

Neglected Tropical Diseases - UPSC Health GS2 Notes

A diverse group of communicable diseases prevailing mostly in the tropical and subtropical conditions are known as Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs). Health and issues related to health are important for students pursuing the [IAS Exam](#) or any other Government Exam.

For UPSC Mains, issues relating to the Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources is a scoring segment in the General Studies paper-2 of the [UPSC Syllabus](#). Questions related to diseases can also be asked in the [UPSC Prelims](#) exam.

What are Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD)?

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) can be defined as a diverse group of communicable diseases that prevail in tropical and subtropical conditions. These diseases affect more than one billion people and cost developing economies of the respective countries billions of dollars every year. Populations living in poverty, without adequate sanitation and in close contact with infectious vectors and domestic animals and livestock are the worst affected.

The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that looks into matters regarding public health. According to the WHO, some of the major NTDs can be listed as follows:

Some Examples of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) according to WHO		
Buruli Ulcers	Chagas Disease	Dengue & Chikungunya
Guinea Worm Disease (Dracunculiasis)	Scabies and other Ecto-parasites	Sleeping Sickness (Human African Trypanosomiasis)
Hansen's Disease (Leprosy)	Leishmaniasis	Lymphatic Filariasis
Rabies	Schistosomiasis	Snakebite Envenoming
Soil-Transmitted Helminthiasis	Taeniasis or Cysticercosis	Endemic Treponematoses (Yaws)
Trachoma	Mycetoma, chromoblastomycosis and other deep mycoses	
Foodborne Trematodiasis	River Blindness (Onchocerciasis)	

India & Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)

According to the World Health Organization report of 2017, India was able to eliminate Leprosy in 82% of the cities and districts.

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare also mentioned that India has eradicated Infectious Trachoma along with the chronic disease Yaws from the country.
- The most common NTDs in India are Lymphatic Filariasis, Visceral Leishmaniasis, Rabies, Leptospirosis, Dengue and Soil-Transmitted Helminthic Infections (STH).
- NTDs are commonly seen to affect people living in poverty and hence, many people in India are afflicted by these diseases every year.
- As per WHO data, India ranks number 1 in the number of cases for many major NTDs in the world.
- However, there is some good news in this regard. India has made tremendous progress in controlling many such diseases.
- While leprosy has ceased to be a public health concern in the country, mass treatment coverage has also been achieved for people susceptible to Filaria.

Government's Initiatives towards Neglected Tropical Diseases

The GOI has undertaken several initiatives towards eradicating and managing Neglected Tropical Diseases from India. Some of them are discussed below:

1. **National Rabies Control Programme:** Established as the Integrated National Rabies Control Programme under the 'One Health Approach', it was renamed as the National Rabies Control Programme. It provides vaccination to stray dogs and free vaccines through Government Hospitals all over the country.
2. **National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP):** It is a comprehensive programme for the prevention and control of vector borne diseases namely Malaria, [Filaria](#), Kala-azar, Japanese Encephalitis (JE), Dengue and Chikungunya. You can also read about the [National Strategic Plan for Elimination of Malaria](#) at the linked article.
3. **National Leprosy Eradication Programme:** The programme was launched with the goal of elimination of leprosy as a public health problem. In 2005, it was officially declared eliminated as a public health concern in India. This was when the new cases fell to less than 1 per 10,000. Yet, India accounts for the largest number of leprosy-affected people in the world. Neglected Tropical Diseases UPSC Notes. NTDs around the World. Read about the Government's Initiatives towards NTDs. UPSC Health GS Paper 2 Notes for IAS Exam.
4. **The National Health Policy:** Established in 2017, it sets an ambition to stimulate innovation to meet the health needs and ensure that new drugs are affordable for those who need them most; but it does not specifically tackle neglected diseases.
5. **The National Policy on Treatment of Rare Diseases:** Mostly focuses on identifying and researching treatments for rare diseases and infectious tropical diseases.