

# Foreword

Increasing evidence mostly emerging over the last decade indicates that neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are widespread in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, especially among the regions' poorest people. Today among the almost 600 million people who live in LAC, close to 100 million people live on less than \$2 per day, of whom about one-half live below the World Bank poverty figure of \$1.25 day (Hotez et al. 2013).

Virtually every person living at this level of poverty is infected with one or more NTDs, led by the intestinal helminth infections—ascariasis (86 million people), trichuriasis (72 million), and hookworm infection (30 million) (Pullan et al. 2014)—and Chagas disease (7–8 million). Moreover, dengue fever has become widespread both among the poor and middle-class populations, with some estimates indicating that there are more than 50 million incident cases (Bhatt et al. 2013). Other NTDs such as lymphatic filariasis (LF), leishmaniasis, and schistosomiasis are still common in some focal areas of the LAC region.

The consequences of such high disease burdens go beyond public health. The NTDs have been shown to reinforce and promote poverty through their long-term and debilitating features. They affect both agricultural and urban productivity and block children from growing to their full intellectual potential. The NTDs also disproportionately affected girls and women. Indigenous populations in the LAC region are especially vulnerable.

This volume, coedited by Dr. Carlos Franco-Paredes and Dr. Jose Ignacio Santos-Preciado, attempts to do a “deep dive” on the problems of NTDs in the LAC region. He has pulled together experts on all of the major NTDs highlighted above, as well as those we often do not hear about frequently, such as bartonellosis, cysticercosis, and fascioliasis. The volume will also provide useful updates on efforts to control or even eliminate some key NTDs in the Western Hemisphere, such as leprosy, LF, onchocerciasis, and vivax malaria. Some of these efforts are

being conducted under the auspices of achieving 2012 London Declaration for NTDs targets and a 2013 World Health Assembly resolution for the NTDs.

There is much written here about some of the major forces that currently promote the emergence or reemergence of key NTDs, including physical and environmental factors such as deforestation, as well as social forces of poverty, conflict, urbanization, and human migrations.

This volume is a great opportunity for readers to obtain an in-depth overview of the problems of NTDs in the LAC region. I congratulate Dr. Franco-Paredes and his colleagues for their efforts!

Peter J. Hotez  
Sabin Vaccine Institute and Texas Children's  
Hospital Center for Vaccine Development,  
National School of Tropical Medicine,  
Baylor College of Medicine,  
Houston, USA

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