Neglected tropical diseases are a diverse group of disease conditions, mostly parasitic infections, that gravely affect people in tropical and subtropical regions. At least one of the NTDs affects people in 28 countries and areas in the Western Pacific Region.

Regional success so far has been largely achieved through mass drug administration campaigns delivered in all endemic communities annually. In 2016-2017, six countries in the Western Pacific Region achieved elimination of lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem and a further two countries achieved elimination of trachoma as a public health problem. The burden of schistosomiasis in the Region has been reduced significantly to the point that elimination is now within reach. Many countries have also institutionalized nationwide annual rounds of deworming in children.

The feasibility of eliminating and controlling NTDs can be increased through the delivery of multisectoral actions, such as improving access to water supply and sanitation, veterinary public health, ensuring access to care, vaccines and antisera, food safety and vector control, for all vulnerable and affected populations. Completing the “unfinished business” of eliminating NTDs in the Western Pacific Region is an ethical priority.

Interventions and services are only effective when they reach the people in need. Their impact is sustainable when people understand the need, demand the services, and own and drive changes that prevent continued transmission. NTDs cause visible chronic morbidities and disabilities. This visibility makes them a powerful tool to engage and mobilize affected communities.

As transmission of diseases reduces, enhanced surveillance capacity becomes more and more critical in order to deliver targeted interventions and measure their impact. The need for effective surveillance does not end with the elimination of a disease. Even in countries that have achieved elimination status, sustained surveillance to continuously detect new or imported cases and foci of transmission and help prevent reestablishment of transmission is required.

WHO works with Member States to achieve elimination and control of NTDs by ensuring that preventive chemotherapy is delivered annually to all people and communities at risk. In 2016 alone, more than 51 million people in 14 countries out of 98 million people in need received preventive chemotherapy for at least one NTD in the Region.

WHO also supports Member States and other partners to catalyze multisectoral partnerships to ensure that provision of improved water supply and sanitation, veterinary public health, vector control and access to curative and rehabilitative health services reach all affected communities in need.

WHO continues to work with Member States to strengthen their surveillance capacity to detect cases and foci of transmission, measure impacts and deliver targeted interventions towards and beyond the elimination of NTDs.

A Regional Framework for Control and Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases in the Western Pacific has been developed through consultations with Member States, experts and partners.

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