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**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE REGIONAL STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC PLAN FOR
NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES IN THE AFRICAN REGION 2014–2020**

Information Document

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BU	Buruli ulcer
DEC	Diethylcarbamazine
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ESPEN	Expanded Special Project for Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases
HAT	human African trypanosomiasis
LF	lymphatic filariasis
MMA	mass medicine administration
NTD	neglected tropical diseases
PC-NTDs	preventive chemotherapy neglected tropical diseases
PHP	public health problem
STH	soil-Transmitted helminthiasis
TCT	total community treatment

BACKGROUND

1. Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a diverse set of 20 diseases and disease groups of which 19 are endemic in the WHO African Region. Lack of timely access to treatment and care for NTDs leads to death or leaves hundreds of millions more severely disabled, disfigured or debilitated.
2. The World Health Assembly resolution WHA66.12 on NTDs urged Member States to take action to reach the targets for 2020 as set out in WHO's NTD road map for the period 2012–2020.¹ In line with this Global road map, the targets of the Regional strategy on NTDs 2014–2020 were to eradicate dracunculiasis and yaws, and eliminate human African trypanosomiasis (HAT), leprosy, lymphatic filariasis (LF), onchocerciasis and trachoma. Additionally, the strategy aimed to control Buruli ulcer (BU), leishmaniasis, schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminthiasis (STH).
3. In September 2013, the Sixty-third session of the Regional Committee adopted the resolution on the Regional strategy on neglected tropical diseases.² The Member States requested the WHO Regional Director to provide biennial progress reports on the implementation of the Regional strategy on NTDs. Three reports were provided in 2015, 2017 and 2019. This is the fourth and final progress report, focusing on the eradication and elimination targets.

PROGRESS MADE

4. Ghana and Kenya were certified dracunculiasis-free in 2015 and 2018 respectively, raising the total number of certified countries in the African Region to 41 in 2018. As such, only six of the 47 Member States of WHO in the African Region remain to be certified: Angola, Chad, DRC, Ethiopia, Mali and South Sudan. In December 2020, Cameroon was the first yaws endemic country to launch total community treatment (TCT) with azithromycin, targeting an at-risk population of around 500 000.
5. Togo and Côte d'Ivoire were validated for the elimination of HAT as a public health problem (PHP) in June 2020 and December 2020, respectively. Benin, Equatorial Guinea and Uganda submitted dossiers for validation of HAT elimination during the fourth quarter of 2020; the three dossiers are being reviewed before submission to WHO for acknowledgement.
6. Leprosy elimination, defined as reducing the prevalence rate to less than one case per 10 000 population, has been achieved and sustained in all countries except the Comoros. Progress continues in the control of targeted NTDs. More countries are conducting case finding and reporting to WHO, and trends are decreasing for Buruli ulcer (from 2101 cases in 2014 to 1949 in 2019) and leishmaniasis (from 17 665 cases in 2014 to 16 435 cases in 2019).
7. The Expanded Special Project for Elimination of NTDs (ESPEN) achieved the following results by the end of 2020: (i) enhancement of evidence-based interventions through the development of the ESPEN Portal; (ii) scaling up of mass medicine administration (MMA) campaigns, including triple drug administration (ivermectin, DEC and albendazole). Overall, a cumulative 619 774 938

¹ Accelerating work to overcome the global impact of neglected tropical diseases: a roadmap for implementation. WHO/HTM/NTD/2012.1F

² Resolution AFR/RC63/R6, Regional strategy on neglected tropical diseases in the WHO African Region, in resolutions of the 63rd Session of the Regional Committee Brazzaville, AFRO, 2013, Document AFR/RC63/10, 2 pages

treatments were delivered in 2019 for the five preventive chemotherapy NTDs (PC-NTDs)³. Malawi was validated for elimination of lymphatic filariasis (LF) in February 2020 in addition to Ghana and Togo, bringing to three, the number of countries which have eliminated at least one PC-NTD.

8. Despite the progress made, some challenges remain. These include occurrence of dracunculiasis infections in animals; co-endemicity of LF, onchocerciasis and loiasis with increased risk of adverse events in loiasis coinfecting persons; insecurity in some countries affecting community-based interventions such as active case finding and treatment, and mass medicine administration, and inadequate domestic funding for NTD programmes. A recent major challenge is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on NTD activities, with the deployment of programme and other health staff to support the COVID-19 response and the suspension or cancellation of community-based interventions as part of COVID-19 preventive measures.

NEXT STEPS

9. To accelerate progress towards eradication, elimination and control of NTDs in the WHO African Region,

Member States should:

- (a) address the impact of the disruption of NTD control activities due to COVID-19 by implementing mitigation measures;
- (b) accelerate the development of 2021–2025 NTD master plans, using the guidance provided by the Regional Office.

WHO and Partners should:

- (a) develop a Regional NTD Framework 2021–2030 for implementation of the Global NTD road map 2021–2030⁴ and the other global strategies on malaria and vector-borne diseases;
- (b) support research and development on NTDs including innovative strategies to address animal infections of dracunculiasis;
- (c) design better vector control strategies, new and rapid diagnostic tests for Buruli ulcer, leishmaniasis and loiasis coinfecting persons;
- (d) conduct safety studies on co-administration of NTD medicines, and advocate for the development of NTD vaccines.

10. The Regional Committee noted and endorsed this progress report.

³ Regional disease-specific coverages were: 54.1% (181 672 314 people treated) for lymphatic filariasis, 70.4% (152 995 807 people treated) for onchocerciasis, 57.1% (101 665 259 people treated) for soil-transmitted helminthiasis, 42.9% (90 615 995) for schistosomiasis and 64.2% (92 825 563 people treated) for trachoma.

⁴ Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, a road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030. https://www.who.int/neglected_diseases/Revised-Draft-NTD-Roadmap-23Apr2020.pdf?ua=1 (Accessed 23 April 2020)

ANNEX Status of achievement of eradication, elimination and control objectives of the Regional Strategy on NTDs 2014–2020

Objectives	Diseases	Status	Number of countries		List of countries (in 2020)
			2014	2020	
Eradication	Dracunculiasis	Certified free	39	41	Algeria, Botswana, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Eritrea, Eswatini, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
		Pre-certification	4	1	Democratic Republic of the Congo
		Endemic	4	5	Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, Mali, South Sudan
	Yaws	Certified free	0	0	0
		Ongoing total community treatment (TCT)	0	1	Cameroon
		Ongoing assessment and mapping	5	13	Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Togo
Elimination	Human African trypanosomiasis	Validated for Elimination as a public health problem (PHP)	0	2	Togo, Côte d'Ivoire
		Ongoing validation (submitted dossiers)	0	3	Benin, Guinea Equatorial, Uganda
		Endemic	29	24	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania, Rwanda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
	Leprosy	Verified for Elimination of transmission	0	0	0
		Elimination as a Public Health Problem (PHP)	46	46	All Member States, except Comoros
		Endemic	1	1	Comoros

Objectives	Diseases	Status	Number of countries		List of countries (in 2020)
			2014	2020	
Elimination	Lymphatic filariasis	Validated for Elimination as PHP	0	2	Togo, Malawi
		Mass Medicine Administration (MMA) stopped and ongoing validation	2	0	0
		Endemic with ongoing mass medicine administration (MMA)	22	30	Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Comoros, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
	Onchocerciasis	Verified for Elimination of transmission	0	0	0
		MMA stopped and ongoing verification	0	0	0
		Endemic with ongoing MMA	24	24	Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Equatorial, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda
	Trachoma	Validated for elimination as PHP	0	1	Ghana
		Claims to have eliminated	0	2	Gambia, Togo
		Known to require intervention	24	26	Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
	Buruli ulcer	Decreasing trend of new cases	6	7	Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Togo
		Stable trend of new cases	7	7	Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan
		Increasing trends of new cases	2	1	Nigeria

Objectives	Diseases	Status	Number of countries		List of countries (in 2020)
			2014	2020	
Control	Leishmaniasis	Decreasing trend of new cases	0	0	0
		Stable trend of new cases	5	7	Algeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Sudan, Uganda
		Increasing trends of new cases	3	2	Cameroon, Chad
	Schistosomiasis	MMA stopped in some Districts	0	0	0
		Fully mapped and ongoing MMA	19	41	All Member States, except Algeria, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Lesotho, Mauritius, Seychelles
		Ongoing Mapping	22	0	0
	Soil-transmitted helminthiases	MMA stopped in some Districts	0	0	0
		Fully mapped and ongoing MMA	25	47	All Member States
		Ongoing Mapping	22	0	0