The Neglected Infectious Diseases - NID, also known as “forgotten” diseases, affect:

- the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable populations
- people lacking access to health services, education, safe drinking water, sanitation - particularly people living in rural areas as well as urban slums or favelas.

Though they seldom cause death, they are chronic diseases with debilitating long-term effects which negatively affect:

- the growth, mental and physical development and learning capacity of children
- the working productivity of adults
- the self-esteem and welfare of people since some of them can cause disfigurement leading to stigma and discrimination which in turn results in further neglect.

In 2009 PAHO’s Member States approved Resolution CD49. R19 for the control or elimination of NID and other infectious diseases related to poverty, which is the reference frame for implementing integrated actions in Latin America and the Caribbean with a focus on:

- prompt and adequate diagnosis and treatment with effective and cost-effective drugs and interventions where a single drug is not sufficient
- efforts to combine and reposition existing resources for the control and elimination of NID for the most affected populations (Primary Health Care, Expanded Program of Immunizations, Integration of Childhood Malnutrition, health programs for children enrolled in schools)
- access to integrated actions in order to address the social determinants of health, namely those which favor the persistence of transmission of NID such as safe drinking water, basic sanitation, education, housing, etc., for which the inter-sectoral approach is a priority, including policies and programs for the promotion of human rights, gender equality, cultural diversity and social justice
- technical cooperation by PAHO for the development and implementation of integrated actions at national and sub-regional levels, strengthening collaboration and integrated work within the health sector and with other sectors for the control and elimination of NID.
In the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Region, which has made important achievements in disease control and elimination, there is a great potential to contribute to reducing inequalities and by addressing the Neglected Infectious Diseases (NID), we have the opportunity to motivate other countries and regions to follow our lead.

The successful history of disease elimination in the Americas is a significant milestone for the region and an important public health achievement which will add to the region’s reputation for excellence in public health. Winning the battle against NID is an example which can motivate other countries and regions to follow our lead. Addressing NID is an opportunity to learn from our experience and to apply it to other diseases.

The NID are a group of diseases that affect the health of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable populations. The diseases of the Americas have been divided into four groups: intestinal helminths, Chagas disease, leishmaniasis, and onchocerciasis.

### Key Interventions

#### Schistosomiasis (Kaknassu)
- 2.5 million people living in areas at risk of schistosomiasis. (This is the regional goal established by PAHO’s regional schistosomiasis program)

#### Cutaneous leishmaniasis (Kuskus)
- 11,600 people with active cutaneous leishmaniasis at risk. (This is the regional goal established by PAHO’s regional leishmaniasis program)

#### Lymphatic filariasis (Lambacas and Nasca)
- 0.5 million people living in areas at risk of transmission in Latin America and the Caribbean.

#### Visceral leishmaniasis (Kabul)
- 1,900 people with active visceral leishmaniasis at high risk.

#### Chagas disease (Kaknos)
- 600,000 people at risk of being infected with Trypanosoma cruzi.

#### Drug administration

- Annual Mass Drug Administration (MDA) during 5 to 7 years of treatment.
- Health education and community participation.
- Biannual Mass Drug Administration (MDA) of ivermectin to at risk communities.

#### Other interventions

- Improvement of access to safe drinking water and excreta disposal systems.
- Integration with other programs such as the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) and with various other disease control programs.

### Regional Goals

- To eliminate new cases of blindness caused by trachoma (reduction in the number of new cases by 90% by 2015).
- To reduce prevalence and para-susceptibility/para-susceptibility in high transmission areas where the prevalence is greater than 5%.
- To interrupt transfusional transmission of T. cruzi (This is the regional goal established by PAHO’s regional Chagas disease program).
- To interrupt domestic vector-borne transmission of T. cruzi (domestic transmission area to less than 10% prevalence by 2015).
- To eliminate ocular morbidity and to interrupt transmission by 2015.

### Conclusion

The Americas have a unique opportunity to lead the world in the fight against Neglected Infectious Diseases (NID). By addressing these diseases, we can demonstrate the region’s commitment to public health and human rights, and show the world that the Americas are capable of reducing inequalities and improving the health of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable populations.