

## WASH AND NTDs MESSAGING

Today, 768 million people do not have access to an improved water source, 1.4 billion people have one or more neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). An astounding 2.5 billion people lack access to basic sanitation. With a billion people in the world still practicing open defecation, it is urgent that we address sanitation in order to tackle a variety of health problems, of which NTDs are some of the most pressing. New approaches in sanitation are offering hope that we can bring about a “sanitation revolution”.

Inadequate water supply, poor sanitation, and lack of hygiene are major contributing factors to the spread of NTDs and many other diseases.

The treatment of NTDs must go hand-in-hand with improvements in water, sanitation and hygiene in order to create sustainable, lasting change across the developing world.

**Water:** Areas with stagnant water are breeding grounds for insects that carry NTDs, notably culex mosquitoes which transmit lymphatic filariasis. In many communities, key water bodies, such as lakes, harbor the parasite that causes schistosomiasis (snail fever), and people who swim, bathe or wade in this water are at risk. Clean drinking water is also a major part of disease prevention. NTDs can be spread by drinking contaminated water. For instance, guinea worm is spread by drinking water containing infected water fleas.

**Hygiene:** Good hygiene practices like hand and face-washing are critical to controlling many diseases. Intestinal worm infections can be contracted by eating food that was not properly washed or eating with unwashed hands. Trachoma is primarily spread when the eye discharge from an infected person is shared through contact with his or her hands, clothing or other personal effects, as well as through transmission by eye-seeking flies. Reducing the flies and washing both hands and faces are essential if trachoma is to be controlled. Plentiful water, close to home, is important in order to encourage good hygiene.

- **Sanitation:** Intestinal worm infections can spread when people come into contact with fecally contaminated soil, for instance by eating food that has not been washed. Children especially have a high risk of contracting these diseases because they often play barefoot outside and put their hands in their mouths without washing them; it is estimated that almost half of all primary school-age children in developing countries carry intestinal worms and much of this burden is due to poor sanitation and open defecation.

The Global Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases (Global Network) and Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) are proud to collaborate on advancing integrated, cost-effective and high-impact strategies to improve water, sanitation, and hygiene and eliminate neglected tropical diseases around the world.

His Excellency John A. Kufuor, president of the Republic of Ghana (2001-2009), serves as the Global Network's NTD Special Envoy and Chair of SWA to champion the urgency of developing cross-sector partnerships to expand access to clean water and sanitation and halt the transmission of debilitating NTDs.

President Kufuor seeks to raise visibility of these issues among the international development community and policymakers; cultivate political support at the national level to promote country

ownership; and encourage development partners to collaborate and advocate jointly for improved water, sanitation and hygiene and control of NTDs. Treatment of NTDs must go hand in hand with improvement of water, sanitation and hygiene in order to rid our world forever of these diseases

Improving WASH and controlling NTDs will serve as a catalyst for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and, it is critical that these issues remain as targets in the final formation of the sustainable post-2015 development agenda.