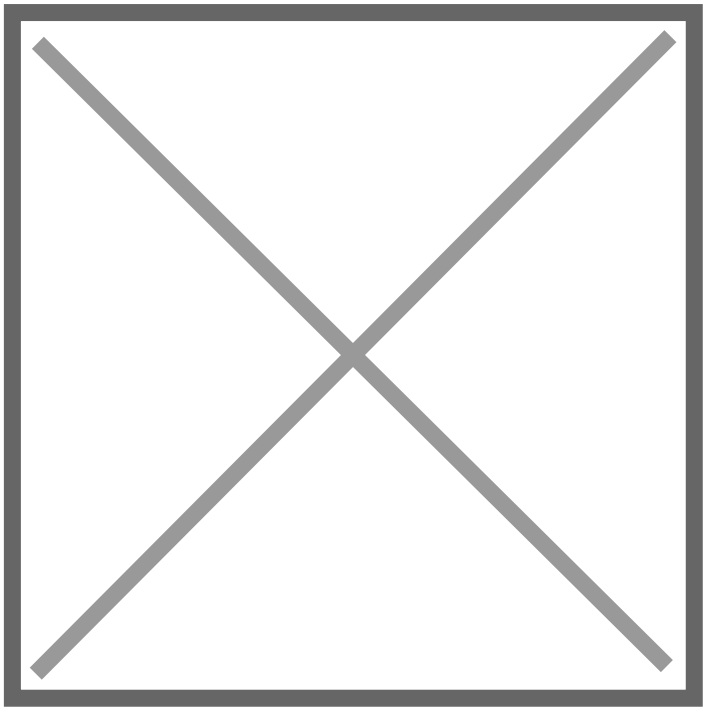
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Improved diagnostics and medicines a priority for eradicating NTD

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Improved diagnostics and medicines a priority for eradicating NTD



Leading the global fight against Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), India is moving to strengthen efforts to eradicate the neglected tropical diseases such as dengue, visceral leishmaniasis (Kala azar), soil-transmitted Helminthes, among others that affect millions of Indians every year especially children. There is urgent need to accelerate research and development for new tools, medicines and indigenous tests that target pathogen strains that are locally prevalent and adopt and accelerate strategies to reach the poorest and most marginalized populations who are most afflicted by NTDs.

The recently held meeting of experts on neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) marked a major step towards accelerating progress in controlling and eliminating NTDs in India. Coming together to launch this strategic drive aimed at the ultimate eradication of NTDs in India were Global Health Progress, Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI), and International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA).

The launch of this initiative, called "Partnering for Success - Reducing India's Burden of Neglected Tropical Diseases" was followed up with a landmark report, launched today, on the current status and action plan to fight NTDs in India. The meeting and subsequent report, are global milestones that emphasized on the partnerships between the Government of India, research organizations, pharmaceutical companies, donors, health professionals and civil society that have contributed technical knowledge, delivery of services and drugs and research funding for NTDs in India.

Mr. Anshu Prakash, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India said, "India has supported the London Declaration of 2012 and has joined other member nations at the World Health Assembly this year to adopt a resolution for controlling, eliminating and eradicating 17 identified NTDs. The India Government is working with all stakeholders and the community towards meeting these objectives."

Given the huge research and development potential in India coupled with its significant disease burden, India has the potential to transform the landscape and trajectory in the NTD field. Stakeholders agree that there is a joint moral obligation to prevent, control, eliminate and ultimately eradicate NTDs in India (and globally). Strong multi-stakeholder partnerships and funding will be critical elements to fully understand the disease burden, increase R&D, integrate approaches, find next generation treatment and interventions and build political and economic will for NTD interventions.

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Ms. Ranjana Smetacek, Director General for the OPPI said, "For India to achieve its ambitious NTD goals, we must work with other sectors to ensure communities have access to clean water, sanitation, improved living conditions, vector control and stronger health systems in endemic areas. Pharmaceutical companies are already doing a lot to prevent and treat NTDs in India and it will be crucial to provide ongoing incentives to ensure production of new tools for the market. We must support

R&D through partnerships and provision of funding to find next generation treatments and interventions for neglected diseases."

Globally, NTDs affect over one billion people, are more prevalent in rural areas and predominantly affect the poorest and most marginalized communities. India has the highest burden of NTDs in the world, and the impact of this is to lock these vulnerable and affected groups into a cycle of poverty and disease. As India continues to grow and develop, the reach of health services to the poorest and most marginalized will be a critical indicator for whether India's growth is truly inclusive and benefits the whole country. NTDs can be controlled and eliminated - even eradicated - but we need to find a mixture of incentives to unite stakeholders.