

# Indonesia's competitiveness at risk from neglected diseases of poverty

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February 27, 2014 – The control and elimination of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) is one of the most cost-effective ways Indonesia can sustain economic growth and reduce inequality, said scientists today in an analysis published in *PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases*. While Indonesia is poised to defeat NTDs by 2020, it has an opportunity to scale up national programs, integrate NTDs with other development efforts, strengthen coordination and enhance collaboration among key partners.

The analysis calls NTDs "one of the most potent forces" trapping Indonesia's citizens, especially women and children, in a cycle of poverty. Approximately 111 million people – or 46 percent of the population – live on less than \$2 per day, while approximately 44 million people – or 18 percent of the population – live on less than \$1.25 per day.

"Today, 70 percent of the poorest are in fast growing economies and [middle income countries](#) like Indonesia. Indonesia's commitment to and investment in controlling and eliminating NTDs could lift millions of Indonesians out of poverty and empower them to lead healthy, productive lives, benefiting the nation as a whole and assuring an equitable distribution of the wealth generated by [economic growth](#)," said Lorenzo Savioli, MD, director of the Department of Control of NTDs at the World Health Organization (WHO). "Indonesia's leadership in carrying out an ambitious national effort to tackle NTDs through its Ministry of Health, in collaboration with WHO and other partners,

would also help achieve the WHO NTD roadmap goals by 2020."

Indonesia has the second highest burden of NTDs worldwide. An estimated 195 million people – including 50 million children – are at risk for soil-transmitted helminths, 125 million people are at risk for lymphatic filariasis and approximately 25,000 – 50,000 people are at risk for schistosomiasis. The number of dengue cases reported annually to the WHO ranks Indonesia as having the second largest number of cases worldwide, with all four serotypes represented. Additional NTDs are listed in the analysis.

"As Southeast Asia's largest economy, G20 leader, co-chair of the United Nation's High Level Panel on the post-2015 development agenda, and ASEAN member, Indonesia is clearly positioned to make significant advances against NTDs," said Peter Hotez, MD PhD, president of the Sabin Vaccine Institute, director of the Sabin Vaccine Institute and Texas Children's Hospital Center for Vaccine Development and dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine. "Indonesia can improve the lives of its most marginalized citizens by continuing to prioritize NTDs and ensuring that treatment and prevention programs reach all vulnerable communities."

NTDs cause anemia, malnutrition, disability, and stigma – preventing children from attending school, keeping adults from working, and increasing the consequences of other diseases – thereby contributing to decreases in human capital and worker productivity.

**More information:** *PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases* [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pntd.0002449](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0002449)

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