War waged on scourge of the lesser known

Killer infections are missing link in efforts to ease poverty in the developing world, says Andrew Ward

It is one of Africa’s most feared diseases with symptoms including fever, swelling of internal organs and shock. It has killed hundreds of thousands in both infected countries and regions.

The parasitic killer is not Ebola but a parasitic disease called visceral leishmaniasis which is spread by the bite of infected sandflies. It has killed hundreds in South Sudan over recent years and there are fears the outbreak could worsen amid renewed civil war.

Similar grim stories exist across the developing world. Only rarely does one of them break into the global consciousness as Ebola has this year. While nobody questions the horror of the epidemic sweeping west Africa, the death toll – 3,500 and rising – is dwarfed by the number struck down each year by a range of less notorious infections.

Dengue fever kills an estimated 20,000 people a year, mostly children, in more than 100 endemic countries. The mosquito-borne virus is among the most deadly of 17 conditions identified by the World Health Organisation as neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). Together, they pose a public health burden comparable with better-known scourges such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Yet their disparate nature and threat outside tropical regions means they have struggled to attract international attention.

Ebola is not officially recognised as an NTD because the explosive nature of its sporadic outbreaks is different from the slow-burning but more enduring threat posed by diseases such as dengue and leishmaniasis. It has been called the “new frontier” of global health because of the need for a rapid response to outbreaks.

As Tim Evans, director of health, nutrition and population at the World Bank says: “Many of the things we’re seeing with Ebola — lack of drugs, lack of vaccines, lack of diagnostics, lack of basic healthcare and sanitation — are the same issues that surround many NTDs.”

Former US president takes on the parasites

Jimmy Carter’s foundation is close to eradicating a deadly disease

When you’re healthy and strong, you can grow up to do anything.
Ebolathrivesinresourcepoorcountries evenalongsidehighincomecountries

**Outbreak points to need for behavioural change**

- **These are the countries with the worst health and development indicators**
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**Contributors**

**Andrew Warde**

Financial Times 

**Andrew Jack**

Financial Times

**Andrew Bardsley**

North American correspondent

**Bill Gates**

London

**Sara Fishbein**

Financial Times

**Nigel Bird**

FT Health

**Andy Jones**

Financial Times

**Peter Chapanis**

Commissioning editor

**Meirion Moloney**

FT Health

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**Sanofi squares circles of philanthropy and a profit**

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Becoming UN president from 1997 to 2006, Mr Annan has fought to bring global health issues to the world stage, an achievement of Jimmy Carter’s that had faded from view. For 30 years after his “long holiday” in 1986, the disease affected millions. By 1996, the number had fallen to 350,000. Since then, it has been reduced to fewer than 40,000. \[Image 368x752 to 769x1134\]

But a key command centre of this war on neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) is now being set up by the Carter Center in Atlanta. Mr Carter, who turned 96 this month, could yet become a new kind of statesman. In the 1980s, he had already started launching a project, which was concluded in 2012, to control dracunculiasis. The only known treatment has been a single dose of oral saline solution. \[Image 635x48 to 893x265\]

With the Carter Center, the world has a new champion in the fight against NTDs. The center has already achieved a lot. It has helped launched a number of new drugs and treatments. It has trained thousands of volunteers to provide grassroots support. It has supported national control programmes. It has strengthened healthcare infrastructure. It has helped develop new tools and diagnostics. It has helped countries to expand their work in NTDs and other global health issues.

According to the Carter Center’s chief executive officer, Mr Donnelly, “The Carter Center has been a great partner in the fight against NTDs. The center has played a key role in helping to develop new tools and diagnostics.”

In addition to technical hurdles, the Carter Center also faces political and financial challenges. Without strong political support and financial resources, it is difficult to achieve the goals of the Carter Center. The center relies not only on treatment and care facilities, but also on an integrated approach to strengthening healthcare systems. This approach includes not only strengthening healthcare systems, but also engaging local communities and other stakeholders. This integrated approach involves not only strengthening healthcare systems, but also engaging local communities and other stakeholders.

The power of education and communication in the control of NTDs is often not fully appreciated. Effective interventions are needed to control the spread of many infections, including the Ebola virus. The power of education and communication in the control of NTDs is often not fully appreciated. Effective interventions are needed to control the spread of many infections, including the Ebola virus.

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For those with sleeping sickness – a tropical disease that affects hundreds of thousands of people each year in Africa and Asia – the Carter Center is a beacon of hope. The center has been working to develop new tools and diagnostics to help people with sleeping sickness. The center has been working to develop new tools and diagnostics to help people with sleeping sickness. The center has been working to develop new tools and diagnostics to help people with sleeping sickness. The center has been working to develop new tools and diagnostics to help people with sleeping sickness. The center has been working to develop new tools and diagnostics to help people with sleeping sickness.

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Snake bite anti-venom remains crude and expensive

**Research** Fear and stigma is hampering progress on treatment for a killer condition. By Andrew Jack

Some diseases are devastating because of their impact, some because of their outcome. Blinding trachoma in both eyes, for example, is associated with a 10% mortality rate. Helminths – parasites from a large family of worms that feed on human faeces, the eggs of which make their way to the nose and mouth of the host’s gut, can cause blindness for life in its most advanced stage of the disease.

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