

Partnership in the fight against NTDs in the next decade: what kind of innovation?

Webinar organized by the Swiss Alliance against Neglected Tropical Diseases (SANTD) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), March 1, 2021, 2.00 – 3.30 p.m.

Connection details at the end of the document

Background and rationale

“Ending the neglect to attain the sustainable development goals – A road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021-2030” was approved in late 2020.

The new road map has two main objectives:

1. to enable national governments to take the lead in delivering NTD interventions to reach SDG 3.3.
2. to encourage the global community of partners to increase their commitments to overcoming NTDs in the coming decade.

To reach objective 1, the Roadmap calls for changes in thinking for a transition towards **cross-cutting approaches**. They include **moving away from a siloed disease-specific approach** to consideration of areas of mutual benefit and collaboration with other organizations to progress towards control and elimination.

The COVID-19 pandemic badly hurt global health in 2020. As NTDs, consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic go beyond health with strong impact on the global economy and deepening inequalities. Social and economic pre-conditions determine how COVID -19 or NTDs affect people. **The determinants of health**, i.e., the context in which people live, their level of education and health awareness, their health hygiene and history as well as access to health care, **influence levels of risks**.

Fighting NTDs and COVID-19 are not a health issue only. Health-oriented public policies in other sectors play critical roles in the prevention, treatment and care of such diseases. Interventions in health and sanitation (WASH), nutrition, health promotion and education campaigns do play a role in an effective fight against such diseases.

Switzerland has exceptional expertise to make a significant contribution to the fight against NTDs. This is based on the experience of organizations active in health and governance cooperation, government cooperation, the strong global role of the Swiss health industry and international key organizations, a leading role in health and life science and a long-standing commitment to innovation in health and beyond. Members of the Swiss Alliance against Neglected Tropical Diseases (SANTD), pharmaceutical companies, implementing partners, non-governmental organizations, research institutions and academia – are playing a key role in the implementation of the new NTDs Road map.

Innovation is a recurring theme in the new WHO Roadmap on NTDs. Being at the forefront of innovation in various areas, Switzerland has the potential to contribute to the realization of various parts of the roadmap.

Objectives of this Webinar

With 2020 marking the end of the current WHO strategy on NTDs, it is time to review the activities of the past and the opportunities of the future.

1. With the COVID - 19 outbreak and the approbation of the new WHO NTD roadmap, the event will highlight the transition from diseases-specific approaches to cross-cutting collaborations and the importance of the determinants of health in the fight against NTDs.
2. Present success stories and discuss a transition into the more ambitious strategic thinking of the new Roadmap.

Event Structure

Segment I – Introduction on NTDs challenges ahead (presentation 20 min)

Speakers:

- Dr Dirk Engels (Uniting to Combat NTDs): Review of the last WHO Roadmap on NTDs
- Dr Mwele Malecela (WHO): Introduction to new WHO Roadmap on NTDs
- Dr Anthony Man (Novartis): Challenges in Development of Innovative Therapeutics for NTDs.

Segment II – Deep-dive in two concrete examples from partners (presentation 20 min – 10 min each)

Disease focus 1: Human African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness)

Sleeping sickness threatens millions of people in 36 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Without treatment, the disease is considered fatal. Many of the affected populations live in remote rural areas with limited access to adequate health services, which complicates the surveillance and therefore the diagnosis and treatment of cases.

Project Flash

- **DNDi** (Dr Olaf Valverde), **FIND** (Dr Joseph Ndungu): Multi-dimensions of access: how to address some of the bottlenecks.

Disease focus 2: Schistosomiasis

More than 240 million people worldwide require treatment and around 200,000 die from complications each year. Morbidity due to schistosomiasis has been greatly reduced over the past decade in some parts of the world thanks to increased control efforts of local NTD programs, international implementation partners and the increased availability and donation of praziquantel. To sustain and advance the gains made to date there is a need for cross-sectorial approaches including R&D of new medical products, WASH and community-based behavior change approaches.

Project Flash

- **Merck Global Health Institute** (Dr Jutta Reinhard-Rupp): From donation to sustainable procurement of medical products (Praziquantel): what kind of (fair) partnership are we looking for?
- **Swiss TPH** (Dr Stephanie Knopp) : Novel tools and strategies for breaking schistosomiasis transmission

Segment III – Cross-sectorial interventions in the fight against NTD and the COVID – 19 pandemic: what room for innovation? (panel discussion ca. 30-45min.)

Panelists:

- **WHO** (Dr Mwele Malecela)
 - **Pharma** (Dr Lutz Hegemann, Novartis)
 - **SDC** (Dr Alexander Schulze)
 - **Research** (Dr Peter Steinmann, Swiss TPH)
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SANTD-SDC webinar: Partnership in the fight against NTDs in the next decade: what kind of innovation?

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