

## Response to WHO consultation

We urge you to highlight meningitis as a priority in your 13<sup>th</sup> Programme of Work. Please build on WHO's previous success toward the elimination of epidemic meningitis by creating steps to defeat it. We need to reach the next level of a sustainable solution to meningitis to "transform our world and leave no one behind" by 2030.

Meningitis must not be left behind. In your draft programme of work you use United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) figures to set your targets for child mortality. The UN IGME's 2017 report shows that meningitis (in children 1-59 months old) plus meningitis/sepsis (in neonates) account for 9% of deaths in under-fives. This makes it the second largest infectious killer of children under five... responsible for more deaths than malaria, AIDS, measles and tetanus combined.

Deaths in 1-59 months and neonates combined:

16% - Pneumonia

9% - Meningitis (1-59 months) plus meningitis or sepsis (neonates)

8.3% - Diarrhoea

5 % - Malaria

1% - Tetanus

1% - AIDS

1% - Measles

Many pathogens can cause meningitis, and therefore a plan to defeat meningitis will also reduce other causes of death in under 5s, notably pneumonia due to the available vaccines which prevent both meningitis and pneumonia. Future initiatives to prevent neonatal meningitis and sepsis would also see a marked improvement in preterm death rates.

Meningitis has become a proportionally more important cause of death in under 5 year olds over time (for all causes of death), increasing from the 11th leading cause of death in the under 5s in 1990 and 2005, to the 10th leading cause in 2015[1]. Meningitis is a universal public health problem yet access to life-saving vaccines is not. Furthermore, proper case management is compromised by the lack of universally available point-of-care rapid diagnostic tools.

You want to make 1 billion more people safer ('Health Emergencies'), partly by building and sustaining resilient national, regional and global capacities required to keep the world safe from epidemics and other health emergencies.

You want 1 billion lives to be improved ('Health Priorities'), including reducing the rate of under-five child deaths by 30%.

This cannot be achieved without a global plan and priority for meningitis, yet meningitis is not specifically mentioned in your programme of work. As an epidemic-prone disease, meningitis deserves utmost attention given the potentially major impact on health systems, the economy and society.

We would like:

1. Meningitis and neonatal sepsis to be listed as a global priority given that these infections are the second largest infectious disease killers of under 5's globally.
2. A new global roadmap to be set out to defeat meningitis by 2030, with a focus combining prevention, early detection and appropriate response and case management. This much consider:

- Universal equitable access to vaccines;
- Innovative ways to diagnose and treat meningitis and neonatal sepsis, including development of new rapid diagnostic tests for use in the field around the world;
- Management of patients and survivors with sequelae and disabilities.

You want to step up global leadership. Now is the time to be global leaders in defeating meningitis to reduce deaths in under-fives. Particularly as the MDG target for reducing the numbers of children around the world who die before their fifth birthday was missed.

[1] Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation (2016) Global, regional, and national life expectancy, all-cause mortality, and cause-specific mortality for 249 causes of death, 1980–2015: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2015