

## Intensifying Integrated Efforts for Control of Soil-Transmitted Helminthiasis in the Region of the Americas: Working Together for a Common Goal

Bogotá, Colombia 16 and 17 May 2013

### **BACKGROUND**

In the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region at least 180 million people live below the poverty line. These impoverished and marginalized populations are often heavily burdened with neglected infectious diseases (NIDs) and other poverty related infectious diseases. This group of diseases continues to take a measurable toll, not only on families and communities, but on the socioeconomic development of nations.

The 3 common types of Soil-Transmitted Helminthiasis - STH (*Ascaris lumbricoides*, *Trichuris trichiura*, and the human hookworms *Ancylostoma duodenale* and *Necator americanus*) are considered to be present in all the LAC Region's countries, with prevalence varying. In 2010, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) prepared a report analyzing progress in control and elimination of five NIDs amenable to preventive chemotherapy (lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, trachoma, schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminthiasis), identifying that if actions were focused on 18 countries; 94% (12,088,816) of Pre-school Age Children (PSAC) and 93.5% (29,927,933) of School Age Children (SAC) population at risk for STH in LAC could be reached with deworming activities (PAHO 2010). In 2012, PAHO updated these estimates based on the methodology described by the World Health Organization (WHO), concluding that 13.8 million PSAC and 35 million SAC are at risk of STH infections in the Region, according to the most updated data of access to basic sanitation and safe water.

Epidemiological information on STH is sparse, as these infections are not reportable; however, in PAHO's review of published prevalence rates, some surveys have indicated prevalence higher than 50% in some groups of SAC and indigenous populations. In addition, these results demonstrated that although intensity of infection is infrequently reported, it has been high enough to be associated with adverse health effects like anemia and physical and cognitive development impairment. Thus, and according to WHO recommendations, the Region's high-risk countries are being encouraged and supported to scale-up STH deworming efforts to reach all vulnerable populations.

As stated in PAHO's Resolution CD49R.19, PAHO member states must achieve a deworming coverage of at least 75% of SAC at risk in LAC by 2015 to contribute to achieve the goal of controlling STH. A handful of countries have established national deworming programs, principally for SAC, while in other countries; various international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) contribute to deworming efforts through their community-targeted interventions. In some cases, NGOs coordinate with Ministries of Health (MoH) or other government institutions, but there are also many NGOs who operate as standalone agencies and their efforts often go unreported, and thus national reports of deworming coverage can be underestimated. As well, in some countries, other UN agencies like UNICEF and WFP support

deworming but may not be coordinating well locally on deworming with health authorities or other UN Organization (UNO) agencies in the country.

The lack of information resulting from underreporting of STH deworming activities not only affects monitoring and evaluation of coverage, but can also result in programmatic inefficiencies. For example, more than one NGO can be carrying out deworming activities in one area, therefore duplicating efforts; in other cases, an NGO could have the infrastructure and logistics available to conduct deworming, but due to the lack of guidance or communication with MoHs or Ministries of Education (MoEs), they are not able to procure the deworming drugs or conduct deworming in the most effective manner to benefit more people at risk in less time. Likewise, it is also important to conduct advocacy and emphasize the importance of MoHs in taking leadership roles in coordinating efforts with existing NGOs as to create and foster a mutually beneficial partnership between these actors. NGOs can coordinate efforts with MoHs and PAHO, to procure deworming tablets and obtain necessary technical guidance on the most effective ways to prevent and control STH. MoHs can take advantage of the existing NGOs' infrastructure to deliver health services to isolated populations and piggy-back integrated NID interventions that have little marginal costs, and maximize existing resources. If MoHs and NGOs coordinate and unite efforts, they could achieve greater health coverage, avoid duplicate efforts, and reduce costs for all parties involved.

In order to achieve a better coordination among NGOs, faith based organizations (FBOs), UNO and national authorities; PAHO, Children Without Worms (CWW), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Global Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases, a program of the Sabin Vaccine Institute, (Global Network), are proposing to carry out a "Joint Regional Deworming Technical Cooperation Meeting" among these inter-sectorial actors. This meeting will seek to include the participation of NGOs and FBOs from LAC, representatives from the MoH and PAHO focal point from each country invited as well as the participation of TFGH, CDC, USAID, UNICEF, WFP, GNNTD, IDB and key drug donors supporting LAC.

The meeting will create a forum for establishing dialogue and consensus between NGOs carrying out deworming in LAC and the corresponding national health authorities in the respective countries and donors, to coordinate STH deworming efforts, scale-up coverage, implement monitoring and evaluation and other integrated efforts to reach the regional goals stated in the Resolution aforementioned.

### **GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

The aim of the meeting is to intensify integrated efforts to control of Soil-Transmitted Helminthiasis infections in the Region of the Americas as part of the goals for control and elimination of Neglected Infectious Diseases established by countries in the PAHO Directing Council Resolution CD49.R19 in 2009, WHO roadmap on NTDs and the London Declaration of 2012.

### **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE**

To promote coordination and cohesion between partners and governments to increase joint collaborative work control of Soil-transmitted Helminthiasis focused on: 1) increase deworming coverage through integration into other programs and platforms, and avoiding duplication of efforts, 2) improve accuracy, completeness and timeliness on data collection and data report, and 3) complement efforts in the framework of the determinants of health and WASH.

**DATE AND VENUE**

16 and 17 May 2013, Bogotá, Colombia, Cosmos 100 Hotel, <http://www.cosmos100.com/>

Address: Calle 100 # 21A – 41, Bogotá, Colombia

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**EXPECTED RESULT**

Meeting report containing a consensus on conclusions, recommendations and agreements on next steps for linking and coordinating deworming programs among NGO/FBO, national authorities and partners.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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Visit [www.neglecteddiseases.net](http://www.neglecteddiseases.net)

**VISA INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS**

For visa information and requirements please visit

<http://www.cancilleria.gov.co/en/services/colombia/visas>

*Please note that each participant should review and complete by himself/herself all visa requirements according to regulations of the Government of Colombia applicable to the participant's own country. PAHO is not able to assist with this process.*

**INTERPRETATION**

English Interpreter services will be provided throughout the meeting.