

PRESS RELEASE

Worldwide funding for neglected disease R&D stagnates after years of growth

The new G-FINDER report reveals that R&D investments for neglected diseases have slowed to a standstill after a period of record growth, despite billions of people still suffering from or at risk of these illnesses.

Sydney, Australia, 31 January 2023 – For the third consecutive year, research and development (R&D) investments for the world's most neglected diseases have stalled, with US\$4.1 billion being spent in 2021, a slight drop (-1.1%) from 2020 funding. These are the latest findings from the fifteenth edition of the [G-FINDER Neglected Disease Report](#), published by [Policy Cures Research](#), a global health research and policy organisation. As in previous years, R&D for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria received the majority of this funding, attracting over two-thirds of reported investments.

In a tumultuous global context, rocked by an ongoing pandemic, this flat headline figure masks important shifts in the R&D investment landscape for diseases affecting the world's poorest populations. Notably, R&D funding for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) continued its downward trend, neglected disease funders decreased their funding to product development partnerships (PDPs), and the United Kingdom, a world-leading public funder, drastically cut its investments.

After years of stagnation, funding for WHO Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) fell by more than 10%

Funding for WHO NTDs included within the [G-FINDER scope](#) decreased by 10% in 2021. These diseases that threaten over one billion people in impoverished communities and disproportionately impact women and children received only \$323 million in investments. This is the lowest total since 2009 and marks two years of decline from a funding peak in 2019, despite many of the targets set in the WHO roadmap on neglected tropical diseases (2012-2020) not being metⁱ. Some diseases have experienced even more severe reductions in funding: Buruli ulcer investments have fallen, on average, by more than 15% each year since 2009.

There is a stark disparity between the scale of unmet needs for NTDs and how much R&D funding they receive. Over the fifteen years of the G-FINDER survey, the median annual contribution to each product area — basic research, drugs, vaccines, biologics, diagnostics, microbicides and vector control products — for any individual NTD is less than \$0.8m, arguably far too little to achieve meaningful progress. Furthermore, much of this funding is dependent on the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), which have provided more than one third of all global NTD funding since 2007.

Dr Nick Chapman, CEO of Policy Cures Research said: “It is concerning to see R&D funding for the world's most neglected diseases going backwards, after the already grim scenario of a decade of essentially zero growth. It is critical that the R&D funder community renews its

commitment to NTDs and carefully considers the role and value of equity and eradication in its investment decisions.”

Funding from the United Kingdom government fell by more than 50%

The neglected disease R&D landscape is highly concentrated, making it particularly vulnerable to strategic and funding changes by a small group of funders, as exemplified by the significant drop in UK public funding. In 2021, UK public funding fell by 50% (-\$114m), an unprecedented year-on-year fall from the country that was the second largest public funder of neglected disease R&D between 2016 and 2020. Its funding to the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), the biggest recipient of UK funding between 2017 and 2019, fell to just \$0.9m, down from a peak of \$52m in 2018. Despite this significant drop, the UK was the third largest public funder of neglected disease R&D in 2021, highlighting the significant divides in investment even among a small group of top funders.

Funding for Product Development Partnerships (PDPs) declined for fourth consecutive year

Neglected disease R&D funding for product development partnerships continued its downward trajectory, falling by 18% in 2021, down nearly 40% below its 2008 peak. This was driven by large donors’ steady reductions in funding over 13 years — drops of 61% from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and 51% from USAID — and further amplified in 2021 by the UK government’s significant cuts to its overseas development aid budget. While some of this funding reflects a shift in funders’ contributions from neglected diseases to emerging infectious disease R&D, it also represents an acceleration of the longstanding downward trend in funding and support to PDPs as intermediaries for neglected disease R&D.

Neglected disease R&D continues to rely heavily on a small pool of funders

The same top ten funders that provided 88% of global funding a decade ago have continued to account for at least 85% of global funding every year since. Furthermore, public funders provide the vast majority of overall investment, with the US NIH alone financing 43% of investments tracked by the G-FINDER report.

For further information, or to request a copy of the report, please contact the Policy Cures Research team at g-finder@polycuresresearch.org

- The full G-FINDER report on neglected disease is available at <https://www.polycuresresearch.org/2022-g-finder-neglected-disease>
- In addition to the report, all G-FINDER survey data, including investments in sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and emerging infectious diseases (EID) will be published on the G-FINDER data portal at <https://gfinderdata.polycuresresearch.org>

About the G-FINDER on Neglected Disease

The G-FINDER, now in its fifteenth year, is the most comprehensive report on global funding of R&D for neglected diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB, sleeping sickness and helminth infections. The annual G-FINDER report is intended to help policy makers, funders and product developers better understand the global landscape for neglected disease R&D, where funding gaps exist, and how their investments fit into the global picture. The G-FINDER survey is conducted by Policy Cures Research and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Methodology

G-FINDER funding data on R&D investments for global health is collected in a global annual survey run by Policy Cures Research. The survey engages the world's funders and developers of global health R&D and includes public, private and philanthropic organisations as well as research and intermediary groups. The survey is supplemented by an analysis of publicly available funding databases. The result is a unique repository of investment data, providing an unmatched resource for policymakers, donors, researchers, and industry to inform their decision making and deliver more impactful outcomes.

About Policy Cures Research

Policy Cures Research is an independent, not-for-profit, research and policy organization providing strategic analysis and decision-making tools for those involved in the creation of new health technologies for neglected diseases, sexual and reproductive health, and emerging infectious diseases. Its focus is on providing governments, funders, researchers and civil society organizations with the insights they need to make optimal R&D policy and funding decisions for diseases affecting the world's poorest populations.

ⁱ World Health Organization (2021 January 28) *Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals: a road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030*
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240010352>