

UK Coalition response to Andrew Mitchell Speech

The UK Coalition Against Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) welcomes the vision of the future of international development outlined by Minister Andrew Mitchell in his recent [Chatham House speech](#). We are particularly encouraged by the shift in tone in the new brand launch of [UK International Development](#) and the commitment to partnerships that tackle the root causes of poverty and global crises.

The UK's contribution should be and is about much more than aid. Development is not an 'us and them' game but a harnessing of each other's strengths to achieve goals which benefit us all. Nowhere is this truer than in global health research. Research partnerships between NGOs, private institutions and universities both in the UK and in NTD-endemic countries are essential for finding the new treatments and approaches that will achieve a healthier and safer world, and shield us all against future health threats. At our recent parliamentary reception with the APPG on Malaria & NTDs, Professor Getnet Tadele from Addis Ababa University noted that *"we are mutually interdependent – those from the global north have technical expertise resources, while we, living and working in NTD-endemic countries, have deeper understanding of the context of the country. These must be valued equally."*

We also welcome the centrality of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals to the vision of the new UKDev brand, something which has been sorely missing in recent FCDO publications. Minister Mitchell rightly notes that we are "two-nil down at half-time" on the SDGs and urgent action is needed if they are to be achieved. Ending the epidemic of NTDs is one of the SDG indicators but this offers opportunities to accelerate progress across multiple goals. For example, reducing parasitic infections in children vastly improves their nutrition and growth, allows them to spend more time in school and increases their opportunities for future employment. Furthermore, NTDs disproportionately affect women and girls living in poverty – if they are truly to be "at the forefront of everything we do" as Minister Mitchell promises then the UK's development offering must tackle NTDs in a holistic but meaningful way.

Finally, Minister Mitchell rightly emphasises poverty reduction and climate security as major enablers of shared prosperity. NTDs continue to affect more than 1 billion of the world's poorest people living mainly in the areas most severely affected by climate change. It is thought that household income lost from health costs and lost wages due to NTDs is at least 33 billion dollars per year¹. Some of the simplest interventions for NTDs give an estimated net benefit of about US\$ 25 per US\$ 1 invested². If the UK government is serious about reducing poverty, delivering value for money and re-establishing its reputation as a development leader then smart investment in NTD research and programming seems a sensible place to start.

¹ WHO. "Investing to Overcome the Global Impact of Neglected Tropical Diseases: Third WHO Report on Neglected Tropical Diseases." Geneva: World Health Organization, 2015. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0021-8_2.

² Fitzpatrick, Christopher, Uzoma Nwankwo, Edeltraud Lenk, Sake J. de Vlas, and Donald A. P. Bundy. "An Investment Case for Ending Neglected Tropical Diseases." *Disease Control Priorities, Third Edition (Volume 6): Major Infectious Diseases*, 2017, 411–31. https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-0524-0_ch17.



We suggest the UK government take the following actions:

- Support research partnerships that prioritise the needs of neglected populations and harness the strengths of researchers in NTD-endemic regions. This includes ensuring innovations originating in LMICs are integrated into international responses and strengthening clinical research networks.
- Ensure coordination and collaboration between NTD programmes and existing investments in nutrition, education, WASH, disability inclusion, social protection, and maternal and child health to multiply the benefits of UK development and ensure the world's poorest communities can reach their full potential.
- Publish a cross-government global health strategy covering all UK government health ODA spend. This should detail the investment in NTDs that will be made within that, and ensure it will deliver against SDG 3, towards achieving UHC, and the 'leave no one behind' pledge. It should work through the synergies between SDG 3 and all other SDGs, including ending poverty (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), gender equality (SDG 5), water and sanitation (SDG 6), and building strong and transparent institutions (SDG 16), amongst others.