



WHO Representative to Oman Dr John Jabbour

Muscat, 30 January 2022 - World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day is an international awareness day aiming to combat neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and ensure progress towards universal health coverage. World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day was endorsed at the World Health Assembly in 2021 and it was agreed that 30 January each year would celebrate the Day.

NTDs are a diverse group of 20 conditions that are mainly prevalent in tropical areas such as dengue, snakebites, sleeping sickness, trachoma, and leprosy. Where they mostly affect more than 1 billion people who live mostly impoverished communities, these conditions if not treated in time can be fatal to those who suffer from them.

Work was initiated in 2018 at the request of the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Neglected Tropical Diseases. The World Health Organization's (WHO) road map for 2021–2030 sets out ambitious targets in tackling many of these diseases in an integrated manner.

Despite the ongoing SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the NTDs road map aims to leave no one behind. It moves from vertical disease programmes to cross-cutting approaches, with shared goals and disease-specific targets, through smarter investments to improve health and well-being by 2030.

Oman and 2 other countries are working together to request the United Nations to do more to combat this group of more than 20 tropical diseases that affect people across some of the most vulnerable regions of the world.

In 2018, Oman became the first country in the world to be validated for trachoma elimination, paving the way for other countries to do so. This is because of the Ministry of Health's sustained interventions and implementation of prevention and control strategies. National leadership, high commitment and collaborative efforts have been key to implementing the SAFE strategy as a WHO tool to support Member States achieve elimination targets.

Oman has made great progress in addressing dengue as a key public health priority. Oman implemented a 2-week campaign under the theme "Your cooperation indicates your awareness" to ensure that there was community engagement to understand the risk factors and preventive measures.

Diseases such as schistosomiasis, leishmaniasis and others that were previously endemic in Oman no longer remain so and this is a real milestone that reflects Oman's impactful work in fighting NTDs.

We all need to join efforts to inform, educate, and motivate communities to engage in prevention, control, elimination and eradication activities to ensure that 'no one is left behind'.

World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day brings everyone together to unify behind a common goal: beating NTDs. Combating NTDs is critical in ensuring progress towards universal health coverage.

WHO is calling on everyone to rally behind the goals of achieving health equity to end the neglect of poverty-related diseases.

Health is a shared responsibility and only by working together we can achieve our vision of "Health for All by All".

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