



World Health
Organization

A CONVERSATION WITH THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) ON NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES (NTDs) IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

*The new WHO Neglected Tropical
Diseases road map and the Mass
Drug Administration campaign in
Madagascar*

Panelists



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Dr Mwelecele Malecela

- The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced why we need the new NTD roadmap more than ever.
- In discussing the WHO NTD roadmap, we wanted to emphasize resilience and strengthening health systems. In this era of COVID-19, this has proven to be a crucial element in sustainable health campaigns.
- Neglected Tropical Diseases are associated with stigma and poverty. Where you see poor sanitation, scarcity, you will find NTDs.
- As of 2019, at least 40 countries have eliminated at least one NTD.
- Integrated approaches, multisectoral action, and country ownership are so important if we want to be successful in the fight against NTDs.
- Ending the Neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals is the official title of the Roadmap.
- The Roadmap was a very consultative process, including regional and country workshops, interviews with experts and colleagues and public reviews.
- We need to mean it when we say country ownership because without this, the Roadmap will not succeed.
- How do we use stakeholders to ensure they are contributing in a meaningful way that will be positively impactful on countries is a question we have been tackling in developing the Roadmap.
- We need the clear framework to support countries in reaching their targets.
- The new WHO roadmap is more relevant than ever before because of its strong ties to Universal Health Coverage and the community. The same volunteers for NTDs have been trained in COVID-19 messages and we will continue to focus on community and country ownerships.
- New roadmap is promoting resilience, health system strengthening and country ownership. It is cross-cutting and collaborative, which is necessary as **we build back better from COVID-19.**

Dr Charlotte Ndiaye

- In Madagascar, mass drug administration (MDA) is a priority, and we have worked hard to ensure that COVID-19 does not slow down the progress made in the fight against NTDs.
- There is a stigmatization of LF SCH STH in Madagascar.
- It is important to have initiatives and innovations that will allow us to adapt to COVID-19.
- We need to work with the government to ensure the success of our work on mass distribution of NTD drugs.
- It is of the utmost importance to continue our MDA campaigns.
- The main activities all had to be reviewed as COVID-19 regulations increased (planning, input routing, community awareness and mobilization, door-to-door distribution and supervision, and evaluation).
- NTDs are not going to wait for the end of COVID-19, they are active, and we must carry out our MDA campaign to protect the population.
- Thanks to the expertise of the monitoring team, we have been able to measure the readiness of the districts.
- SMS and illustrations are just a few of the innovative measures we have taken to ensure that we reach every corner of Madagascar for MMDs.
- Other innovations included: establishment of a headquarters and remote MMDs; new tools such as SMS messages and data entry masks for data transmission.
- ESPEN has been an essential support in the preparation of our MDAs.

Q&A Session

- Zimbabwe is currently experiencing a malaria epidemic at time of COVID-19. How can governments ensure resources are allocated to support an epidemic like this without compromising COVID-19 interventions.
 - We need to continue to work to live with COVID-19 and ensure that COVID-19 doesn't overshadow other diseases, so governments must work with partners.
- There`s a strong correlation between NTDs and WASH. And with the fallout of the coronavirus outbreak this is more important now yet, millions of Africans lack access to WASH services. How is WASH being integrated into the new NTDs roadmap?
 - Strong WASH is central to fight against NTDs. In Roadmap we have ensured we have WASH Indicators and have prioritized this. We aren't saying we will build wells directly - but collaborate to ensure that we put resources (such as clean water) in areas that have high endemicity for COVID-19.
- For the Roadmap publication, we are waiting for the WHA endorsement, but we are not waiting while sitting down. We will continue to advocate on its behalf and fight in an aligned way.