

Perspectives on Newborn Screening in Africa

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Definition

- Newborn screening (NBS) is the process of systematically testing newborns just after birth for certain treatable diseases.
- Ideally, this practice is part of a larger NBS programme that also includes confirmatory diagnostic, immediate care, treatment and follow-up.

Why NBS for RDs

- RDs are often severe, chronic, and with a degenerative evolution.
- Signs and symptoms do not appear in the first days or months following the birth.
- Some RDs fully qualify for inclusion in NBS programmes where early intervention can prevent or minimize the onset of the disease symptoms, improve individual health outcome together with family and social response.
- Prevent late or incorrect diagnosis, minimize health expenditures and unadapted family behavior.

Africa Health Strategy 2016-2030 an opportunity for NBS

In adopting the AHS 2016-2030, the AU, its Member States and key stakeholders (RECs, CSOs and international development partners) will be guided by the following principles:

- Health is a human right
- Health is a developmental input and result requiring multi-sectoral responses
- Equity is important in accessing health services and the determinants of health
- Effectiveness and efficiency are key in maximizing benefits from available resources
- Evidence is the basis for sound public health policy and practice
- Respect for cultural diversity is important to overcome access barriers to health
- Prevention is the most cost-effective way to reduce the burden of disease
- Health is a productive sector; investing in health brings positive economic returns
- Diseases and disasters do not stop at borders; cross border cooperation in disaster management and disease control is required.

Africa Health Strategy 2016-2030 an opportunity for NBS

- **Vision and Mission:**

The vision for AHS 2016-2030 is an integrated and prosperous Africa free of its heavy burden of disease, disability and premature death.

The mission is to build an effective, African-driven response to reduce the burden of disease through strengthened health systems, scaled-up health interventions, inter-sectoral action and empowered communities.

- **Goal:**

To contribute to the achievement of “Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want” goal for universal **access to quality health care and services by 2063** and the SDG Goal 3 of ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages in Africa. This goal will be pursued with a particular focus on the most vulnerable members of society such as the rural and urban poor, women, adolescents, children, elderly persons, migrants (including refugees and internally displaced persons) and people living with stigmatizing health conditions (including disability, HIV, TB, injecting drug use, mental conditions and others).

NBS in Africa

- Very limited in Africa or non existent
 - South Africa
 - Egypt for RDs such as congenital hypothyroidism (CH) and recently phenylketonuria (PKU)

Feasibility and Implementation of NBS in Africa

- One of the basic requisites for a NBS programme is the availability of the epidemiological data regarding disease burden
- It may not be viable economically and ethically to screen for a complete range of disorders for which diagnostic modalities are available.
- Use specific criteria outlined by Wilson and Jungner
- Prioritize diseases according to the incidence
- Public private partnership is required to offer the program to run as a low cost model

Conclusion

- Advocacy, Advocacy, Advocacy
- Education
- Collaborative efforts of stakeholders to improve the policy and practice of newborn screening
- New opportunities such as the establishment of the Africa Centres for Disease Control