

Taking 'Neglected' Out
of Neglected Tropical Diseases:The UK Government's Ascend Programme

Accelerating the Sustainable Control and Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (Ascend) is The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) £200m flagship health programme to protect millions of people worldwide from Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs).

NTDs are a group of infectious diseases that thrive in poor and often rural settings, affecting more than 1 billion of the world's poorest people. These diseases cause disability, disfigurement, stigma and death.

The three-year programme aims to support national governments in sustainably tackling NTDs, with a focus on the control and elimination of five preventable NTDs across 24 countries.

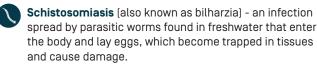




Onchocerciasis [also known as river blindness] - a parasitic worm infection transmitted by infected blackflies, causing severe itching, disfiguring skin conditions, and visual impairment, including permanent blindness.



Trachoma – a bacterial eye infection spread through personal contact, with repeated infections causing permanent damage and vision loss. It is the leading cause of infectious blindness worldwide.



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Lymphatic Filariasis [also known as elephantiasis] a parasitic infection spread through the bite of infected mosquitoes, causing tissue swelling and thickening that can lead to permanent disability.



Visceral Leishmaniasis (also known as Kala Azar) a parasitic infection spread through the bite of infected sandflies, causing fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anaemia.

THE COUNTRIES ASCEND WORKS IN:

Bangladesh Benin Burkina Faso Central African Republic Chad Côte d'Ivoire Democratic Republic of Congo Ethiopia Ghana Guinea Guinea Bissau Kenya Liberia Malawi Mozambique Nepal Niger Nigeria Sierra Leone Sudan South Sudan Tanzania Uganda Zambia



WHY IS ASCEND IMPORTANT?

Ascend is working with governments to:



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Strengthen health systems -- to ensure sustainable delivery of NTD control and elimination activities beyond the programme's lifetime

Increase detection of NTD cases

Increase treatments to both prevent infection and treat symptoms

Advocate for greater allocation of governments funds to NTDs

Integrate NTDs within universal health care and their Covid-19 response



Increase coverage of preventive measures through better collaboration between government departments, including Water, Sanitation and Hygiene [WASH]

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

- Mass Drug Administration of treatments (MDAs) delivered in target countries
- Surgeries provided to prevent cases of blindness due to Trachoma
- Treatments to reduce morbidity and disability of people with Lymphatic Filariasis
- Increased early diagnosis and treatment of Visceral Leishmaniasis

WHAT ASCEND HAS ACHIEVED AT A GLANCE

Supported the delivery of over **156 million** neglected tropical disease (NTD) treatments in the countries where it works.

Increased country capacity by supporting the training of over **434,000 people**, including community volunteers and teachers.

Supported ministries with their COVID-19 response, reaching more than **115 million** people with mass media behaviour change campaigns.

Leveraged a vast network of volunteers and health workers to **raise awareness of COVID-19** and conduct 'track and trace' within targeted communities across West and Central Africa. Designing, building, testing and rolling-out a monitoring and information system for NTDs NTDs built on the widely-used DHIS2.0 software platform. This will enable Ministries of Health to better monitor the NTD situation in their countries and plan effective interventions.

Improving supply chains by **tracking the movement of NTD drugs**, ensuring visibility of the last mile of distribution using a real-time data platform called NTDeliver.



ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAMME:

Harnessing the skills and research of European academia in global NTD control through its partners, including:

- The NTD Modelling consortium
- The London Centre for NTD Research
- Imperial College London
- The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine
- The KIT Royal Tropical Institute
- The SCI Foundation

Supporting countries where elimination of a disease is within reach:

- Eliminating Visceral Leishmaniasis in Bangladesh by 2022
- Elimination of Visceral Leishmaniasis in Nepal by 2024

Value for Money:

- Supporting governments to implement national NTD services directly
- The cost per treatment can be as low as \$0.03 achieved in both Sudan and Mozambique

Strengthening health systems through:

- Supply chain management
- Data systems to improve monitoring and evaluation
- Pioneering new ways of delivery during the pandemic
- Supporting the Leave No-One Behind Agenda (LNOB)
- Reaching the truly marginalised and remote communities of the countries it works in



CROWN AGENTS







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