Stephens for her contribution as chair of the conference plenary team and Kat Gulyas, our indomitable Chair of the Communications Working Group, for going above and beyond year-after-year for the conference.

Immense gratitude to Ms. Nesia Mahenge, Country Director, CBM Tanzania, and her team for serving as the local host for the conference and securing the highest levels of support from the government of Tanzania. Nesia and her team worked tirelessly to coordinate with the immigration department, the President's office, the national media, and other key stakeholders to ensure the success of the conference.

To all our conference sponsors, my immense gratitude for your continued support in making the conference possible but also for your commitment towards a world free of NTDs. I would also like to extend my congratulations to this year's NTD Innovation Prize Winner.

Finally, to all of those that attended in-person or online, at odd hours of the day, for those that actively participated and engaged with each other over the course of the conference, thank you. Thank you for your collaborative spirit, your hunger for change, and for your willingness to continue to learn with and from each other.

Girija Sankar, NNN Chair 2022-2023

Head of NTD Programmes, CBM International



*The preparation of this report was led by Subin Adhikari with support from Kat Gulyas