

What role does disability, stigma and mental health play in achieving the NTD road map targets?

7 October 2020

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) have long-term consequences including permanent disability, physical impairment and death. NTDs impact the daily lives of mainly marginalized populations where disease awareness is low and yet sociocultural beliefs and misconceptions about them are strong. In many settings, NTDs are linked with stigma which, together with the impact of disabilities and poverty, can cause social exclusion, associated with significant mental health consequences.

The new WHO NTD road map for 2021–2030 prioritizes integrated interventions and mainstreaming of NTD programmes within national health systems. It aims to expand access to interventions against NTDs and improve the quality of care for people at risk of, and those living with, NTDs, so that “no one is left behind”. The road map also aims to better coordinate activities carried out in other sectors, strengthen country capacity and advocate for the mobilization of optimal global and regional resources and expertise to support programmatic interventions.

Ensuring continued patient care for people affected by NTDs – one of the focus areas of the road map – requires planning and investment, including training of health care workers and development of platforms for effective service delivery. It also requires a better understanding of patients' journeys and the resources to support them at every step. This can only happen with strong political will and leadership and when countries, WHO and partners work together to ensure long-term investment for accessible, rights-based, patient-focused and equitable primary health care.

The road map proposes fundamental shifts in focus from specific diseases to people-centred approaches and to gauge programmatic impact not only on diseases averted but also on high-quality care for people affected by NTDs, to ensure that actual patient experience and suffering alleviated are documented appropriately.

The measures proposed in the road map are relevant during the current COVID-19 pandemic, even if they precede its implementation. The road map encourages us to work together optimally and in an integrated manner in a context in which we will need to do more with less resources. As global policies are translated into locally integrated services, collaboration with other sectors and programmes will become more important than ever as we work towards the same goals.

Webinar goals

The webinar will consider:

- WHO's definition of health¹, and the physical, mental and social well-being of individuals that is central to the fight against NTDs;
- patient-centred, holistic approaches, to enhance gender equity and the rights of all to health services;
- the importance of disease management, disability and inclusion in achieving the elimination targets and in holistic approaches towards the long-term consequences of NTDs; and
- collaboration between NTD and mental health, disability prevention and rehabilitation programmes, to address the gap and silent burden of NTDs.

Webinar panels

First panel: NTDs and Disease Management, Disability and Inclusion (DMDI) as an essential component of achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

The first panel will discuss the importance of investment in DMDI and measures to promote accessibility and sustainability. The link to high-quality, people-centred services – integral to UHC – will be made.

Second panel

People, rather than diseases

The second panel will hear stories and perspectives from people affected by NTDs. The speakers will share their personal experiences of living with NTDs and the impact of NTDs on their lives, and the approaches the NTD community should focus on towards care of persons affected by NTDs.

Third panel

Mental health of people with neglected tropical diseases

The WHO Department of Mental Health will formally launch its document on “Mental health of people with Neglected Tropical Diseases”. The third panel will also discuss stigma, inclusion and mental health services for NTD patients. The panellists will propose improvements in low-resource countries.

¹ “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. Preamble to the Constitution of WHO as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19 June – 22 July 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of WHO, no. 2, p. 100) and entered into force on 7 April 1948.

Webinar format

This moderated webinar will follow an established format: in the pause between panels a selection of short videos and voices from the field will be shown to illustrate real changes and opportunities.

Duration: 100 min

Delivery: Live, interactive panel discussion

Webinar outline

Time	Title	Overview	Speaker
14:00–14:02	Welcome	Opening and introductory remarks	Moderator
NTD video clip			
14:05–14:18	Panel One	<i>NTDs and DMDI as an essential component of achieving UHC</i>	Moderator
Video or music			
14:21–14:51	Panel Two (3–5 min per speaker)	<i>People, rather than diseases</i>	Moderator
Videos and voices from the field (5 min)			
14:56–15:15	Panel Three (3–5 min per speaker)	<i>Mental health and NTDs</i>	
15:15–15:30	Q&A	Live questions	
15:30–15:40	Closing remarks		Directors, NTD and Mental Health Moderator