

# **A conversation with Fiona Fleming and Daniel Gastfriend, April 2, 2015**

## **Participants**

- Fiona Fleming – Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, Schistosomiasis Control Initiative
- Daniel Gastfriend – Associate, IDinsight
- Natalie Crispin – Senior Research Analyst, GiveWell
- Tyler Heishman – Research Analyst, GiveWell

**Note:** These notes were compiled by GiveWell and give an overview of the major points made by Dr. Fleming and Mr. Gastfriend.

## **Summary**

GiveWell spoke with Fiona Fleming of the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (SCI) and Daniel Gastfriend of IDinsight to gather updated information on SCI's projects and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) methods. Conversation topics included SCI's upcoming mass drug administrations (MDAs), IDinsight's upcoming monitoring activities, and SCI's review by the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

## **MDA project in Ethiopia (Fall 2015)**

### **Description and timeline**

SCI will coordinate an MDA in Ethiopia in the fall of 2015. The Federal Ministry of Health will implement the program. Deworm the World Initiative (Deworm the World) a program run by Evidence Action, will also participate. The precise details of Deworm the World's and SCI's respective roles are still being determined, but SCI will lead the program's monitoring and evaluation with the Ethiopian Public Health Institute.

The baseline survey will take place in September, and the MDA is scheduled for October. A subsequent coverage survey will occur in December and/or January.

### **Coverage survey methodology**

As Ethiopia is larger than most of the countries in which SCI operates, SCI is in the process of assessing what type of coverage survey methodology is most appropriate. It has consulted with the Task Force for Global Health, which is currently trialing a number of coverage survey designs.

SCI will likely employ cluster sampling to create a national sample; this will be the same as or similar to the approach they have used in the past. Obtaining the required amount of detail using this method at a district level would not be cost effective.

## **MDA project in Mozambique (Fall 2015)**

## **Description and timeline**

SCI will coordinate an MDA in Mozambique in fall 2015. The MDA will be implemented in November 2015 in collaboration with the Centre for Neglected Tropical Diseases (CNTD). It will be a triple drug administration targeting 3 neglected tropical diseases (NTDs): schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminthiasis and lymphatic filariasis.

## **Coverage survey methodology**

The coverage survey will likely be carried out using lot quality assurance sampling (LQAS). The LQAS survey will not indicate precise district coverage levels but will determine whether a district meets the threshold of a 75% coverage level. Using that data, precise provincial coverage levels can be determined for enrolled and non-enrolled children. *(Editor's note: after this conversation, the survey was carried out in July and August 2015 to assess the June 2015 mass drug administration for schistosomiasis and STH.)*

CNTD proposed this approach for SCI and CNTD's Spring 2015 MDA in Mozambique. SCI had planned to use its normal methodology but agreed to use CNTD's protocol as it had stakeholder support and SCI was eager to proceed with the survey. The Spring 2015 project will take place in 16 districts in 4 provinces in northern Mozambique chosen for their low performance on previous surveys. Expected to cost approximately £48,000, this project is a major expense.

## **Upcoming monitoring services provided by IDinsight**

### **Number of MDAs for IDinsight monitoring activities**

While Mr. Gastfriend is open to the idea of IDinsight providing monitoring services for both MDAs, he would prefer that IDinsight's first monitoring activity focused on one project. This would allow IDinsight to use the results to design future monitoring activities in other locations.

### **Selection of project(s) for IDinsight monitoring activities**

The Ethiopia project seems to be the most appropriate candidate for IDinsight monitoring services. Though IDinsight's transportation costs would be higher due to the country's large size, Ethiopia's stakeholder environment is less complex, and this project is more representative of SCI's work in other countries.

### **SCI's M&E learning objectives**

SCI is interested in learning about and/or improving its M&E methods in several areas.

#### *Different methodologies and data triangulation*

SCI is interested in data triangulation using different methods and learning about different coverage survey methodologies. Other actors are also assessing these methodologies, so it is important not to duplicate that work.

### *Spot checks*

SCI is interested in the possibility of monitoring its MDA process through spot checks, a technique that has been used by the Deworm the World Initiative.

### *Improving access to treatment for non-enrolled school-aged children*

SCI is researching existing platforms and piloting different methods to improve access to treatment for non-enrolled school-aged children. It would also like to investigate how school-based MDAs affect non-enrolled children's access to treatment, but this would be a significant research undertaking.

In the past, if SCI identified an area with a schistosomiasis prevalence of over 50%, it would administer treatment to all children over 4 years, regardless of school enrollment status. The majority of funding received by SCI in the past few years has been earmarked for school-based projects, so recent work has primarily been school-based rather than school and community-based. Availability of praziquantel has also limited SCI's capacity to undertake additional community-based MDAs.

SCI coverage surveys from the past 2 years have indicated that its programs do not adequately reach non-enrolled children. If a program targets all children, and only 50% of children are enrolled in school, then only 50% of the target population is reached. Focusing on school-based MDAs will not make a significant high-level impact on morbidity.

### **DFID review of SCI's work**

In 2013, DFID hired independent consultants to conduct a mid-term review of SCI's work on the DFID-funded Integrated Control of Schistosomiasis in sub-Saharan Africa (ICOSA) project. The consultants interviewed a sample of SCI staff members, and travelled to some of the ICOSA project countries to interview SCI program staff and national program managers. They also interviewed some of SCI's global partners.

The review evaluated SCI's performance, highlighted areas for improvement, and included a series of recommendations. SCI has made efforts to implement the recommendations, many of which are applicable to other SCI projects.

DFID will conduct another review of SCI's work in Ethiopia and Mozambique in September 2015. *(Editor's note: after this conversation, the plans were changed to review Tanzania instead of Mozambique.)*

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