



Noma as a Neglected Tropical Disease

For Prelims: [Neglected Tropical disease](#), **Cancrum oris**, **Gangrenous stomatitis**, **Noma**

For Mains: [Neglected Tropical Diseases](#), Impacts of NTDs, Initiatives for NTDs.

Source: [DTE](#)

Why in News?

Recently, [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) added **noma** to its list of [neglected tropical diseases \(NTDs\)](#) underscoring the urgent need to address this health challenge and allocate resources for prevention and treatment.

- Noma, also known as **cancrum oris** or **gangrenous stomatitis**, is a severe gangrenous disease affecting children aged 3-10 in poor communities.
 - Gangrene is a **dangerous and potentially fatal condition** that happens when the **blood flow to a large area of tissue is cut off**.

What is Noma?

- **About:**
 - Noma, derived from the **Greek "nomē"** meaning "to devour," manifests as **severe gangrene of the mouth and face**.
 - Evidence indicates that noma is **caused by bacteria found in the mouth**.
 - This **non contagious disease**, exploits weakened defense with a **mortality rate of around 90%** and poses a significant threat to marginalized children in extreme poverty and malnutrition.
 - **Risk factors** include poor oral hygiene, malnutrition, weakened immune systems, poverty.
- **Geographic Distribution and Historical Context:**
 - Noma is prevalent in developing countries, especially **sub-Saharan Africa**, affecting **poor children aged 3-10**.
 - Historical records show noma was reported in concentration camps during World War II and **disappeared in the Western world with economic progress, emphasizing its link to poverty**.
- **Consequences and Treatment Challenges:**
 - Survivors face severe consequences like **facial disfigurement, jaw muscle spasms, oral incontinence, and speech problems**.
 - **Early detection** is crucial, with therapy most effective in the disease's initial stages.

What are Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)?

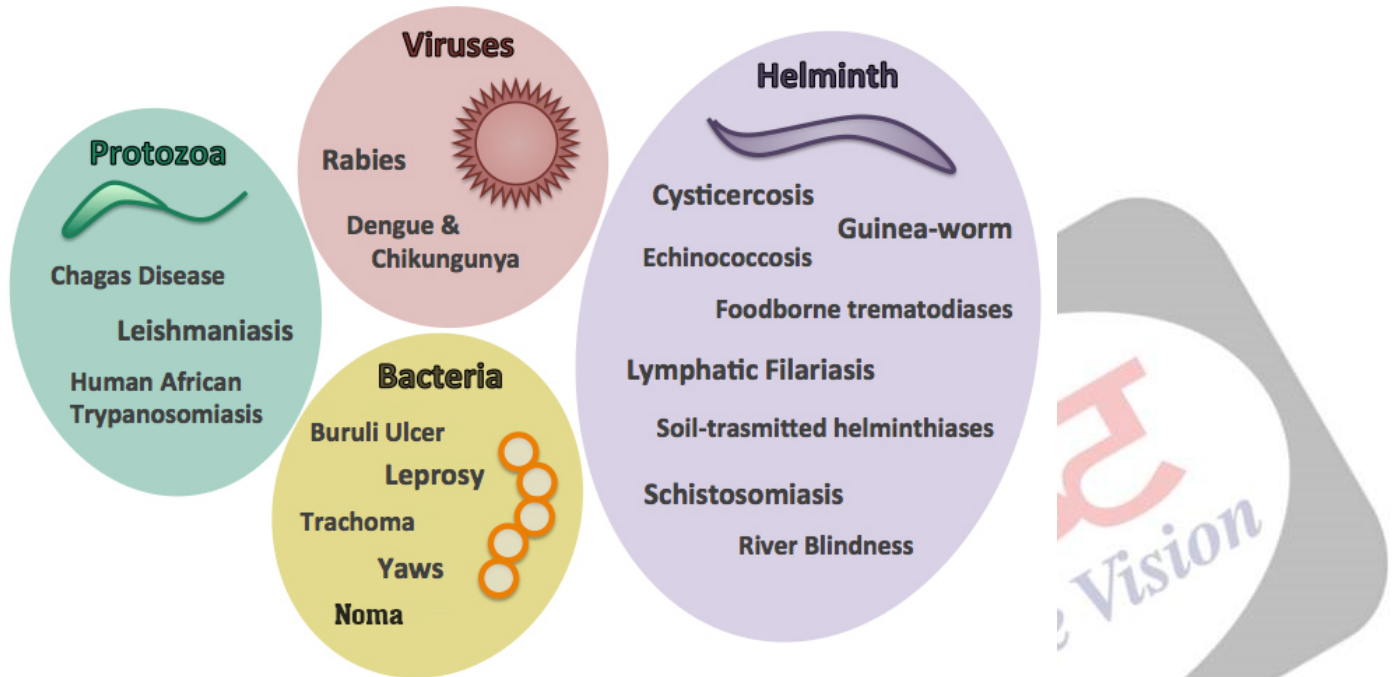
- NTDs are **communicable diseases in tropical regions**, thriving in **conditions of poverty and poor healthcare access**.
- They are caused by a variety of [pathogens](#) such as **viruses, bacteria, protozoa and parasitic**

worms.

- The term "neglected" reflects the **lack of attention and resources** despite significant impact on vulnerable communities.
- These diseases generally receive less funding for research and treatment than **malaises like tuberculosis, HIV-AIDS and malaria.**
 - Examples of NTDs are: [snakebite envenomation](#), scabies, yaws, trachoma, [Leishmaniasis](#) and Chagas disease etc.

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Neglected Tropical Diseases



What is the Impact of NTDs?

- **Global Scenario:**
 - NTDs **affect more than a billion people** globally. They are **preventable and treatable.**
 - There are 20 NTDs that impact over 1.7 billion people worldwide.
- **Indian Scenario:**
 - India carries the largest burden of at least 11 of these diseases, with parasitic illnesses like [kala-azar](#) and [lymphatic filariasis](#) affecting millions of people throughout the country – often the poorest and most vulnerable.
 - India is **at the cusp of eliminating Kala-Azar**, with 99% Kala-Azar endemic blocks having achieved the elimination target.

What are the Initiatives for NTDs?

- **Global Initiatives:**
 - **WHO's New Roadmap for 2021-2030:**
 - It is WHO's blueprint to drive global efforts in the fight against NTDs in the context of the United Nations [Sustainable Development Goals.](#)
 - The Blueprint recommends measuring impact and to promote disease-specific planning and programming
 - **London Declaration on NTDs:** It was adopted on 30th January, 2012 to recognise the global burden of NTDs.
- **Indian Initiatives:**
 - **The Accelerated Plan for Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (APELF)** was launched in 2018, as part of intensifying efforts towards the elimination of NTDs.

- A WHO-supported **regional alliance** established by the governments **of India, Bangladesh, and Nepal** in 2005 to expedite early diagnosis and treatment of the most vulnerable populations and improve disease surveillance and control of sandfly populations (Kala-azar).
 - India has already **eliminated several other NTDs**, including guinea worm, trachoma, and yaws.
- **Preventive methods like Mass Drug Administration (MDA)** rounds are periodically deployed in endemic areas during which anti-filarial medicines are provided free-of-cost to at-risk communities.
- **Vector-control measures** like Indoor Residual Spraying rounds are undertaken in endemic areas to prevent sandfly breeding.
- State and central governments have also introduced **wage compensation schemes for those suffering from Kala-Azar** and its sequela (a condition which is the consequence of a previous disease or injury) known as Post-Kala Azar Dermal Leishmaniasis.

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