

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA TO RAISE THE PROFILE OF THE FIGHT AGAINST NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES AT COUNTRY LEVEL



This tool provides NTD Programme managers and their teams with a model game plan for undertaking an advocacy initiative that aims to promote greater in-country media support for achieving their NTD programmatic goals. It is also useful for NTD stakeholders at country-level who are working with the NTD programme to achieve its advocacy goals.

The mass media, both electronic (television, radio, online) and print (newspapers, magazines) are valuable allies in your advocacy effort. Because of their significant role as key gatekeepers for disseminating information and as socializing agents, media institutions will have a powerful impact in terms of creating support among both the general public and specific audiences for NTD elimination. Very importantly, the media can influence opinion makers and public actors – such as political, business and religious leaders to make NTD a greater public health priority. In the journalism field, such influence is widely recognized as the media’s agenda-setting role.

Policy-makers usually respond to popular appeal, and to their own social network of policy and decision makers. Political leaders, especially elected officials, are sensitive to public opinion and expectations about health and social issues because public perception of government health service delivery effectiveness may influence the way the electorate will vote.

Mass media can play two kinds of advocacy roles:



Supporting development initiatives by the dissemination of messages that encourage the public to support development-oriented projects.



Providing the decision-makers with the necessary information and feedback needed to reach a decision.

Media coverage of NTD issues will also broaden the understanding of how a relatively modest expenditure on NTD elimination will produce long term gains in reducing the human and economic burden of these diseases, thus highlighting the broader social and developmental gains to be made from NTD reduction with the goal of elimination.

The NTD program should develop and coordinate with partners to implement the media engagement strategy.



WAYS OF ENGAGING THE MEDIA

Media workshops with journalists and editors to educate them about the NTD elimination effort and the gains that will be made through elimination are a common way of engaging the media. Media workshops should be organized as opportunities for the journalists to hear from and interview a variety of sources pertinent to telling the NTD story to the public in ways that will resonate. These sources may include:



Spokespersons for the NTD program.



NTD champions, including members of the NTD Partners' Coalition.



Persons whose lives have been negatively affected by the burden of NTDs and improved because of treatment.

In countries with strong subnational political and administrative structures, workshops with the local media may be called for in order to build up support for the NTD program among subnational and district level administrative and political actors. These actors often have budgetary discretion in establishing line items, so it is important to impact them.

It may also be helpful to have a workshop at the national level for media outlets that have national reach, especially because of their potential of reaching national political leaders and national religious and civil society organizations. Those journalists participating in a workshop should be selected based on the ability of their outlets, whether traditional broadcast, print or online, to reach targeted audiences. If there are journalists working for international broadcasters such as RFI, BBC, VOA and Deutsche Welle, it may be important to include them in workshops because in many countries where the international broadcasters have large audiences, they can be extremely influential, including with politicians sensitive to international opinion of domestic program effectiveness.

Journalists participating in the workshop should commit to producing, at least, one feature story or, even better, a series on NTDs. The journalists should be encouraged to put a human face on their NTD stories as a way of creating empathy with those who have had to deal with the NTD burden; this is a powerful way to go beyond numbers and statistics that illustrate the impact of NTDs. Formats such as call-in shows, round table discussions and interviews also resonate well with audiences.

Journalists participating in the workshop can also be invited to become members of an NTD elimination journalist group, perhaps with a Facebook page where they can upload their stories and share information, and to which the Program and its advocacy partners can distribute press releases and acquaint the journalists with the ongoing roll out of NTD elimination activity.

These journalists should also be provided with a media kit, ideally with a NTD elimination cap and t-shirt that they can wear, a CD with a standard musical theme to be played in association with broadcast programs dealing with NTDs, and factsheets about the NTD burden, the gains to be achieved through control and ultimately elimination, the country's programmatic goals, the international commitments that the government has made to achieve elimination, and the level of domestic and international funding.



NEWS PEGS

Besides the productions that come out of the workshop, typically journalists will produce stories or programs that are “pegged” to a particular event or activity. Such pegs may include:



The launch of a mass drug administration campaign;



The arrival in country or in a subnational region of donated medicines;



The attaining of milestones in reaching program objectives; and



An international report on NTD progress.

Journalists should be sent invitations to cover such events, and provided with a press release whose information is embargoed until after the day and time of the particular event.

USEFUL TOOLS



**POWERPOINT
PRESENTATIONS**



**NTD
FACTSHEET**

NTDs KEY FACTS



WHAT ARE NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES?

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a group of destructive mostly communicable diseases. They affect the world's poorest people and are especially common in tropical areas, where people have little access to clean water or proper ways to dispose of human waste.

Women and children who live in unsanitary environments face the biggest threat of NTDs. Although they can be prevented and treated, they continue to cause severe disfigurement and other long-term disabilities that create obstacles to education, employment, economic growth and overall development.



THE NTD BURDEN



1 BILLION PEOPLE

are affected by NTDs worldwide



NEARLY 50%

of the global NTD burden occurs in
Africa



ONLY 0.6%

of global healthcare funding goes to
controlling NTDs



THE NO TO NTDs MOVEMENT

In November 2018, the “No to Neglected Tropical Diseases” movement was launched. Through this movement, individuals, political leaders, private sector companies and civil society organizations (CSOs) come together to increase awareness, prioritization and national commitment to accelerate the control and elimination of NTDs in Africa.

Combating NTDs and reaching all communities in need can put countries on the pathway to achieving universal health coverage. Where there is poverty, NTDs are commonly an accepted part of life. But this is not inevitable, nor should we accept it. In this sense, the movement aims to:

1. Increase overall political engagement to NTDs to increase domestic resources for NTDs;
2. Build the capacity of civil society organizations to make NTD decision-making spaces more inclusive;
3. Create an enabling environment at the national level for increased prioritization of NTD elimination.



THE ONLINE PLATFORM

An online platform is available to enable knowledge sharing and facilitate the spread of the No to NTDs movement in Africa. It is designed for stakeholders in all African countries working on NTD control and elimination. The resources aim to support all stakeholders with NTD campaign planning, strategic partnership building, increased visibility and monitoring and evaluation.

For more information about the NTD Advocacy guide or the No to NTDs movement please contact:
info@speakupafrika.org or check out the No to NTDs online platform at notontds.org