

Accelerating NTD 2030 Targets Achievement Through Paradigm Shifts in Country Ownership

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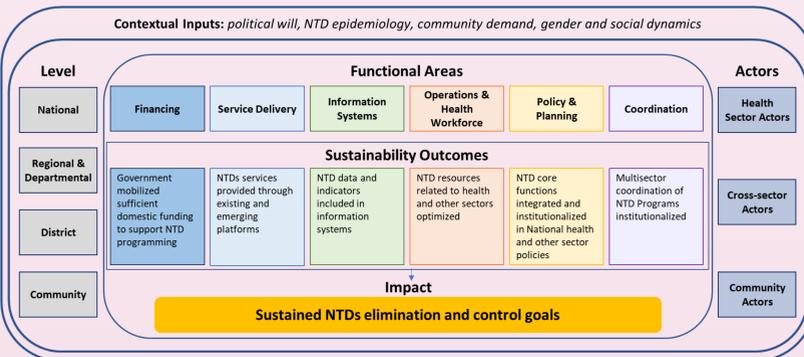
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INTRODUCTION

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a diverse set of 20 diseases and disease groups with a singular commonality: their devastating and disproportionate impact on impoverished communities. Untreated, NTDs can lead to stigma and life-altering disabilities that prevent those affected from working, attending school, and gaining socioeconomic mobility to name a few.

For over a decade, disease-endemic countries and the global community have worked together toward eliminating and controlling NTDs. With donor support, concerted partnerships, and local, national, and global coordination, national NTD Programs (NTDPs) have improved their efficiency, effectiveness, and impact. While such support has enabled countries to make steady progress, it has not reinforced national leadership to plan, implement, and fund NTD interventions fully and independently.

With government-led NTDPs at the helm, NTD sustainability processes can focus on obtaining the technical and financial resources needed for increased ownership and accountability and for the mainstreaming of NTDs into national policy, financing, planning, and delivery structures. **Sustaining NTD goals will require a shift in countries' relationships with donors, from an approach based on short-term humanitarian assistance and vertical disease-specific programs to one that has NTD control efforts overseen and managed by national and local governments in order to reduce reliance on donors over time and promote locally-led development.**



USAID and its implementing partners developed the above framework to support prioritization of activities in six functional areas that will contribute to attaining programs' elimination and control targets. Financing is one of the crucial pillars, with a particular focus on mobilizing sufficient domestic resources for robust NTDP support.

APPROACH & RESULTS

Deloitte Consulting LLP is a partner in the Act | West consortium, which supports the global effort to eliminate NTDs in 11 West African countries. One of Act | West's primary goals is to support NTDPs to strengthen country environment for management of NTDs.



PHASE 1: ENGAGING A BROADER POOL OF NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

The purpose of Phase I of the USAID-supported NTD sustainability approach is **to raise awareness of NTDs to a broader and more diverse pool of government, national, and local stakeholders** and to engage them in sustainable, country-driven NTD interventions. Throughout Phase I, NTDPs in West Africa worked with the Act to End NTDs | West program to identify, encourage, and meet with traditional and non-traditional stakeholders within the MOH and across sectors. Together, they were able to provide stakeholders with an analysis of NTDs and their socio-economic burden as well as opportunities for mainstreaming NTD intervention planning and delivery into national systems to maintain sustainable services and public health gains. **Nine NTDPs across Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, and Niger**, hosted dialogues with national stakeholders on NTD sustainability, resulting in: creating nationally owned action plans; reviving or establishing multisector stakeholder groups; identifying priorities such as integrating NTD data into health management information systems; increasing the role of community leaders in raising awareness of NTD prevention and treatment; and establishing health focal points across ministries relevant to NTD interventions such as the Ministry of Education. The political will and the high-level engagement of national stakeholders in Phase I helped establish the direction for Phase 2 and the long-term future vision of sustainable, country-owned NTD services and national investment.

PHASE 2: CONDUCTING A SELF-ASSESSMENT OF NTDP SUSTAINABILITY

Phase 2 focuses on **conducting comprehensive analyses** of both the NTDP's capacities and the country's efforts and investment in NTD interventions and services. This phase includes several types of partner-led analyses that culminate in a self-assessment driven by NTDPs using the **NTD Sustainability Maturity Model**. This tool guides NTDPs in **scoring themselves along a continuum for each of the USAID Sustainability Framework's six outcomes to determine the current state of their strengths and weaknesses and the milestones required to achieve their target goals in each functional area**. With a structured format for defining and prioritizing milestones in their respective contexts, this activity strengthened NTDPs' commitment to invest in NTD sustainability. The work completed in this phase illustrates how the sustainability framework can be adopted to a country's unique needs. It has also **strengthened buy-in among NTDP staff and confirmed responsibility and ownership** of the process of discussing gaps, priorities, and targets before re-engaging a broader set of government stakeholders in sustainability planning discussions during Phase 3.

PHASE 3: DEVELOPING AND VALIDATING A NATIONAL NTD SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Based on the results of their analyses and self-assessment, the NTDP engages leaders of key stakeholder groups across the government and private sector to participate in the planning process that leads to the creation of NTD Sustainability Plans. This process outlines actions, owners, timelines, and accountability measures needed to achieve NTD sustainability targets and milestones. These plans serve as guides to achieving control and elimination goals and cement the need for country government leaders to fully commit to acting quickly and sustaining progress over the long term. Among the first countries to formally validate an NTD Sustainability Plan, Côte d'Ivoire was able to gain endorsement for its plan by the MOH and other governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in 2020.

Eight countries have moved through the first three phases of the sustainability process. Countries hosted sensitization meetings and leveraged landscape, stakeholder, and financial analyses to enhance programmatic decision making and develop advocacy materials mainstreaming NTDs into national systems. Results also informed the development of national NTD Sustainability Plans, which will guide future cross-sector coordination and mainstreaming of NTD activities into policies, information systems, operations, service delivery platforms, and MOH budgets. The political will and the engagement of national stakeholders helped establish the direction for the long-term future vision of sustainable, country-owned NTD services and domestic investments.

CONCLUSION

Throughout Act to End NTDs | West's experiences, these comprehensive, coordination-intensive activities take at least one year to complete. For this reason, it is important to maintain the momentum gained to follow through on commitments outlined in the Sustainability Plan. Phases 4 and 5 of the process involve implementing these country NTD Sustainability Plans and monitoring their progress.

Looking ahead, **successful implementation** of these plans will rely on:

- Continued **engagement with multi-sector stakeholders** and well-coordinated support of country priorities and ownership by stakeholders and donors.
- A **strong level of internal accountability** established and led by the NTDP and other government stakeholders, using internal government mechanisms and multi-sector platforms to track country implementation of sustainable NTD interventions and follow-through on commitments.
- Co-designed technical assistance** by country leadership, partners, external donors, and implementing partners to bolster country ownership, domestic resource mobilization, and other mainstreaming efforts.

Efforts to mainstream NTDs into national data, budget planning, supply chains, training, and service delivery among other systems should be supported as the ultimate path to full country ownership of NTD activities and to reduced reliance on donor support. Donor and implementing partners' transparent, collaborative work planning and **alignment with national policies and NTD Master Plans are therefore critical to ensuring external support promotes country ownership.**

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