

### MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-CHAIR

Dear Members and Supporters of the APPG on Malaria and NTDs,

It has been a busy few months for our All-Party Parliamentary Group – with visits to Malawi and Dundee, events on topics ranging from arboviral diseases to drug and insecticide resistance, and meetings with key partners including the World Health Organization, DNDi, and Uniting to Combat NTDs.

We have also seen some exciting announcements within the malaria and NTD communities – including the recent recommendation from the World Health Organization for a second malaria vaccine, R21, developed by scientists at Oxford University’s Jenner Institute. R21 follows the first-ever WHO-approved malaria vaccine, RTS,S, developed by British company GSK in partnership with PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative, and with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine supporting vital research and clinical trials.

When implemented broadly, these vaccines are expected to have high public health impact and are – in the case of RTS,S – already making a significant difference to individual lives. In July, I was able to visit a routine immunisation programme in Malawi, and saw RTS,S being given to a five-month-old baby – an incredible moment for me to witness and an incredibly exciting step for the young child and their mother. I also met Evison Saimon, the second child in the world to receive the vaccine, and his mother, and heard about the amazing effect the vaccine has had on their lives. It is vital we now work to ensure these vaccines reach others at risk, and that their impact is maximised by continuing to develop and deliver a full suite of malaria tools and treatments.

Both vaccines demonstrate the importance of British-backed science, global collaboration, innovation, and investment in the fight against malaria. I am a passionate champion of the work of scientific research and development, and have been able to see some inspiring work in Malawi and the UK recently and meet some committed and talented scientists and researchers. In Malawi, colleagues and I visited the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine-supported Malawi Liverpool Wellcome Programme, one of the leading research institutions in any low-income country worldwide, and the cutting-edge Blantyre Blantyre Research Facility at Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, which is supported by Glasgow University. In Dundee, Wendy Chamberlain, my fellow Co-Chair, Lord Trees, and I visited the purpose-built laboratories and met researchers at the Drug Discovery Unit and Wellcome Centre for Anti-Infectives Research working on innovative drug discovery to uncover new insights into neglected infectious diseases. These institutions all work collaboratively with partners across the UK and globally, and it is always so exciting to see the way that industry and scientists from all over the world come together to find new and innovative ways to treat and eliminate disease.

There has been real progress and successes to celebrate. But we continue to face some critical challenges. New and growing concerns threaten to knock progress backwards – humanitarian crises as a result of conflicts, flooding, and famine; rising biological threats and insecticide and drug resistance; a decline in the effectiveness of core tools. We have recently seen cases of locally-acquired malaria in the United States and dengue in Europe as climate change and changes to the natural environment push mosquitos and other vectors into new habitats. The role of UK scientific research and development conducted up and down the country will be crucial to the fight. We need to continue to invest in innovation. Over the next few months, our APPG will continue to work with partners to make the case.

*Catherine West*

**Catherine West**

*MP for Hornsey and Wood Green and Co-Chair of the APPG on Malaria and NTDs*



### VISITS Malawi

In July, Co-Chair, Catherine West, Vice-Chairs James Sunderland and Tan Dhesi, and Member, Patrick Grady, visited Malawi to see the impact of malaria and NTDs, the important being work done by government, partners, and local communities to fight these diseases on the ground, and the huge role of scientific research in finding innovative ways to tackle disease and overcome threats to progress.

The delegation’s first site visit was to Mitundu Community Hospital to learn about the roll-out of the RTS,S malaria vaccine pilot programme. The delegation met with doctors, nurses, and healthcare providers at the Community Hospital, together with representatives from Malawi’s Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) and the National Malaria Control Programme (NMCP) within the Government of Malawi’s Ministry



APPG Members speak with Litines Dalali, a former trichiasis surgery patient, in Salima.  
Credit: Malumbo Simwaka / Uniting to Combat NTDs / Sightsavers



APPG Members with health workers and community members at Mtira community clinic in Balaka

of Health, and programme partners, including PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative. Members heard how the pilot programme has been rolled out, with safety concerns managed, and household surveys showing the positive impact on individual families. The delegation was able to see first-hand the critical work of a group of incredible healthcare professionals administering the routine immunisation programme, including seeing a malaria vaccine being given to a five-month-old baby. The delegation also met with Evison Saimon, the second child in the world to receive the vaccine, and his mother, to hear about the positive impact of the vaccine on their lives.

The delegation's second site visit was to Salima, on the shore of Lake Malawi, to meet some of the inspiring health workers and surgeons who had been at the forefront of the successful elimination of trachoma as a public health problem in Malawi in 2022. The delegation was also able to hear from some remarkable men and women who had received surgery for trachoma, regained their sight, regained their independence, and were able to enjoy time with their families without feeling like a burden. Their powerful testimonies showed the impact of these incredible efforts to treat and eliminate trachoma on individual lives. The delegation also heard about key lessons learned from the comprehensive approach adopted by the Ministry of Health in Malawi, managed by Sightsavers and implemented with support from several non-governmental organisation members of the International Coalition for Trachoma Control (ICTC) – including the importance of increased mapping to understand where affected communities are, the development of a national programme to coordinate and implement all components of the SAFE strategy, and ensuring the integration of trachoma interventions into the formal health system to ensure interventions can still be accessed where needed after elimination has been achieved.

The delegation's third site visit was to Balaka to learn about the indoor residual spray (IRS) campaign supported by the Ministry of Health through the NMCP, funded by the Global Fund, and implemented through World Vision Malawi. The delegation received an informative presentation at Balaka District Council on the results of the IRS campaign to date, and on the challenges to malaria control and prevention, including the impact of Cyclone Freddy on the community. The delegation then visited the district's main warehouse where IRS commodities are securely stored, before travelling to Mbera operational site to see a simulated demonstration of how structures are safely sprayed. At Mbera, the delegation was welcomed by the entire village community with singing, dancing, and presentations from Group Village Heads about the success of the IRS campaign. The delegation also

visited Mtira community clinic to see how suspected cases of malaria are managed and treated at a local level, and to meet with some of the incredible, dedicated community health workers.

The delegation's fourth site visit was to Kanolo Health Post, currently under construction in Dedza. The nearest public health facility to this area is located about 20 kilometres away – with no direct means of transport it takes a minimum of two hours to get there by foot. As a result of the distance, and the lack of immediate access to health care services, the community of Kanolo has been experiencing many deaths in those under the age of five. In some instances, pregnant mothers have had to deliver their babies on the way to the nearest health facility. Supported by the Global Fund, Kanolo is one of 55 health posts being constructed by the Government of Malawi. Once complete, the health post will include a clinic, two houses for health workers, a borehole, and a solar power supply for the facility and the houses. The delegation met with

construction workers and with representatives overseeing the design and implementation of the project to learn more about progress and the impact the post will have on the community.

The delegation's fifth site visit was to Blantyre for a packed two-day programme of presentations, meetings, and laboratory, hospital, and community visits, coordinated by the Malawi Liverpool Wellcome Programme (MLW). MLW is one of the leading research institutions in any low-income country worldwide. Built around laboratories, it provides training for the next generation of clinical researchers and supports research nurses and clinicians at the nearby Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital. It is closely linked with the community and is an integral part of the Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS), which houses the Blantyre Blantyre Research Facility, supported by the University of Glasgow. MLW's international partners include the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), the University of Liverpool, and the Wellcome Trust. These relationships provide a unique opportunity replicated in few centres in Africa to study major health issues spanning both community and hospital settings.

The delegation was able to meet with scientists and researchers working across global health, including malaria and NTDs such as rabies, schistosomiasis, and human African Trypanosomiasis, also known as sleeping sickness. The delegation also met with the senior leadership team at KUHeS, toured the state-of-the-art Blantyre Blantyre Research Facility, and visited the paediatric research ward, the adult respiratory high-dependency unit, and the newly-built oxygen plant at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital. The group also toured the construction site of the new CREATOR building which, when built, will train the next generation of researchers. Finally, the delegation visited nearby Ndriande Health Clinic to meet health workers and understand the collaborative work MLW does in and for the local community.

Delegation visits also enable Parliamentarians to meet with their counterparts in other countries. During our time in Lilongwe, the delegation was able to meet with Parliamentarians Dr Matthews Ngwale, Chair of the Health Committee, and Catherine Gotani Hara, Speaker of the National Assembly, and received a tour of Malawi's Parliament building. The delegation also met the UK's High Commissioner to Malawi, Fiona Ritchie, and members of the 50:50 Campaign Malawi to discuss their work in strengthening the participation and involvement of women in leadership and decision-making positions at the national and district level.

A detailed report of the delegation visit will be published later in the year.



## Dundee

In September, our Co-Chairs, Catherine West and Lord Trees, and Member, Wendy Chamberlain, visited Dundee University to see the important role the Drug Discovery Unit (DDU), the Wellcome Centre for Anti-Infectives Research (WCAIR), and the School of Life Sciences at Dundee University are playing in the fight against neglected infectious diseases, including malaria, tuberculosis, leishmaniasis, schistosomiasis, cryptosporidiosis, and Chagas disease.

Drug discovery for neglected diseases faces huge challenges. Existing treatments are expensive, difficult to administer, and unsafe and/or increasingly ineffective as the pathogens that underlie these conditions develop resistance. The WCAIR is developing new methods, technologies, and processes that will make drug discovery for NTDs faster and smarter, training the next generation of researchers, and informing the public about the role that science plays in fighting poverty and disease.

The DDU bridges the gap between academic scientific research and commercial drug development. Four DDU-developed compounds are currently in clinical development and nine assets are licensed to pharmaceutical companies. DDU partnerships with pharmaceutical companies bring millions of pounds in international investment to Dundee. Successes include developing a rapid diagnostic test for human African Trypanosomiasis, also known as sleeping sickness, and two drugs in clinical development to treat visceral leishmaniasis, while a compound invented in Dundee can treat malaria with a single dose and is now in advanced human trials in Africa.

The Members visited Dundee University's cutting-edge, purpose-designed laboratories and met some of the incredibly committed and talented scientists and academic staff dedicated to drug discovery and uncovering new insights into neglected infectious diseases in the hope of developing potential therapies for these devastating diseases. The Members also heard about the University's work to support R&D in low- and middle-income malaria and NTD endemic countries. Dr Linda Amoah from Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research at the University of Ghana introduced the 'Developing a Drug Discovery Hub in Ghana' project where her laboratory evaluates malaria transmission in the field and designs new transmission blocking agents. This work demonstrates the University's commitment to active, equitable partnership.

You can read more about the visit, [here](#).

## Geneva

The APPG's Co-Chair, Lord Trees, attended the World Health Organization's Global Neglected Tropical Disease Programme Partners' Meeting in Geneva to discuss successes and approaches to tackling NTDs.

You can read more about the meeting, [here](#).

## EVENTS

### APPG's AGM

The APPG held its AGM on Tuesday 16 May 2023. We were delighted to re-elect Catherine West as a Co-Chair, and to elect Lord Trees as a new Co-Chair. In addition, Taiwo Owatemi, Baroness Ritchie, and Derek Thomas were elected as new Vice-Chairs, joining re-elected existing Vice-Chairs, Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, Baroness Hayman, Pauline Latham, Bell Ribeiro-Addy, Virendra Sharma, Baroness Sugg, and James Sunderland.

Those Parliamentarians present at the meeting agreed the focus for the work of the APPG over the next year. This work includes:

- raising the profile of malaria and NTDs;
- demonstrating the impact and value of UK aid;
- supporting and promoting British-backed science, research and innovation, with a particular focus on UK regional-based malaria and NTD research institutions; and
- continuing to build close working relationships with Parliamentary Groups, forums and caucuses in endemic countries.

In addition, the APPG will consider exploring themes around:

- harnessing the strengths of researchers in endemic regions and promoting research partnerships;
- promoting coordination and collaboration between malaria and NTD programmes and existing investments to multiply the benefits of UK development – for example, in nutrition, WASH, education, disability inclusion, and maternal and child health;
- cross-cutting issues – including conflict (with a focus on Sudan), climate change, and changes to the natural environment including flooding – which impact on malaria and NTD rates, and cross-cutting themes prioritised within the International Development Strategy and Integrated Review Refresh – including women and girls, pandemic preparedness, and health system strengthening;
- a focus on high-burden countries, and last mile elimination efforts;
- raising the profile of noma and other neglected diseases; and
- building relationships with Parliamentary Groups, forums and caucuses in other donor countries.



After the formal proceedings, the Parliamentarians were joined by Nikita Sarah from The Leprosy Mission Trust India, who gave a presentation on the impact of leprosy, with a focus on India, and on The Leprosy Mission's work to create awareness and increase political, public, and social support for people affected by leprosy.

The APPG was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of our Vice-Chair, Baroness Masham of Ilton, in March. Baroness Masham was a leading disability rights campaigner, and a passionate champion and advocate for global health and for strengthening the global response to HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. Our APPG was immensely privileged to have Baroness Masham's expertise and leadership as a Vice-Chair. Our thoughts are with her family and friends.

## Female Genital Schistosomiasis

Over 50 million women and girls across sub-Saharan Africa are experiencing painful, yet preventative, sexual and reproductive health complications due to female genital schistosomiasis (FGS) – an indicator of the failure of health systems to respond to these women’s rights and needs. In March, to coincide with International Women’s Day, we co-hosted a roundtable briefing with the APPG on Population, Development and Reproductive Health and the APPG on HIV and AIDS, on FGS: Unlocking health and opportunity for women and girls in Africa through tackling a neglected health emergency.

The session highlighted the opportunity for greater gender equity and women’s health, drawing the links between NTDs, HIV and sexual and reproductive health. It followed an event our APPG held last June to launch the FGS Integration Group – an innovative coalition of organisations galvanising joint action to raise awareness of FGS with the aim of improving diagnosis, treatment, and prevention with and for women and girls.

The roundtable was chaired by APPG on HIV and AIDS Co-Chair, Baroness Barker, with contributions from Dr Pamela Sabina Mbabazi, a medical epidemiologist working on FGS and member of the World Health Organization’s NTD Team, Dr Wendy Harrison from Unlimit Health, Amaya Bustinduy and Dr Helen Kelly from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), and Robinson Karuga at LVCT Health, a Kenyan NGO leading on HIV programming, research, and advocacy.

## Drug and Insecticide Resistance

In March, to coincide with British Science Week, we co-hosted a roundtable briefing with the APPG on Global Tuberculosis, the APPG on HIV and AIDS, and Malaria No More UK on how the UK can best support the fight against drug and insecticide resistance, shining a spotlight on the impact resistance is having on communities. The roundtable was co-chaired by our Co-Chair, Catherine West, and Member, Lord Browne of Ladyton, and involved Parliamentarians and experts from across global health, civil society, scientists, researchers, and advocates. Speakers included George Jagoe from Medicines for Malaria Venture, Dr Khalid Beshir from LSHTM, Professor Angharad Davies from the Royal College of Pathologists, Laura Rosu from LSTM, Janet Ginnard from UNITAID, and Harun Tulunay, an HIV and sexual health advocate. Award-winning choreographer, Sherrie Silver, also spoke passionately about her personal experience of malaria and the disproportionate impact on young children and their access to learning.

Following the discussion, the APPG partnered with Malaria No More UK on a short report, which begins to highlight some of the key challenges and solutions to the growing problem of resistance. You can read the report, [here](#).



Panellists at the APPG’s roundtable with ISNTD on arboviral diseases

## Oxford University students

In March, Co-Chairs Lord Trees and Catherine West hosted two sessions for students on Oxford University’s International Health and Tropical Medicine MSc programme. The students gave policy briefings and held discussions on a range of global health issues, including One Health, pandemic preparedness, climate sensitive diseases, roadmaps and declarations, and disease management.

## World Malaria Day

To coincide with World Malaria Day, our Vice-Chair, Baroness Sugg, hosted a reception in Parliament together with Malaria No More UK to raise the profile of the ongoing fight against malaria and to celebrate some of the incredible work being done by British-backed scientists.



APPG Members and Speakers at the World Malaria Day Parliamentary reception with Malaria No More UK

Louise Marston, an inspiring young scientist from Target Malaria and Imperial College, spoke passionately about her important and innovative work to end malaria and how she became involved in the malaria fight. The Global Fund’s Peter Sands spoke about the growing challenges to malaria eradication, including climate change and conflict, and about the importance of continued advocacy and the commitment to accelerate progress. And Olympic medallist, malaria survivor, and passionate Malaria No More UK ambassador, Anyika Onuora, spoke about her experience of falling ill from malaria, and the importance of continued leadership and investment.

## Africa Health Summit

In April, our Co-Chairs, Lord Trees and Catherine West, co-hosted a discussion with Dr Diana Atwine, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Health in Uganda, for Parliamentarians, health officials, and health professionals in London for the UK-Africa Health Summit. The session focused on how we can work collaboratively to find solutions to tackle global health challenges, including malaria and NTDs.

## Arboviral Diseases

In June, our Co-Chairs, Lord Trees and Catherine West, co-hosted a roundtable with the International Society for Neglected Tropical Diseases (ISNTD) on The arboviral threat: a growing hazard in an uncertain world.

Arboviral diseases, such as dengue and chikungunya, are a growing concern, both in magnitude and geographic spread, with exacerbating factors including climate change, migration, and urbanisation. The session explored the growing threat to public health, and the responses and collaborations urgently needed in those regions experiencing explosive outbreaks, as well as the risks and roles for non-endemic countries. The session discussed how innovations, R&D in treatment and diagnosis, equitable access to tools, partnerships, and investment in vector control are all critical.

The roundtable included an overview from Dr Ibrahima Socé Fall, Director of the World Health Organization's Department of Control of NTDs, and presentations from Dr Dinu Guruge at the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (DND*i*), Dr Theodore Tsai from Takeda Pharmaceutical, Dr Juan Carlos Jaramillo from Valeneva, Sergio Lopes from MENTOR Initiative, and Her Excellency Mrs Saroja Sirisena, Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to the UK.

You can watch this meeting in full, [here](#).

The APPG was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Kamran Rafiq, co-founder and co-director of ISNTD, in July, just a month after this roundtable. Kamran was a passionate champion and advocate for NTD alleviation, and the health and prosperity of the most vulnerable. Our thoughts are with Kamran's family and all at ISNTD.

## MEETINGS Dr Socé Fall



Lord Trees with the WHO's Dr Socé Fall and Dr Camilla Ducker

At the end of February, our Co-Chair, Lord Trees, and Vice-Chair, Baroness Sugg, hosted Dr Ibrahima Socé Fall, Director of the World Health Organization's Department of Control of NTDs, and Dr Camilla Ducker in Parliament to discuss his plans and priorities for the WHO's Global NTD Programme, and how we can work together to tackle the interconnected challenges we face.

## DND*i*



Lord Trees with DND*i*'s Dr Luis Pizarro, Thi Hanh Cao, and Rachael Crockett

In July, our Co-Chair, Lord Trees, met with Dr Luis Pizarro, Thi Hanh Cao, and Rachael Crockett from DND*i* to discuss how the UK can support vital research and development into affordable and patient-friendly drugs for neglected patients.

## Uniting to Combat NTDs



Lord Trees with Uniting to Combat NTDs's Thoko Elphick-Pooley and Louisa Tribe

In July, our Co-Chair, Lord Trees, met with Thoko Elphick-Pooley and Louisa Tribe from Uniting to Combat NTDs to discuss the importance of UK support and investment in elimination and control of NTDs, and cross-cutting themes including climate change and pandemic preparedness.

## PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITY

In the Commons, our Vice-Chair, James Sunderland, asked a number of questions – including in Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) questions on health as a barrier to education, and on the spread of malaria beyond its predominant endemic regions, following the recent local-acquired cases in the United States of America.

In the Westminster Hall debate on water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH) and sustainable development, our Member, Patrick Grady, spoke about trachoma elimination in Malawi, highlighting the key role of facial cleanliness and hand hygiene in reducing transmission. Patrick Grady also raised malaria and NTDs in the Westminster Hall debate on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, alongside Vice-Chair, Virendra Sharma, who spoke about the economic and social impact these diseases have on individual lives. Virendra Sharma also introduced a Westminster Hall debate on the UN High-Level Meetings on Pandemic Preparedness, Universal Health Coverage, and Tuberculosis.

In the Lords, our Member, Lord Browne of Ladyton spoke in the debate on International Women's Day to argue how, globally, women and girls bear the most severe consequences of sickness and poverty, with women and girls not only more vulnerable to malaria itself, but also in their roles as the first caregivers and healthcare providers when family members fall ill. Lord Browne also paid tribute to the leading role of female scientists, community organisers, and aid workers in tackling malaria, recognising those British women in the vanguard of the malaria fight. Lord Browne also spoke in the debate on the Integrated Review Refresh raising the increasingly significant and global threat that drug resistance poses to tackling global health risks, including malaria.

Members of the APPG have also tabled a number of questions over the past few months, including our Vice-Chair, Baroness Ritchie, on the UK's malaria science sector, UK plans to eradicate malaria, and on the role of the Financial Intermediary Fund for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response in tackling new and existing diseases. To coincide with World Malaria Day, our Co-Chair, Catherine West, tabled a question on the potential contribution of the UK's malaria science sector to preventing, diagnosing, and treating malaria, and the steps the FCDO is taking to support the sector, and our Vice-Chair, James Sunderland, asked about FCDO support for the delivery of malaria vaccines and next-generation insecticide-treated nets to malaria endemic countries. Following the reception on arboviral diseases our Co-Chair, Catherine West, asked about UK funding for research into treating and preventing dengue, chikungunya, and other arboviral diseases, and Co-Chair, Lord Trees, asked about what assessment the government has made of the risk of dengue being transmitted in the UK.

## REPORTS

Following the roundtable in March on drug and insecticide resistance, the APPG partnered with Malaria No More UK on a short report, *The Race Against Resistance: what it means for affected communities in the Global South and global health security*.



The report, with a foreword from our Chair, Catherine West, begins to highlight some of the key challenges and solutions to the growing problem of resistance.

You can read the report, [here](#).

## ARTICLES

In October, following the World Health Organization's recommendation for the use of a second malaria vaccine, R21/Matrix-M (R21), to prevent malaria in children at risk of the disease, our Vice-Chair, James Sunderland, wrote in *ConservativeHome* to welcome the announcement and celebrate the role of UK scientific research and innovation in the fight against malaria.

You can read the article, [here](#).

## LETTERS

Ahead of the G7 Leaders' meeting in Hiroshima in May, our Co-Chair, Lord Trees, Vice-Chairs, Pauline Latham, James Sunderland, and Baroness Sugg, Member, Patrick Grady, and former Chair, Jeremy Lefroy, joined Parliamentarians from across 24 countries to call on G7 Leaders to invest in NTDs.

You can read the open letter, [here](#).

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### Contact details

For more information on the work of the APPG on Malaria and NTDs, please contact our Coordinator, Martha Varney, at:

✉ [secretariat@appgmalariaandntds.org.uk](mailto:secretariat@appgmalariaandntds.org.uk)

✂ @MalariaNTDAPPG

🌐 <https://appgmalariaandntds.org.uk>



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