

Press release: UK to protect 200 million people from tropical diseases

The UK will protect over 200 million people from the pain and disfigurement caused by treatable tropical diseases, International Development Secretary Priti Patel announced today.

Neglected Tropical Diseases, such as trachoma, Guinea worm and river blindness, are avoidable infections but can deform, disable, blind and even kill if left untreated. They affect over a billion people in the poorest and most marginalised communities in the world, stopping children going to school and parents going to work – costing developing economies billions of dollars every year in lost productivity and reducing overall global prosperity.

Britain is already leading the way in fighting these diseases, and will more than double its support over the next 5 years. This will mean a billion treatments for people at risk in the developing world as part of an international push to eliminate and eradicate these ailments for good.

The UK's total support package will:

- wipe out Guinea worm, which is transmitted through dirty water
- eliminate visceral leishmaniasis in Asia, a parasitic disease caused by infected sand-flies which destroy the internal organs
- prevent up to 400,000 cases of blindness caused by trachoma, the leading cause of infectious blindness in the world
- prevent tens of thousands of cases of disability caused by lymphatic filariasis, a mosquito-transmitted disease which can cause severe swelling of the lower limbs

The UK will also build on the great work done by our world-class universities, pharma companies and NGOs tackling Neglected Tropical Diseases by investing in pioneering research to drive the development of drugs that will control or eliminate them.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

These diseases belong to the last century. They cause unimaginable suffering and pain to some of the world's poorest people, forcing them into a deeper cycle of poverty with no way out. Yet they are treatable.

The UK's support will protect over 200 million people from a future blighted by tropical disease and represents a huge leap towards ending this scourge.

Through our commitment, through our leading NGOs and pharma companies, through our world-class universities and

researchers, Global Britain will continue to play a leading role in this fight. These diseases have been named 'neglected' for a reason, but I'm not prepared for them to be neglected any longer.

The doubling in UK funding announced today cements Britain's commitment ahead of the WHO conference in Geneva next week where the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, governments, NGOs, multilateral organisations and the private sector will come together in an effort to relegate Neglected Tropical Diseases to the history books.

Notes to editors

The UK will invest a total of £360 million on implementation programmes to tackle NTDs between 2017-2018 and 2021-22.

The £360 million breaks down as follows:

- £205 million of new support from 2017/18 to 2021/22
- £55 million for the next two years which forms part of an existing UK commitment made at the London Declaration in 2012
- £100 million allocated from the Ross Fund portfolio

The Ross Fund Portfolio is a £1 billion programme, which brings together UK Government investments to tackle the world's deadliest infectious diseases by developing, testing and delivering a range of new products (including vaccines, drugs and diagnostics).

The UK spend on NTD implementation between 2012 and 2016 averaged almost £30 million per year. This new investment will more than double the average annual spend on NTD implementation.

Research

In addition to the spend on implementation outlined above, the UK will invest the following in research and development for new technologies to fight NTDS with allocations also from the Ross Fund portfolio: £48m to the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative, £30m to the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics and £10m to the Coalition for Operational Research on Neglected Tropical Diseases. These research programmes will support the development of drugs and diagnostics for Neglected Tropical Diseases and provide evidence to improve the delivery of NTD programmes.