



Ten Years later: The END Fund launches its Impact Report of NTD progress in Rwanda



KIGALI, Rwanda, 18 May 2018 - /African Media Agency (AMA)/ - A 30% reduction in the prevalence of intestinal worms in Rwanda in six years has represented a wonderful return on investment and transformed the lives of millions of people, but there is more to do and more resources are needed according to an impact report published by the END fund today.

A decade from the ground-breaking launch of the National Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) program in Rwanda, the END Fund revisits the East African country to critically reflect on progress as well as to chart its next phase of investments to help the continent unlock its potential by ending these preventable diseases.

Over four days, from May 17 to 20, in the Rwandan capital Kigali, a visiting delegation of the END Fund's Board, investors, and supporters hosts a high-level group of partners including government officials, private sector leaders, and change-makers at the site of one of its biggest successes in combating NTDs to discuss what is needed to reach the end of these diseases in Rwanda.

In the spirit of generating evidence and enthusiasm for combating NTDs, an ethos that has driven the initiative since its inception, the END Fund delivers an impact report on a decade of partnering with Rwanda.

Following a visit to END Fund-supported programs at Rwesero Primary School, the events culminate in a roundtable discussion on "Innovations in Health: How Private Sector can Move the Needle on Global Health Challenges."

The five most common NTDs — intestinal worms, schistosomiasis, lymphatic filariasis, trachoma, and river blindness — inflict suffering on over 1.5 billion people worldwide, disabling

and debilitating, and causing early death for around 170,000 per year if left untreated. Africa alone bears 40% of the global NTD burden.

The report looks to quantify the progress achieved since the first investment was made by the Legatum Foundation in 2007 and amplify the evidence-based argument for the approach to be replicated in other countries on the continent. The foundation's support of a pilot program in Rwanda helped further the large-scale use of private philanthropy to end NTDs.

"What was distinctive about this investment proposition was the opportunity to not just do the good but the great," says Alan McCormick, Partner at Dubai-based private investment firm Legatum on the Legatum Foundation's initial investment in Rwanda and neighboring Burundi. "We saw a unique investment opportunity emerging that could catalyse change on a major scale which is why we chose to prove the concept in two small countries so they could act as case studies for others to follow."

The END Fund itself was formed in 2012 following the successes of the initial pilot.

While the investment and socioeconomic case for a systematic focus on NTDs may appear straightforward, the approach is yet to be universally prioritized by policymakers and investors. Studies show every dollar invested in NTD control and elimination produces between \$27 and \$42 worth of economic benefit. Recent modelling from Erasmus University shows that if the World Health Organisation's 2020 goals for NTDs are met by 2030, Africa could save over \$52 billion. In 2018, Rwanda holds the African Union (AU) Presidency, creating a unique opportunity to share its successes with and inspire other AU leaders to increase financial support and political will to end NTDs.

By providing a detailed account of the Rwandan experience and the various partnerships and programs that have flowed from it, the report also seeks to provide the necessary information to bridge the gap between policy and implementation, while highlighting the strategic gains of good epidemiology rooted in thorough understanding of disease profile and emphasis on primary healthcare provision.

Distributed by African Media Agency (AMA) on behalf of the END Fund.

Photo Caption

Children at Rwesero Primary School in Rwanda wash their hands before receiving treatment for intestinal worms and schistosomiasis during an END Fund supported mass drug administration.

About the END Fund

The END Fund is the only private philanthropic initiative solely dedicated to ending the five most common neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), which affect more than 1.5 billion people globally. It efficiently puts private capital to work, advocating for NTD programs that are innovative,

integrated, and cost-effective. It facilitates strong partnerships with the private sector and aims to support national disease control programs in over 29 countries.

Since its founding in 2012, with its partners, the END Fund has provided over 500 million donated treatments worth almost \$933 million, over 11,400 surgeries for people suffering from the effects of the advanced stages of elephantiasis and trachoma, and trained more than 1.1 million people in NTD control and elimination efforts.

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