

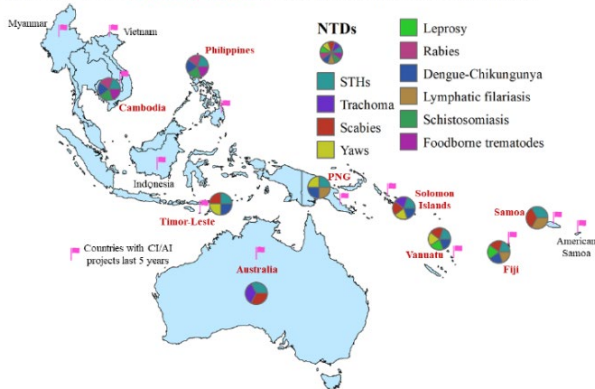
ENGAGE NEWSLETTER

No. 1 (December 2025)

WELCOME!

Welcome to the first edition of the ENGAGE Newsletter! It's been a productive first year across both the Asia-Pacific and Indigenous Australia components, and we're pleased to share a snapshot of what's been happening across the network.

NTDs endemic in our 9 priority countries in South East Asia, Pacific and Australia*



First Face-to-Face Meeting (Sept 2025)

In September, we held our first face-to-face meeting at the Monash College City Campus in Melbourne, bringing together 44 collaborators from 16 partner institutions across Australia and the region.



It was a fantastic opportunity to connect in person, share ideas, and strengthen collaborations. The first part of the meeting was dedicated to presenting, refining and selecting collaborative proposals for the initial two years of ENGAGE. Day 2 featured a scientific session with seven presentations showcasing recent findings in NTD research, followed by a strategic discussion on what the shifting global health funding landscape means for future NTD research.

ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Round 1 Proposals Selected!

Following a collaborative process, four projects were selected for funding in 2026-2027. A big thank you to everyone who submitted a proposal for your time and effort. A second call for proposals is planned (date TBC).

Selected projects for 2026-2027:

1. Geospatial Mapping of Neglected Tropical Diseases in South-east Asia

Co-leads: Beth Gilmour (The Kids Research Institute/Curtin University); Haileab Wolde

(The Kids Research Institute/Curtin University); Fasil Shiferaw (QIMR Berghofer)

2. Spatial epidemiology for action: dengue, chikungunya and lymphatic filariasis in the Pacific

Co-leads: Eloise Skinner (UQ); Adam Bartlett (Kirby Institute); Anaseini Ratu (Monash University); Adam Craig (UQ); Luzia Freitas (Oxford University)

3. Validating, Strengthening, and Enhancing the Utility of Multiplex Bead Assays for Surveillance of Neglected Tropical Diseases

Co-leads: Harriet Lawford (UQ); Fiona Angrisano (Burnet Institute); Mohamad Assoum (Kirby Institute); Maria Ome-Kaius (PNGIMR)

4. Harnessing a novel genetic epidemiology platform for the control of zoonotic soil-transmitted helminths in the Asia Pacific

Co-leads: Patsy Zendejas (UniMelb); Elma Nate (PNGIMR); Sze Fui Hii (UniMelb); Lucas Huggins (UniMelb); Adam Bartlett (Kirby Institute)

INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA

Several ENGAGE CIs and AIs with existing collaborations in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities have been working closely with **Dr Dawn Casey**, **Dr Megan Campbell** and **Ms Claire O'Neill** at the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) to shape the Indigenous Australia component of ENGAGE.



NACCHO Members' Conference (Dec 2025)

ENGAGE Investigator **Dr Rachel Burgess** (The Kids Research Institute) chaired a 90-minute session at the NACCHO Members' Conference in Sydney titled *Stopping the neglect: Partnership approaches to tackling neglected tropical diseases*.



Ms Claire O'Neill opened with an overview of NTDs and environmental determinants of health, followed by three presentations:

- ❖ **Ending the neglect: setting a platform for strongyloidiasis elimination in North East Arnhem Land**

Mr Steve Rossingh, Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation & **Dr Suzy Ossipow**, QIMR Berghofer

- ❖ **Reaching trachoma elimination – but what's next?**

Mr Sinon Cooney, Katherine West Health Board Aboriginal Corporation & **Ms Alison Jaworski**, Kirby Institute

- ❖ **Moxi Yarns: a community consultation about moxidectin for scabies and head lice**

Ms Maxine Gore, **Ms Lola Chulung**, **Ms Eve Stowers**, Ord Valley Aboriginal Health Service & **Dr Rachel Burgess**

Prof John Kaldor (Kirby Institute) wrapped up the session with reflections on how research can help, followed by a discussion highlighting the close links between NTDs and environmental health.



NTD Resources Development

Discussions are underway on the co-development and updating of community- and clinician-facing resources for scabies, strongyloidiasis and trachoma, supporting culturally informed prevention, diagnosis and management.

NTD Forum (2026)

We're gearing up for an NTD Forum in close partnership with NACCHO to strengthen collaboration and knowledge exchange with Aboriginal community controlled health organisations (ACCHOs) on NTDs that disproportionately affect remote Australian communities. The forum is likely to take place in mid-2026, with the location to be confirmed (likely Darwin).



EMCRC CORNER

We're introducing our **Early-Mid Career Researcher Council (EMCRC)** – a leadership group invited to provide guidance on how ENGAGE can best support EMCRCs across the network. The team is currently developing the Terms of Reference and preparing a review of the round 1 proposal application process. We'll also hear from them about plans for online seminars and new funding opportunities for EMCRCs.

EMCRC Representatives

Dr Mohamad Assoum (Kirby Institute)

Dr Stephanie Enkel (The Kids Research Institute)

Mr Haileab Wolde (Curtin University)

Dr Patsy Zendejas (UniMelb)



A BIG THANK YOU!

A huge thank you to everyone across the ENGAGE network for your contributions this year – from working on proposals and joining meetings to quietly keeping things moving in the background. We're very much looking forward to building on this momentum in 2026. If you have a story, photo or update for the next newsletter, please feel free to send it through. Wishing you all a happy, restful, and well-deserved holiday season!



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Funded through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) under a Centres of Research Excellence (CRE) scheme, ENGAGE is a multi-institutional research consortium dedicated to advancing the control and elimination of NTDs in Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region.