

Society

Controlling, lessening the burden of NTDs

BY MENGISTEAB TESHOME

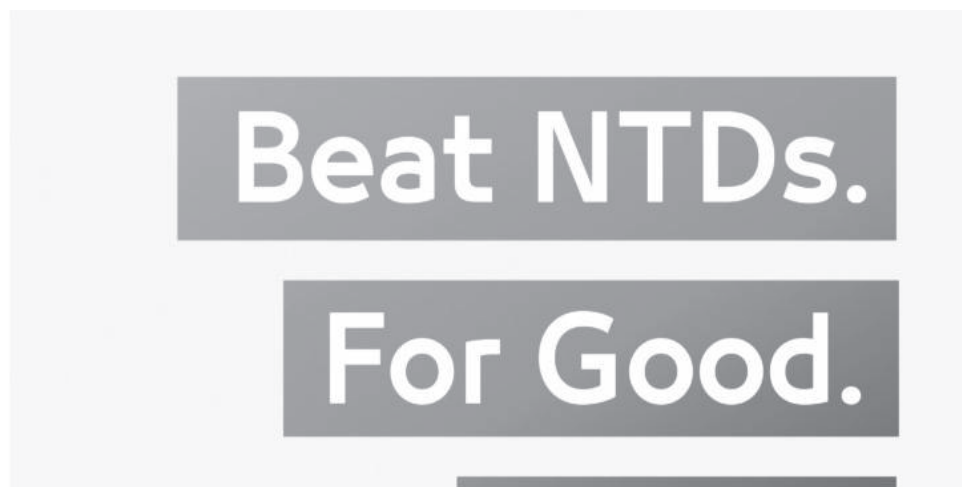
Ministry of Health said concerted effort is underway to lessen the burden of Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD), and call on partners to exert more efforts than ever before in addressing both treatment and stigmas related challenges.

Fekire Seyiefe National NTD Eradication Program Coordinator noted that significant progress has been achieved in increasing access to those people lacking access to improved sanitation and water supply, basic infrastructure and health services.

As part of its commitment to eliminate and control NTDs throughout the country, Ethiopia has developed new NTD Roadmap (2021-2030) that could help shape nation's effort in more established fashion.

Ministry is keen working with partners because the burden is immense and at this juncture having partners and collaborations from academic and research institutions of 5s project could help one step ahead in eradicating and controlling NTDs.

As to him, the initiation of the Social Sciences for Severe Stigmatizing Skin (5s) diseases is one of the instrumental moves the Ministry is appreciated for as it could help in addressing NTDs' burden in health system and paves ways for development partners to



take part in more established fashion.

As he stated, nine priority NTDs have been identified literarily: trachoma, soil-transmitted helminthiasis, schistosomiasis, lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis (river blindness), podoconiosis, dracunculiasis (Guinea-worm disease), leishmaniasis and scabies.

“Since NTDs have long health impacts on communities as well creating stigma, working in collaboration is instrumental to address the burden. To this end, the Ministry is working diligently through supplying communities with high NTDs areas with mass drugs and medical treatments as well

undertaking awareness raising activities, he further noted.

Dr. Mitke Molla Vice President for Research and Technology Transfer at Addis Ababa University noted that NTDs affect the poorest populations, particularly those living in remote rural areas, in urban slums, or in conflict zones. Ethiopia also bears the highest disease burden.

According to her, people affected by Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) are frequently the target of social stigmatization and discrimination which results in immense social and psychological burden on individuals. Furthermore, affected

individuals may experience negative attitudes, feel ashamed about their condition and may isolate and withdraw themselves from social participation. In addition to these social and psychological consequences, health-related stigma can hamper the care and control of the disease in areas such as health-seeking behavior, engagement in care and treatment and adherence.

Teshome Gebre (PhD) Regional Director for Africa International Trachoma Initiative for his part noted that the incumbent commitment to eliminate and control the diseases is commendable.

According to him, since the NTDs affect the world's poorest people, they impair the physical and cognitive development, lower productivity in the workplace and finally lead to death. To curb this and improving the health and wellbeing of citizens, joining hands is timely.

“In my view, the project could help address the challenges and pertinent stakeholders should show resilience in translating their plan to the practice”, he remarked.

The project is being implemented by the Department of Global Health and Infection at Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) in collaboration with Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA).



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Investing on early childhood care and learning, preparing children for primary education

BY ALAZAR SHIFERAW

Quality early childhood and primary education is recognized as key mechanism to create capable and responsible citizens, break poverty, and bring about sustainable development. To this effect, emphasizing on ensuring quality and equity education for all and implementing early childhood policies accordingly is crucial.

In Ethiopia, primary education has been showing promising progress and consolidated better. According to the Education Statistics Annual Abstract 2019-2020 report of the Ministry of Education (MoE), the overall goal of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy is to improve child growth and development through improvement of ECCE services delivery. Since the introduction of the Policy in 2013, there has been a marked improvement in the quality of ECCE services throughout the country. Enrolment and uptake of ECCE has drastically increased and generally awareness about the need for supporting ECCE has been done and taken root in most places of the country.

What is more, the government is working earnestly to ensuring that all pre-primary school going children have access and

equal opportunity to education, regardless of any differences-r social class, ethnicity, background or physical disabilities. Through ASC, the sector annually tracks progress towards ECCE access and equity, as the report stated.

Most importantly, the policy plays crucial role in preparing children for primary education, and has the potential to increase the extents of enrolment, reduce dropouts and grade repetition, particularly for girls. In order to achieve the ECCE objectives, the government has developed a curriculum, trained teachers and provided supervisory support. As a result, pre-primary enrolment is increasing every year, though underreporting remains a persistent issue in kindergarten centers, it said.

The importance of ECCE is also recognized by the inclusion of a specific indicator under Sustainable Development Goal-4; in line with this, one of the focus area/indicator under the SDG is early childhood development and universal pre-primary education.

In addition, pre-primary Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) calculates the number of students enrolled in pre-primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official pre-primary school-age

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population (ages 4-6). It shows the general level of participation in pre-primary education, regardless of whether students are of the correct school age.

However, states such as, Somali and Afar have registered the lowest rate with GER of just 7.4 percent and 18.3 percent respectively while Addis Ababa and Harari showed commendable achievements, 105.5 percent and 92.7percent GER in pre-primary education respectively.

Nationally, the modality providing the majority of pre-primary education is “O” class, with a GER of 87.3percent, showing an increment of 6.3 percentage points.

In kindergarten modality, Addis Ababa performs the highest proportion of children enrolled, with a GER of 104 percent. Whereas Tigray has the largest enrolment in Child to Child provision, with a GER of 41.0percent, and SNNP in “O” class, with a GER of 141.6percent.

According to the ESDP V document, those who complete three years of kindergarten are more likely to be better prepared to enter school than a child who has received one year of ‘O’ Class or Child to Child Instruction. Although the ESDP V document suggests that alternative modalities are improving in quality, it is likely that those able to access three years of pre-primary education are likely to be better prepared for primary level education.

However, kindergarten is a program for 4 to 6 year olds. It is mainly a three-year program at nursery, lower kindergarten and upper kindergarten at ages 3-4, 4-5 and 5-6 years respectively. This program has its own curriculum, trained teachers, administrative staff, and school compounds. Most of the kindergarten schools are operated by nongovernmental organizations such as communities, private institutions, and religious organizations. The program was limited to the private sector and urban areas, so attendance was low, it said.