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MEMORANDUM OF THE HONOURABLE COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH, GOMBE STATE ON THE NEED FOR SYNERGY IN SUSTAINING CAMPAIGN FOR THE ELIMINATION OF NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES (NTDS) IN GOMBE STATE BEYOND 2020 WHO NTDS ROAD MAP.

Purpose:

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform the Council on the effort by the State Government in the area of elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) and also to seek collaboration of Federal, neighboring States; WHO, UNICEF and other development partners towards building strong strategies to reduce these NTDs to barest minimum.

Background:

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) – Is a diverse group of communicable diseases that prevail in tropical and subtropical conditions in 149 countries – affect more than one billion people and cost developing economies 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 those worst affected.

Effective control can be achieved when interventions are guided by the local epidemiology and the availability of appropriate measures to detect, prevent and control diseases. Implementation of appropriate measures with high coverage will contribute to achieving the targets of the WHO NTD roadmap on Neglected Tropical Diseases by 2020. The campaign for the elimination of some NTDs in Gombe State commences about 15years ago, and some were added in 2015 with elimination target of 2020 as stipulated in the WHO NTD roadmap.

CHALLENGES POSE BY NTD / EFFECT OF NTD:

Neglected Tropical Diseases

Neglected tropical diseases (NTD) comprise several diseases that have a range of effects, from extreme pain to permanent disability to death. Here are some examples:

Onchocerciasis (river blindness)

A parasitic worm disease spread by infected black flies, onchocerciasis can cause extreme itching, blindness, and skin lesions. It can damage the genital part of an infected person, consequently cause fertility problem. 10 out of the 11 LGAs of the State are endemic with this disease, and these black flies has the ability to fly for more than 200km as such not only the entire State is vulnerable, but including all our four neighboring States of; Yobe; Bauchi; Adamawa; Borno respectively.

Lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis)

A parasitic worm disease spread from human to human by mosquitoes, lymphatic filariasis can lead to disfiguring swelling of the legs, scrotum, and breast. 10 out of 11LGAs of the State are endemic with Lymphatic Filariasis.

Schistosomiasis:

A parasitic worm disease transmitted by fresh water snails, schistosomiasis can lead to blood in the urine, impaired growth, and malfunctioning of the kidney, liver, and spleen. All the 11 LGAs of the State are endemic with Schistosomiasis with its attending consequences.

Public health experts are concerned about schistosomes becoming resistant to the currently used drug praziquantel. If this were to occur, an alternative drug would be needed as a substitute, to fulfill this need; researchers are to be supported in conducting basic research to learn more about certain biochemical pathways that the schistosome worm requires for survival. If a drug could target these pathways and inhibit them, this would be a new and effective way to eliminate the parasite.

PRAYERS:

The council is invited to note:

(i)- The State Government is finding it hard to sustain the quarterly chemical spray around Dadin Kowa Dam and Environs, and also funding similar sprays around Balanga Dam; Gombe Abba; Nafada; Funakaye rivers and Environs so that the black flies spreading onchocerciasis would be eradicated from their breeding ground.

(ii) Government is providing free distribution of treated insecticide nets to members of the public across the State; this effort is complemented by Saving One Million Lives Programme for Results in the State.

(iii) Biannual dredging of drainages to stop them from becoming breeding areas for mosquitos and related vectors.

(iv) The State Government has prioritized improved sanitation combined with delivering preventive chemotherapy and health education to sustain reductions in prevalence of many of these diseases in the State.

Council is further invited to **approve** that:

The Federal Ministry of Health in collaboration with State Governments and relevant bodies to create avenues for research and development in order to find new approaches and simplified strategies as well as novel diagnostics, medicines, vaccines and vector control methods to enhance interventions and advance progress towards the roadmap's targets of WHO on Neglected Tropical Diseases.

Honourable Commissioner for Health, Gombe State.
JUNE, 2018
