Webinar
The need for innovative diagnostics to achieve NTD road map targets
28 October 2021, 14:00–15:30 CET

Concept note

Overview

Diagnostics is a priority area that requires critical action to ensure the 2021–2030 road map targets for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are achieved.

As the intensity of infection and prevalence of NTDs progressively decrease, current methods of diagnosis may not have the necessary sensitivity or specificity to support programmes through to the point of target delivery.

New tests will therefore be required to determine decisions that include changing treatment frequency; when to stop mass treatment and maintain appropriate levels of surveillance; and validation or verification of elimination.

In response, the World Health Organization (WHO) has taken steps to ensure that this programmatic area receives the scrutiny and expert attention it needs to ensure that diagnostic capability keeps pace with developments on the ground.

This also involves the development of accurate point-of-care\(^1\) tests that can be performed in resource-limited settings to bring them nearer to remote communities and to potentially overcome challenges such as healthcare-seeking behaviour, lack of disease awareness and population movement.

A Diagnostic Technical Advisory Group (DTAG) was established by WHO in October 2019 to bring together disease-specific and cross-cutting experts whose task is to provide high-level, broad expertise to advance the NTD diagnostics agenda.

DTAG has met twice since its 2019 inaugural meeting and has also generated several time-limited subgroups focussed on diagnostics for specific diseases and disease groups. These committees too have made good progress during the last 18 months.\(^2\) To date, five disease-specific subgroups have been initiated, as well as a cross-cutting skin NTD group and three further cross-cutting subgroups, tasked with addressing critical issues in diagnostics that span the entire portfolio of NTDs.

DTAG is playing a coordinating role to ensure that diagnostics are available, field-ready and capable of supporting programmes. The disease-specific subgroups, meanwhile, have been developing target product profiles (TPPs) to meet critical programme needs.

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\(^1\) Point-of-care testing is usually defined as “testing that is performed near or at the site of a patient with the result leading to possible change in the care of the patient.”

\(^2\) The proceedings of the DTAG as well as various subgroups are available from WHO on request.
The webinar will focus on current efforts to address diagnostic gaps, assess progress and highlight outstanding areas that require urgent and ongoing attention.

**Theme: The need for innovative diagnostics to achieve NTD road map targets**

**Webinar goals**

The goals of the webinar are to help participants understand:

1. The needs for accurate diagnostics in NTDs to optimize use of resources;
2. The importance of reviewing existing TPPs and developing new ones to identify and address diagnostic gaps;
3. The end-to-end process in diagnostic development, from innovation to deployment; and
4. The donor environment and the need to refine and develop new tools and approaches to support the 2030 road map targets.

**Webinar panels**

**First panel**

Accurate and reliable diagnostic tools are a prerequisite for NTD programmes to succeed. Although classical clinical and parasitological techniques can be adequate for mapping disease distribution and monitoring the progress of interventions against NTDs, the need for improved diagnostics comes into much sharper focus as infection prevalence declines and elimination becomes a possibility.

The first panel speakers will discuss why, without accurate diagnostics, we will not achieve the 2030 targets.

**Second panel**

The initial speakers for the second panel will consider the end-to-end process in diagnostic development, with focus on innovation in developing new diagnostic tests. Subsequent speakers will discuss how to develop a supportive regulatory environment and how to improve access to new tools.

**Third panel**

In the third panel on the donor landscape, test developers and donors will discuss how to support investment in the development of new diagnostic tools.

**Wrap-up**

This final section will summarize the main discussions.

**Webinar format**

This moderated webinar will follow an established format: in the pause between panels, a selection of short videos and voices from the field will be shown to illustrate real changes and opportunities.
**Duration:** 90 min  
**Delivery:** Live, interactive panel discussion

### Webinar outline

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