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WHO Topic #2 - Neglected Tropical Diseases and Worldwide Prevalence of Parasites

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Among disease specialists and researchers, some diseases receive more attention than others; Malaria, Hepatitis, Influenza, and Tuberculosis are a few examples of diseases that receive a large amount of the attention over others. However, there are a lot of lesser-known diseases that are pushed aside in favor of focusing on more well-known ones. These overlooked illnesses are commonly known as neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and represent a major global issue. These conditions are estimated to impact over 1 billion people worldwide, with more than 1.5 billion people requiring NTD interventions.¹

NTDs are primarily prevalent among impoverished communities in tropical areas, although their reach extends across all continents. Risk factors such as lack of access to clean water and proper sanitation cause NTDs to often appear in wartorn and hard-to-reach areas.

These diseases are considered “neglected” because they remain almost absent from the global health agenda, leading to broader domestic ramifications. For example, populations affected by NTDs receive very limited resources and are often ignored by global funding agencies, perpetuating a cycle of limited access to education, economic opportunities, and the health care these neglected communities need. The lack of funding and access to these opportunities is what prevents measures against NTDs from taking place, and providing care to those already affected.² While NTDs generally have a low mortality rate, they cause significant morbidity which often leaves patients with long-lasting chronic conditions or disfigurements.

In response, the World Health Organization (WHO) has created a strategy to try and address NTDs by 2030 through several key interventions. These include individual case management, vector control, veterinary public health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).³ The goals for 2030 include: a 90% reduction in the number of people requiring

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/neglected-tropical-diseases>

² <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/neglected-tropical-diseases>

³ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240010352>



treatment for NTDs, the elimination of at least one NTD in 100 countries, and the overall eradication of two diseases.⁴

As you research this topic, consider the following:

- How is your country affected by NTDs and which ones are most prevalent?
- What programs does your country have in place to help treat or prevent NTDs?
- How can your country address the root causes of these diseases to reduce their spread?

These questions can be used as a guideline to help begin your research, but do not let them limit you. You should be informed and well-researched on this topic in preparation. I do not expect you to know everything about each condition or medical specifics, just general concepts and basic understandings.

Please note that YUNMUN has a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism, and all papers will be checked through Turnitin. In addition, generative AI is not permitted to be used, and if found to be used may impact your eligibility for awards.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at nnarowe@mail.yu.edu. I am very excited to read your position papers and meet you at this year's conference!

All the best,
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⁴ https://www.who.int/health-topics/neglected-tropical-diseases#tab=tab_3