

Fighting Neglected Tropical Diseases Around The World

President Bush Announces New Global Initiative To Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases

Today, President Bush has challenged the world to reduce dramatically and eventually control and eliminate the burden of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) as a major threat to health and economic growth in the developing world. This Initiative will make a total of \$350 million available over five years to provide integrated treatment of more than 300 million people in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and target seven major NTDs: lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis); schistosomiasis (snail fever); trachoma (eye infection); onchocerciasis (river blindness); and three soil-transmitted helminthes (STHs – hookworm, roundworm, whipworm).

This investment increases the United States' commitment to NTDs from \$15 million in 2008 to a total of \$350 million over five years (FY 2009 – FY 2013) and will expand the targeted number of countries from 10 in 2008 to approximately 30 by 2013. The new Initiative will target communities with integrated treatment annually for three to five years in order to reduce the prevalence of these diseases within these communities.

Treating the millions of people that suffer from NTDs will bolster child development, promote educational achievement, and contribute to poverty reduction. Interventions in fighting these diseases promise large economic payoffs as they improve educational outcomes and worker productivity.

President Bush challenges other donors, including our G-8 partners, foundations, and public, private, and voluntary organizations to complement the United States' commitments by providing collectively an additional \$650 million to close the funding gap for treatment of NTDs in the countries that are most affected by these diseases. Combined with U.S. efforts, the entire G-8 would provide sufficient funding for control and elimination of NTDs in Sub-Saharan Africa and high burden countries in Asia and Latin America.

Combating Neglected Tropical Diseases By Leveraging Public-Private Partnerships

Approximately one billion people, mostly in the developing world, suffer from one or more NTDs; seven of these diseases can be controlled and even eliminated through targeted mass drug administration. Most of these diseases either blind, deform, or debilitate their victims. They can reduce school enrollment, diminish childhood growth and cognitive development, and reduce economic productivity in adults.

Most drugs needed to treat NTDs are donated by the pharmaceutical industry. These donations are valued at hundreds of millions of dollars each year, and reduce the estimated cost for other program components to less than 40 cents per person per year in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The United States Agency for International Development has launched an innovative, integrated approach to treating NTDs by supporting governments' efforts, achieving efficiency gains, and capitalizing on synergies with other health and education programs. The current program has shown significant success by reaching 14 million people in five countries.

The United States will also enhance efficiency and efficacy by leveraging existing initiatives such as the Basic Education Initiative, the President's Malaria Initiative, and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

The United States will work in partnership with countries struggling with overlapping disease burdens. These countries will have the opportunity to be selected based on a competitive grants process to receive additional support. This will ensure an integrated country specific approach to fighting NTDs.