

---

## **Enhancing and extending partnerships to combat neglected tropical diseases**

Dr. Jeffrey L. Sturchio  
Chairman, Corporate Council on Africa

Leadership Dialogue on Raising the Profile of Neglected Tropical Diseases  
Special Event on Philanthropy and the Global Public Health Agenda  
UN Economic and Social Council  
New York City  
February 23, 2009

---

Neglected tropical diseases affect more than 1.4 billion people around the world and kill half a million each year. These living on less than \$1.25 per day. The seven most common NTDs -- ascariasis, whipworm, hookworm, schistosomiasis, lymphatic filariasis, trachoma and river blindness of healthy life lost greater than tuberculosis or malaria, exceeded only by lower respiratory infections, HIV/AIDS and diarrheal diseases.<sup>1</sup> To address these unmet medical needs effectively, we need continuing research & development into new tools to provide safe treatments for NTDs and to guard against resistance, as well as increased investments in implementation and coordination of programs to bring existing remedies to those who need them. This brief essay focuses on the latter question.

There are safe and effective drugs already available to help control and potentially eliminate the most common NTDs, many of which are donated by pharmaceutical companies including Merck & Co., Inc., GlaxoSmithKline, Johnson & Johnson and Pfizer. Building on these philanthropic efforts through public/private partnerships, the integrated control of NTDs is possible for often as low as 50 cents per person per year.<sup>2</sup> Yet there is still much work to be done in scaled-up implementation, in advocacy, and in resource mobilization to ensure that these interventions reach the millions who still lack access to them.

---

---

<sup>1</sup> See <http://gnntdc.sabin.org/about-ntds>

note: raising the profile of neglected tropical







With these recommendations in mind, everyone interested in scaling up the response to NTDs should work to enable the activities of groups engaged in advocacy, fundraising and funding of NTD programs. These include the:

Global Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases (GNNTD), coordinated by the Sabin Vaccine Institute, which has recently received a grant of \$34 million from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to help scale up prevention and treatment<sup>6</sup>

Disease / sector specific programs, e.g., GET2020 for trachoma, Vision2020 for preventable blindness, and the Global Alliance for the Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis<sup>7</sup>

Global Health Progress, a coalition of research-based pharmaceutical companies and other stakeholders committed to improved global health outcomes through partnerships on neglected tropical diseases and other areas such as strengthening health systems and improving access to care and treatment in the developing world<sup>8</sup>

### **3. How can access to NTD treatment and knowledge be facilitated?**

---

ontinue raising awareness of the issues around NTDs and to catalyze broader discussions and potential collaboration. Publication of the conclusions of this forum and related events and their dissemination throughout the global health and donor communities (including the private sector) will help to encourage those with resources and expertise to get involved in the effort to scale up NTD interventions.

Another important way to facilitate these outcomes will be through **optimizing the**



hundreds of millions of those affected throughout Africa and other parts of the developing world. Other private sector partners have also begun to contribute to efforts to improve the training and capacity of health care workers and infrastructure in developing countries. We can expect similar developments in response to the need for scaling up and improving drug distribution and procurement.

These efforts have already demonstrated the power of partnerships to help reduce the ill health and inequalities that NTDs cause. By building on existing partnerships, raising the profile of NTDs and facilitating improved access to knowledge of treatment successes