



Here's what has happened in the last year and what is coming in 2026!

Welcome to this newsletter. The first half of 2026 will be a period of strong progress for WHO's work on skin diseases and skin-related neglected tropical diseases (skin NTDs). Following the momentum generated by the adoption of the WHA Resolution on Skin Diseases (WHA78.15) in May 2025, Member States and stakeholders are focused on transforming global commitments into practical action. This includes advancing key normative products such as treatment guidelines, surveillance tools, and components of the forthcoming Global Action Plan for Skin Diseases (2026 – 2035). Across programmes, substantial efforts have strengthened digital health tools, including AI-supported applications, expanded blended learning resources, and enhanced diagnostic and laboratory capacities. These activities are complemented by the ongoing work of the Skin NTD Working Groups, whose contributions span advocacy, capacity building, psychosocial

support, One Health, epidemiology, and operational research. Their collective achievements reflect the broad engagement of Member States, partners, researchers, and affected communities, as highlighted in recent global updates and technical exchanges. As countries increasingly seek integrated, people-centred approaches to skin health, WHO and its partners remain committed to supporting national implementation, strengthening primary health-care delivery, and expanding equitable access to services. The progress outlined in this newsletter reflects growing global recognition that skin health is essential to universal health coverage and to improving the lives of millions worldwide.

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World Health Organization

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Knowledge Hub and Research



1. Advocacy & Communication Working Group

Scope and Goals of Working Group

The Skin NTDs Advocacy and Communication Working Group (WG) aims to support, amplify, and strategically coordinate advocacy and communication efforts to advance implementation of the WHO NTD Roadmap and the skin NTDs Framework.

The Working Group's goals are to develop shared advocacy priorities, identify key audiences, and promote coherent messaging to raise awareness of skin NTDs among communities, governments, and global stakeholders. It also aims to advocate for adequate resources, policy prioritisation, and the integration of skin NTDs into broader health and development agendas, while sharing best practices and aligning efforts across WHO Skin NTD Working Groups.

Activities and outputs since inception

Since inception, the WG has delivered a global advocacy and communications survey with respondents from 38 countries, highlighting the centrality of community-led approaches and the importance of government as a key advocacy audience. In March, the WG convened **"Beyond the Surface"**, a high-level advocacy workshop at the 2nd WHO Global Meeting on Skin NTDs, bringing together global advocates, lived-experience leaders, and private-sector partners to galvanize momentum and resources. The Working Group has also strengthened cross-WG coordination and laid foundations for shared learning and dissemination that will grow in 2026.

Upcoming events/ webinars/ calls for partnerships

Planned activities for 2026 include:

- Dissemination of survey findings through a publication and policy brief
- A webinar series on advocacy and communications for Skin NTDs
- Expansion and diversification of WG membership, and
- Launch of this Skin NTDs Working Groups Newsletter in 2026.

Contributions and content from all Working Groups will be actively encouraged and amplified in upcoming issues.

BEYOND THE SURFACE

The workshop was attended by prominent speakers including;

- Beatriz Miranda-Galarza, UN Special Rapporteur on the Elimination of Discrimination against Persons Affected by Leprosy and their Family Members
- Jacquelyn Kankam, Director of Brand Transformation, L'oreal-Paris and Sultan Isabelle, Chief Sustainability Officer, L'oreal Dermatological Beauty, Levallois- Perret
- Mulikat Okanlawon & Claire Jeantet (Elysium Noma Survivors Association)



2. Capacity Building Working Group

Scope and Goals of Working Group

- Advancing and promoting integrated capacity building on skin NTDs through quality blended learning and the use of digital technology
- Fostering awareness and technical and strategic collaborations within and outside the skin NTDs Network to ensure coherence and magnify impact
- Promoting research on the quality and impact of capacity building interventions to accelerate progress towards the 2030 targets

Activities and outputs since inception

- Developed a continuum of care map, with existing cross-cutting and stand-alone training initiatives and identified gaps in training material
- Publication titled "**Training Resources for Skin Neglected Tropical Diseases: Coverage, Quality, and Gaps – A Scoping Review**".

3. Diagnostics Working Group

Scope and Goals of Working Group

- Review the diagnostics landscape in Skin NTDs
- Maximize the role of diagnostics and new/repurposed drugs for the integrated diagnosis, screening programmes, treatment, and management of Skin NTDs.
- Promote the sharing of experiences between countries to help strengthen laboratory capacity
- Establish a network to develop training packages and leverage existing quality control programmes to assist endemic countries in the evaluation and implementation of diagnostic tests.



Activities and outputs since inception

- Developed a landscape analysis of diagnostics (from early stage development to implementation) for skin NTDs. The Landscaping tool was refined through repeated iterations between core group members and an additional consultation with extended members of the Working group.
- Assessed laboratory/ diagnostic training needs in SkinNTDs and identified/ developed training resources/ guidelines with harmonised case definitions



4. Discovery Research WG

Scope and Aims

This Working Group (WG) aims to provide a platform for sharing discoveries that contribute to the fundamental understanding of Neglected Tropical Diseases of the skin.

Discovery research, also described as blue sky or exploratory research, is an essential precursor to the development of improved prevention and treatment strategies, as well as disease surveillance, and is fundamentally linked to our understanding of skin health. Without discovery research, existing and future advances in drugs and diagnostics would not be possible.

The WG will discuss and review opportunities for integrating procedures, strategies, and resources across different priority pathogens in relation to discovery research, and will welcome contributions from those working on other Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases, for example when studying interactions between pathogens and models of human skin.

The WG aims to encourage the principles of Open Research among its members, including transparency in study design, research methodologies, laboratory assays, and data reporting.

The WG also aims to promote collaboration among researchers within and across continents, as well as within and between pathogen-focused research areas, and to identify appropriate funding opportunities to support such collaborations in furtherance of the WG's aims.

Currently, this WG welcomes members with relevant expertise, including expertise in models of human skin and genomics.



5. Drug Development & Access Working Group

Scope and Goals of Working Group

The Drug Development and Access Working Group provides strategic guidance to researchers, program managers, and clinicians on antimicrobial and host-directed therapies for skin Neglected Tropical Diseases. Serving as a collaborative platform, the Working Group facilitates the exchange of experiences, co-ordination of clinical care, and advancement of implementation research to enhance treatment outcomes. It also supports regulatory processes for clinical trials, oversees drug safety and adverse event monitoring, and advocates for equitable access to safe and effective treatments for all individuals affected by skin NTDs.

Activities and outputs since inception

The Working Group and its members provide oversight and technical support for planned and ongoing human studies on drug treatments for skin-related Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs). The group is currently reviewing the existing literature on treatment for all skin NTDs to identify gaps and priorities related to the management of skin NTDs and highlight new treatments that are underway.



6. Epidemiology WG

Scope and Goals of Working Group

- Contribute to improved surveillance and reporting of skin NTDs by supporting the development and refinement of standardized case definitions, data collection tools, and indicators.
- Provide support in surveillance and evaluation processes, including aspects of data management such as compilation, monitoring, interpretation, and mapping.
- Offer technical advice to inform assessments of country epidemiological situations and provide inputs into the design of epidemiological studies when requested.
- Assist in reviewing and interpreting data trends at local, national, and global levels, and help to generate evidence-based public health insights.



Activities and outputs since inception

- Facilitated cross-country learning through invited online presentations of countries with integrated surveillance system, as well as those with disease-specific skin NTD surveillance systems (Vanatu, Ghana and Cameroon).
- Gave input into the Global NTD Annual Report Form (GNARF)



7. Integration at Country Level

Scope and Goals of Working Group

The Working Group on Integration at Country Level supports countries to strengthen skin health services by embedding skin-NTD care within existing health systems, particularly at the primary health care level to advance progress towards universal health coverage. We encourage and support integrated care services at country level to improve case detection, diagnosis, treatment access, workforce capacity, and surveillance through people-centered approaches.

Our role is to connect country experiences, provide practical guidance, and create opportunities for learning to overcome common barriers. Through this work, we promote sustainable systems so that all people affected by skin NTDs and beyond can receive quality care close to home, without stigma or financial hardship, to reach skin health for all.

Activities and outputs since inception

Since its establishment, the Working Group has focused on creating platforms for cross-country exchange and operational collaboration. Together with the NNN Skin Cross-Cutting Group, they have co-hosted the Skin Symposium at the Neglected Tropical Diseases NGO Network (NNN) Meetings, bringing together national programme managers, ministries of health, NGOs, researchers, affected communities, and partners to showcase country-led models of integrated control of skin NTDs. Building on the WHA Skin Health Resolution adopted in May 2025, we also organized a global webinar on integration priorities recently in November 2025, facilitating dialogue on WHO online survey findings and country expectations. These joint efforts are aimed at strengthening country leadership and collective ownership toward real-world implementation and sustainable adoption of the resolution.

Upcoming events/ webinars/ calls for partnerships

We are planning a continued webinar series featuring country implementation examples and tools to support skin NTD integration and rollout of the WHA Resolution at national level. We warmly welcome collaboration with other Working Groups to align activities and amplify country voices.



This Working Group conducted a successful global webinar, titled "WHA Resolution on SKIN Health and the way forward" on 20th November 2025. The session brought together experts and colleagues from various countries to reflect on the implementation of the WHA Skin Health Resolution (WHA 78.15) and its potential to drive integrated, country-level action.





8. One Health WG

Scope and Goals of Working Group

- The goal of this WG is to strengthen the One Health (OH) approach in the control, elimination or eradication of skin NTDs and to support transdisciplinary last-mile collaborations to eliminate and eradicate skin NTDs.
- The scope includes reviewing the current state of One Health integration in skin NTDs and identifying and ranking related research and programmatic priorities. This WG also aims to promote One Health within skin NTD programmes by providing guidance and acts as an expert body for One Health-related requests at all levels. Activities also support capacity strengthening and policy counselling for evidence-based decision-making, while engaging in strategic advocacy and raising awareness of research priorities to funders.

Activities and outputs since inception

Ongoing three-part scoping review encompassing (i) Skin NTDs and disease ecology (ii) Skin NTDs and Socio-Economical and Psycho-Social Sciences (iii) Skin NTDs and WASH

9. Operational Research WG

Scope and Goals of Working Group

The goal of the Operational Research Working Group is to support researchers, health workers, civil society and policy makers in endemic countries to make optimal use of Operational Research to accelerate progress towards the 2030 roadmap targets.

Activities and outputs since inception

- Developed a 'think bank' of people with lived experiences to contribute across Skin NTD Working Groups.
- Consulted widely with people affected by Skin NTDs to develop principles of research collaboration with people with lived experiences. This is to be appended to the forthcoming NTD Research and Development Blueprint.
- Communicated with relevant networks (e.g. NTD Program Managers; NNN cross-cutting groups; InfoNTD) to reduce duplication and coordinate activities in a better way.

Upcoming events/ webinars/ calls for partnerships

- We look forward to partnering with a range of organisations and fora to disseminate the Principles of Research Collaboration with People with Lived Experiences once finalised.
- These Principles were included at the NNN 2025 workshop.



10. Psychosocial Aspects Working Group

Scope and Goals of Working Group

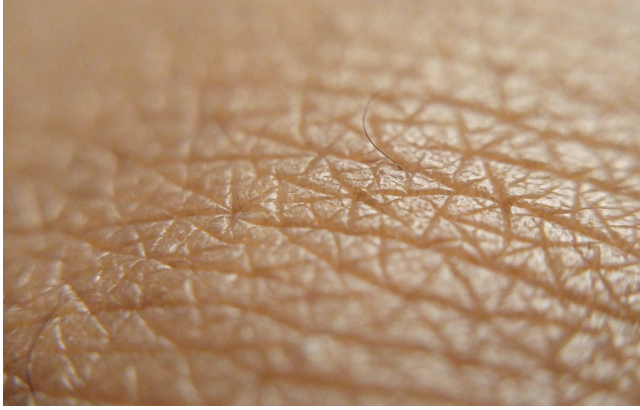
- This group operates within the framework of WHO Road Map for NTDs (2021-2030), championing person-centred approaches to health and wellbeing in the Skin NTD sector and national strategic plans. The key aims are:
- Develop appropriate guidance and tools for understanding the psychosocial issues related to skin NTDs and address them
- Provide advice to endemic countries to develop, implement and sustain comprehensive integrated activities related to psychosocial aspects
- Advocate for the psychosocial aspects relating to skin NTDs to be visible in national policy documents and activities
- Establish a network of experts to provide technical assistance to endemic countries in implementing the framework.

Activities and outputs since inception

- The key outputs of the group since inception have been to more clearly define the term “psychosocial” and its practical implementation in policy and programmes, including by holding a webinar introducing these concepts to NTD programme managers and the wider community. Excitingly, we have done publication of two key WHO documents in collaboration with a wide consortium; an overarching introduction called “Mental health of people with neglected tropical diseases – towards a people centric approach” - and an **Essential Care Package** to address Mental Health and Stigma for persons with Neglected Tropical Diseases”.
- We now plan to advocate for widespread adoption, and provide practical resources to facilitate the scaled implementation of these evidence-based guidelines.

Upcoming events/ webinars/ calls for partnerships

- Issues of mental health, stigma and wellbeing are cross-cutting, and have relevance to all the other working groups. Our Working Group is keen to support others in integrating psychosocial aspects into their work. We are, for example, already working with the One Health Working Group to explore intersections. We see the Essential Care Package as a practical document guiding countries and agencies to undertake projects/ programmes to address the neglected mental health issues experienced by persons affected by skin NTDs. The **Essential Care Package** was launched during the World NTD Day 2026 and we welcome ideas from all the skin NTD groups who can play an important role in reaching out to the intended users globally.



11. Skin Health, Wound Care and Rehabilitation WG

Scope and Goals of Working Group

- Ensure endemic countries develop integrated activities for Skin Health, Wound care and Rehabilitation.
- Monitor the progress of implementation of integrated wound services and stimulate actions to address any gaps.
- Promote sharing of experiences between countries and persons with lived experience of skin NTDs and wounds to develop competencies of staff to implement the framework
- Ensure through advocacy that skin NTDs and wound management services are visible in national policy documents
- Establish a network of wound experts to provide technical assistance to countries
- Liaise with other Working Groups to ensure coherence and synergy.

Activities and outputs since inception

This Working Group developed an [online course](#) on Wound Management in Resource-Limited Settings, which is now published on the WHO Academy platform. They also promoted an Essential Wound Dressing Kit, which has mainly occurred in tandem with promotion of the wound course in [publications](#) in Community Skin Health Journal and oral presentations by Dr. Hubert Vuagnat at various conferences. Additionally, they have conducted an informal scoping survey on wound and ulcer care services provided by primary health facilities, the results of which were presented at the 2nd WHO Global Meeting on Skin NTDs, Geneva, 2025.

The findings included (i) wound care is jeopardised by frequent lack of basic supplies, (ii) compression bandages are widely used, often without Ankle-Brachial Index (ABI) checks and (iii) health workers request more training.

Next, we completed an online teaching course on Lymphoedema Management in Resource-Restricted settings, which is undergoing technical review by the WHO Academy. We held a side event on 'Rehabilitation & Wounds/Ulcers due to skin NTDs on 24th March 2025 during the 2nd WHO Global Meeting on Skin NTDs, Geneva (see the photograph). Antony Duttine, WHO Technical Lead for Rehabilitation presented at the meeting and facilitated discussions to help develop the WG's Rehabilitation objectives further.

Currently we are collating patient rehabilitation case histories, for the Patient Testimony page of WHO Rehabilitation website. Publications are also in preparation, on the importance of rehabilitation in skin NTDs and skin diseases in general, in light of the recent WHA resolution on skin diseases as a global public health priority.

12. Transmission WG

Scope and Goals of Working Group

- The aim of the Skin NTD Transmission Working Group is to provide a scientific basis for the investigation and evaluation of possible modes of transmission of skin NTDs and potential ways of interrupting transmission in an integrated manner. This scope encompasses all activities related to the biology of the skin NTD pathogens, including protocols that are used in understanding the behavioral and environmental pathways that lead to host infection and/or transmission, utilizing a One Health approach.
- Our primary function is to discuss the progress and challenges associated with integrated research into transmission and to formulate recommendations for the broader membership, researchers, and other stakeholders.

Activities and outputs since inception

Our group has a [review article](#) published in Nature Communications. This paper, "Integrated Action for Skin NTDs: Deconstructing Transmission, Addressing Knowledge Gaps, and Championing One Health Strategies," advocates for a One Health framework to address skin NTDs. It also highlights the need for integrated approaches to manage co-endemicity with other diseases (e.g., malaria, HIV).



Upcoming events/ webinars/ calls for partnerships

We are looking forward to receiving new members who are working in the field of transmission of SkinNTDs, particularly those who undertake environmental research in Africa.

13. WASH WG

Scope and Goals of Working Group

- The Working Group aims to provide an overview of WASH-related aspects in the control, elimination, and eradication of skin Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs).
- Review existing tools and resources related to inclusive WASH and skin NTDs, and promote the integration of WASH within skin NTD programmes by guiding existing and future programmes in line with best practice.
- Relevant WASH aspects within healthcare facilities will be addressed, and support will be provided to WHO, researchers, healthcare workers, civil society, and policymakers in endemic countries by serving as an expert body for WASH-related requests on NTDs.

Activities and outputs since inception

The Working Group prepared a document that provides an overview of the role of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in relation to skin neglected tropical diseases, emphasising the relevance of WASH beyond disease control and prevention, highlighting the importance of WASH approaches that promotes social inclusion and responds to the needs of affected individuals and communities.

Upcoming events/ webinars/ calls for partnerships

Currently, this Working Group welcomes members with relevant expertise to contribute to its activities.





Team Photo from the 2nd WHO Global Meeting on Skin NTDs at WHO H.Q.

Thank you for reading!

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