

Concept note

2026 Annual NTD programme managers meeting

“Leveraging innovative tools and sustainable financing to advance NTD elimination in Africa”

13–16 April 2026

[Bingu International Conference Centre, Lilongwe, Malawi](#)

Introduction and background

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) continue to affect large numbers of people worldwide. The African Region accounts for roughly 35% of people affected by NTDs, reflecting the substantial burden they constitute for countries across the continent.¹ In 2023, an estimated 1.495 billion people required interventions for at least one NTD, representing a 32% decrease from the 2010 baseline, indicating steady but uneven progress towards the 2030 targets.

Africa bears the highest burden, accounting for the most global disability-adjusted life years from several major NTDs. All African countries remain endemic for at least one NTD, and 20 of the 21 WHO-recognized NTDs are present in the Region. NTDs fall into two subcategories: those primarily controlled through preventive chemotherapy (PC-NTDs) and those addressed through case management (CM-NTDs). Countries continue to report significant achievements, including the development of national plans to sustain NTD services and the integration of data into national systems. Eradication and elimination trends for specific diseases are also encouraging. For instance, dracunculiasis is nearing eradication, with only 15 human cases reported in 2024 (Chad and South Sudan), despite ongoing challenges. As of October 2025, 24 countries in the Region had eliminated at least one NTD.

Progress across the continent is tangible. In 2025, Niger became the first country in Africa to be verified by WHO to have eliminated the transmission of onchocerciasis. Many programmes are transitioning into post-mass drug administration or post-validation surveillance for trachoma and lymphatic filariasis. The 2025 WHO Global Report on NTDs notes slowed or stalled progress in reducing deaths from vector-borne NTDs, expanding access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), protecting populations from catastrophic health expenditures, and improving reporting by ensuring data are complete and disaggregated by gender. Financing pressures are acute, with official development assistance for NTDs falling by approximately 41% between 2018 and 2023, underscoring the need for domestic resource mobilization and smarter allocation.

¹ 2025 WHO Global Report on NTDs (<https://www.who.int/teams/control-of-neglected-tropical-diseases/global-report-on-neglected-tropical-diseases-2025>)

The same report highlights that in 2025, the global funding environment tightened further, with international projections indicating a continued decline in overall official development assistance from the previous year. Early WHO updates also indicated that this contraction led to immediate programme disruptions worldwide, delaying mass treatment campaigns. Many countries reported shortfalls in operational funding, which affected mass drug administration and survey operations. Within countries, competing health priorities, subnational pockets of transmission (often along borders and in mobile populations), and limited primary health care (PHC) integration continue to hinder elimination efforts. To catalyse progress, the African Union's Continental Framework on the Control and Elimination of NTDs in Africa by 2030 provides strategic guidance to support Member States in achieving the continent's elimination goals. The Framework promotes a comprehensive approach that emphasizes disease prevention, scaled-up domestic financing, effective mobilization of human resources, strengthened accountability mechanisms, cross-border collaboration, and robust multistakeholder coordination.

Furthermore, the African Union Roadmap to 2030 and Beyond: Sustaining the AIDS Response, Ensuring Systems Strengthening, and Health Security for the Development of Africa, offers innovative approaches for integrating health financing, service delivery, and disease prevention into a streamlined approach for the elimination of NTDs and other diseases while advancing health equity by 2030. It prioritizes integrated health services and domestic resource mobilization to strengthen health systems across the continent. The Roadmap calls for increased political commitment and strategic partnerships to sustain investments in resilient health systems, accelerate disease elimination, and advance universal health coverage (UHC), especially for NTDs, which remain underfunded.

The recently held 2025 Annual NTDs Experts Meeting in Cotonou, Benin, issued a decisive call for a paradigm shift, centred on domestic ownership and resilient health systems to secure the continent's achievements. Member States reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the AU Roadmap to 2030 and Beyond, emphasizing that sustaining this progress requires financial independence and structural integration. They resolved to prioritize domestic resource mobilization through dedicated budget lines and innovative mechanisms such as health insurance schemes, while elevating NTDs to parity with other major diseases such as HIV and malaria. This necessitates the integration of NTD interventions into primary health care, One Health and WASH strategies, alongside a forward-looking approach that incorporates climate change mitigation and local manufacturing to close persistent gaps in funding and ensure access to essential medical supplies.

As a follow-up to the previous meeting, the 2026 Annual NTD programme managers meeting (PMM), co-convened by the African Union Commission (AUC) and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa (WHO AFRO), will focus on practical solutions to accelerate and sustain the continental NTD elimination agenda. With the 2030 targets fast approaching, this meeting adopts a multisectoral approach that brings together policy-makers and policy implementers from

governments, communities, civil society and nongovernmental organizations, academia and the private sector to align strategies for achieving the targets.

Despite considerable progress towards NTD elimination, the sustainability of these achievements is threatened by fragmented cross-border coordination, persistent subnational gaps, and a reliance on vertical programming that leaves interventions vulnerable to funding shifts. To counter the risk of disease re-introduction and stagnation, the meeting will address these systemic weaknesses by strategizing to integrate NTDs into national PHC services and advance sustainable domestic financing models. By deliberating on innovative digital tools for precise data-driven planning and placing communities at the centre of accountability, the convening aims to secure long-term resilience and close the critical gaps impeding NTD elimination ahead of the 2030 timeline.

Objectives

General objective

To provide a collaborative platform for African countries and partners to operationalize community-centred strategies for NTD elimination, driven by enhanced coordination, effective use of data and digital tools, PHC integration, and sustainable domestic financing.

Specific objectives

- (1) To review Member States' progress towards elimination goals, with a priority focus on the dissemination of national climate mitigation plans that include NTDs, and integrating NTD interventions into national health strategies, primary health care, and education curricula.
- (2) To evaluate Member States' progress in establishing dedicated NTD budget lines, and to accelerate domestic resource mobilization and innovative financing for sustainable programming.
- (3) To strengthen national and regional systems by enhancing timely, high-quality health information reporting; fostering robust community engagement and local advocacy; and institutionalizing cross-border collaboration through synchronized surveillance and data-driven planning.
- (4) To build the capacity of Member States in research and innovation through the acceleration of investments in diagnostics, vaccines, and operational research, and promoting the regional manufacturing of essential NTD medicines as well as biennial reporting mechanisms to ensure transparency.

Expected outcomes

- (I) An enhanced understanding of Member States' progress towards elimination goals, identification of critical gaps and validation of the integration of NTD interventions into broader national frameworks, specifically climate change mitigation plans and education curricula.

- (II) A documented assessment of financial sustainability, detailing the establishment of dedicated domestic budget lines for NTDs and the deployment of innovative financing mechanisms to accelerate local funding.
- (III) Agreed frameworks for unified data reporting standards to ensure accuracy, alongside synchronized procedures for cross-border data sharing, joint planning, and coordinated surveillance.
- (IV) Identification of priority investment areas to accelerate and promote the regional manufacturing of essential NTD medicines and diagnostics to reduce external dependency.
- (V) Adoption of a structured timeline and mechanism for biennial reporting to track Member States' investments in research, monitor progress, and ensure transparency.

Overall themes

Day 1: Integration and resilience – progress in NTD elimination and sustainability

Day 2: Data, digital innovation, cross-border surveillance and regional collaboration

Day 3: Sustainable financing and domestic resource mobilization

Day 4: Innovation and independence – advancing research and development, local manufacturing and accountability.

Date and venue

Date: 13–16 April 2026

Venue: Bingu International Conference Centre, Lilongwe, Malawi.

Languages

English, French and Portuguese will be the medium of communication during the meeting and simultaneous translation will be provided.

Participants

NTD programme managers, NTD donors and implementing partners, AUC staff, WHO NTD staff from HQ, AFRO and EMRO.

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