

STATEMENT

DNDi acknowledges the progress report on UHC and health related SDGs and wants to draw focus to addressing Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), as a part of the UHC response. We would like to congratulate Member States for making progress against NTDs, including Bangladesh becoming the first country in the world to eliminate Visceral Leishmaniasis (VL) as a public health problem, and India being on the cusp of VL elimination.

The true test of UHC is whether it addresses the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations. In almost 20 years of experience, DNDi has learnt that those living with NTDs often access health services at advanced stages of illness, and therefore where tools exist, treating them often requires secondary or tertiary care. In many settings, this means that all expenses related to hospitalization must be paid out of pocket, often representing a catastrophic expense.

Despite progress for some NTDs, new and better diagnostic tests are still needed – as are safer, more effective, more affordable patient-friendly treatments that can be used in primary healthcare settings, close to affected communities. Avoiding or limiting hospitalization can reduce burden on health systems and can be critically important for vulnerable people, including those with NTDs, who are poor or otherwise marginalized. And for diseases that are on the cusp of elimination, diagnostics and medicines that are specifically developed to reflect the requirements of a sustainable elimination programme will be critical to avoid backtracking on hard-won successes. These should be highly effective, safe, and suitable for deployment in remote areas with limited public health infrastructure.

Addressing the needs of people living with NTDs, with appropriate health tools would support the twin SDG goals of eliminating NTDs and supporting UHC.