

## **16<sup>th</sup> Annual NNN Conference 2025 – Kampala, Uganda**

The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Neglected Tropical Disease NGO Network (NNN) Conference was successfully held from 30 September to 2 October 2025 at the Speke Resort Munyonyo, Kampala, Uganda, under the theme “*Sustainable Innovations for Impact – Transforming the Fight Against NTDs.*” Hosted by the Uganda Ministry of Health in collaboration with the NNN Secretariat, the event attracted over 600 participants from more than 50 countries, including government representatives, international NGOs, research institutions and community organizations. It marked the first time Uganda hosted this global conference, signifying the nation’s growing leadership and commitment in the fight against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

The conference provided a hybrid platform for in-person and virtual participation, focusing on six major subthemes: digital and AI innovations for NTD control, community-driven solutions, One Health approaches, health system strengthening, climate change impacts and sustainable financing mechanisms. Throughout plenary sessions, technical workshops and panel discussions, delegates shared practical experiences, scientific research and innovative models aimed at accelerating progress toward NTD elimination in line with the WHO NTD Roadmap 2021–2030.

Several key sessions shaped the event’s outcomes. A Visceral Leishmaniasis (VL) Elimination Workshop highlighted ongoing regional challenges and called for improved cross-border collaboration in East Africa. The Skin NTDs Symposium, conducted with WHO’s NTD Department, emphasized integrated approaches to diagnosis and care. The Conflict and Humanitarian Emergencies Working Group addressed service delivery challenges in fragile contexts, while plenary sessions explored issues such as resource mobilization, digital data systems, and the inclusion of affected persons in policy planning. Uganda’s Minister of Health, Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng Ocero, was recognized for her leadership in advancing NTD programs nationally and regionally.

The conference concluded with several important takeaways. Participants reaffirmed the urgency of sustaining investments, integrating NTD programs into national health systems, and leveraging local innovations for lasting impact. The role of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in data collection, mapping and surveillance was widely endorsed as a key enabler for the next decade. Furthermore, the inclusion of people affected by NTDs in decision-making was formally recognized through a new NNN Statement of Commitment on community engagement and equity.

Despite significant progress, several challenges were noted. Delegates raised concerns over declining donor funding, limited operational capacity in fragile or remote settings, weak supply chains and inadequate monitoring tools. Climate variability and environmental changes were also identified as emerging threats that demand cross-sectoral coordination under a One Health framework. Addressing these challenges requires increased domestic financing, political commitment and strengthened partnerships among governments, NGOs and the private sector.

In conclusion, the NNN 2025 Conference in Uganda successfully advanced dialogue, learning and collaboration among global NTD stakeholders. It reinforced the collective resolve to build resilient, inclusive, and innovative systems for NTD elimination. The knowledge shared and commitments made in Kampala are expected to guide strategic actions and investments leading up to 2030. The conference outcomes will serve as a catalyst for renewed partnerships, sustained innovation and stronger accountability in achieving global NTD goals.