



## Letter to the Editor

## WHO's recognition of NOMA as a neglected tropical disease and its global health implications

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Dear Editor,

The World Health Organization's (WHO) recent acknowledgement of NOMA as a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD) during the 17th annual meeting of the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Neglected Tropical Diseases (STAG-NTD) is a momentous milestone in global health [1]. This recognition raises awareness of NOMA and catalyses a call to action for collaborative efforts across political, private, and public sectors to prevent and treat this debilitating disease.

NOMA's unique status as both a disease and a social marker of extreme poverty and malnutrition makes heightened advocacy crucial, especially given its disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable populations [1]. The designation of NOMA as an NTD shows the necessity for increased research, funding, and collaborative efforts. This acknowledgement stimulates innovation in diagnostics and treatment, aligning to achieve universal health coverage. It also serves as a global call to prioritise NOMA within the spectrum of NTDs, emphasising the urgency of enhancing healthcare capacity through training, infrastructure improvements, and targeted interventions.

Moreover, this recognition elevates global awareness regarding the presence and gravity of NOMA. Shedding light on the challenges associated with NOMA encourages a global focus on prevention, treatment, and ultimate eradication. The acknowledgement acts as a catalyst for research initiatives, urging a directed allocation of intellectual and material resources to understand NOMA's pathophysiology, comprehend its epidemiological details, and formulate efficacious strategies for prevention and treatment.

The WHO's recognition is also pivotal in facilitating financial support for NOMA-related projects [2]. Such backing is indispensable for conducting studies, implementing preventative programs, and augmenting healthcare infrastructure to address the NOMA burden holistically. Categorising NOMA as an NTD shows the importance of earmarking resources to combat this overlooked disease.

This recognition strengthens the commitment to adopting multifaceted approaches to disease control for NOMA. Acknowledging NOMA within the NTD framework implies formulating and implementing a comprehensive strategy, encompassing not only medical interventions but also community engagement, educational initiatives, and the mitigation of socio-economic determinants contributing to the disease's

prevalence. This holistic approach shows the WHO's commitment to addressing NOMA within a broader socio-ecological context, recognising that the complexities of the disease require an interdisciplinary response.

The WHO's commitment to addressing NOMA is not isolated. It calls for collaborative international efforts. Nigeria's proactive role in leading this initiative sets a precedent for other nations facing similar health challenges. The inclusion of NOMA in NTDs prompts the international community to address the complex factors contributing to NOMA's prevalence, including poverty, malnutrition, and inadequate healthcare infrastructure.

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## Acknowledgement

None.

## References

- [1] World Health Organization (WHO). WHO officially recognizes noma as a neglected tropical disease (Accessed 15 December 2023).
- [2] <https://www.who.int/news/item/15-12-2023-who-officially-recognizes-noma-as-a-neglected-tropical-disease>.

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