



World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day

For Prelims: About NTDs, World Health Organisation.

For Mains: Indian efforts in combating Neglected Tropical Diseases.

Why in News?

Neglected tropical disease day is observed **every year on 30th January**. It was declared in the **74th World Health Assembly** (2021).

- The proposal to recognise the day was **floated by the United Arab Emirates**. It was adopted unanimously by the delegates.
- The **World Health Assembly** is the decision-making body of the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.

What are Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)?

- NTDs are a group of infections that are most common **among marginalized communities in the developing regions of Africa, Asia and the Americas**.
- They are caused by a **variety of pathogens** such as **viruses, bacteria, protozoa and parasitic worms**.
 - NTDs are especially **common in tropical areas** where people do **not have access to clean water or safe ways** to dispose of human waste.
- These diseases **generally receive less funding for research and treatment** than malaises like **tuberculosis, HIV-AIDS and malaria**.
- **Examples of NTDs are:** **snakebite envenomation**, scabies, yaws, trachoma, **Leishmaniasis** and Chagas disease etc.

Why is World NTD Day observed on 30th January?

- World NTD Day **commemorates the simultaneous launch of the first NTD road map (2012-2020) and the London Declaration on NTDs on 30th January 2012**.
- **London Declaration on NTDs:**
 - It was adopted on 30th January, 2012 to recognise the global burden of NTDs.
 - Officials from the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, the **World Bank**, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, representatives from leading global pharmaceutical companies as well as representatives of several national governments met at London's Royal College of physicians to pledge to end the diseases.
- **WHO's New Roadmap for 2021-2030:**
 - From measuring process to measuring impact.
 - From disease-specific planning and programming to collaborative work across sectors.
 - From externally driven agendas reliant to programmes that are country-owned and country-financed.

What is the impact of NTDs?

▪ Global Scenario:

- NTDs affect **more than a billion people globally**.
 - They are **preventable and treatable**. However, these diseases - and their intricate interrelationships with poverty and ecological systems - continue **to cause devastating health, social and economic consequences**.
- There are 20 NTDs that **impact over 1.7 billion people worldwide**.
- **India carries the largest burden of at least 11 of these diseases**, with parasitic illnesses like [kala-azar](#) and [lymphatic filariasis](#) affecting millions of people throughout the country – often the poorest and most vulnerable.

▪ Indian Scenario:

- 2021 witnessed improved case surveillance, case detection and case prevalence rates with respect to Kala-Azar.
- 35% fewer cases of the disease were reported in 2021, as compared to 2020 and all reported cases were treated.
- India is **at the cusp of eliminating Kala-Azar**, with 99% Kala-Azar endemic blocks having achieved the elimination target.

What are the Indian Initiatives to Eliminate NTDs?

- The **Accelerated Plan for Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (APELF)** was launched in 2018, as part of intensifying efforts towards the elimination of NTDs.
- A **WHO-supported regional alliance established** by the governments of India, Bangladesh, and Nepal in 2005 to expedite early diagnosis and treatment of the most vulnerable populations and improve disease surveillance and control of sandfly populations (Kala-azar).
- India has already **eliminated several other NTDs**, including guinea worm, trachoma, and yaws.
- Preventive methods like **Mass Drug Administration (MDA)** rounds are periodically deployed in endemic areas during which anti-filarial medicines are provided free-of-cost to at-risk communities.
- **Vector-control measures** like Indoor **Residual Spraying rounds** are undertaken in endemic areas to prevent sandfly breeding.
- The government also **supports morbidity management and disability prevention** for those affected by lymphoedema and hydrocele.
- State and central governments have also introduced **wage compensation schemes** for those suffering from Kala-Azar and its sequela (a condition which is the consequence of a previous disease or injury) known as Post-Kala Azar Dermal Leishmaniasis.

Way Forward

- India is poised to emerge as a global leader in the battle against NTDs, but success in this decade will demand bolder action. As India stands firm on its commitment to eliminate NTDs, multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral partnerships and collaboration will continue to play a central role in sustaining the momentum gained.
- An integrated approach to improving access to quality healthcare, water, sanitation, hygiene, addressing climate change and ensuring gender equality, mental health and well-being must lie at the core of eliminating these diverse NTDs.

[Source: DTE](#)