

A conversation with Dr. Alix Zwane and Jessica Harrison on November 4th, 2014

Participants

- Dr. Alix Zwane – Executive Director, Evidence Action
- Jessica Harrison – Associate Director, Deworm the World Initiative, led by Evidence Action
- Timothy Telleen-Lawton – Research Analyst, GiveWell

Note: These notes were compiled by GiveWell and give an overview of the major points made by Dr. Zwane and Jessica Harrison.

Summary

GiveWell spoke with Dr. Zwane and Jessica Harrison for an update on Deworm the World Initiative's activities at the end of 2014. Conversation topics included National Deworming Day and Deworm the World's other recent activities and plans.

National Deworming Day

On National Deworming Day, 12 states in India selected for inclusion in the program's first phase will be required to administer deworming drugs to schoolchildren, regardless of measures of worm prevalence. National Deworming Day was originally planned for October 2014, but was delayed after Deworm the World staff alerted the government that drug supplies were insufficient. The Indian government has publically announced that National Deworming Day will be in February 2015, but it is possible that there will be further delays.

The target of the National Deworming Day is children who are 1-19 years old. In the first year, the national government is not advising states to highly prioritize deworming treatment in preschools, though some states were prepared and have already procured deworming medication.

Deworm the World's role in National Deworming Day

Deworm the World has three primary roles in National Deworming Day:

- **Agenda setting:** Deworm the World has played a large role in getting deworming on the national government's health agenda, which led to the creation of National Deworming Day. Before Deworm the World began working with the national government, deworming was officially a part of some health programs, but was inconsistently implemented outside of those states where Deworm the World provides technical assistance.
- **Developing materials and advising the national government:** Deworm the World has also developed operational guidelines for program implementation, including training materials, public awareness materials, monitoring forms, guidance for teachers and health workers, and a Frequently Asked Questions guide

about National Deworming Day, in partnership with the national government. The national government will distribute these materials to state governments for use on National Deworming Day; some materials will be adapted to state-specific contexts. Deworm the World's work plan also advised the national government on appropriate timing for workshops and trainings, and plans to conduct a training for state-level functionaries once the date of deworming is announced. Deworm the World's India Country Director Priya Jha speaks with Dr. Khera of the Child Health Division at the Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on a weekly basis about plans for National Deworming Day.

- **Direct work with state governments:** Deworm the World will work individually with the states Bihar, Rajasthan, Delhi, and Madhya Pradesh to adapt National Deworming Day guidance into those programs. Deworm the World has been working in the first three of those states for multiple rounds of deworming. Funding for working in Madhya Pradesh comes from a USAID grant, for which this will be the first round of deworming support. Deworm the World also hopes to work in Chhattisgarh with additional funds from USAID, and Odisha and Uttar Pradesh with funding from the Children's Investment Fund Foundation.

Other than developing operational guidelines and materials, and providing high-level training for key state functionaries, Deworm the World does not have the capacity to be involved in the first phase of National Deworming Day in other states in India.

Deworm the World had originally planned to create a national implementation and monitoring workshop for representatives from each Indian state prior to National Deworming Day. However, it is too late to host the workshop before the first National Deworming Day in February 2015.

Editor's note (based on updates after this conversation): Deworm the World did provide some support to Chhattisgarh and supported the national government in hosting a workshop.

Deworm the World had considered the potential for implementing prevalence surveys in northeastern Indian states, but given the quick take-up of National Deworming Day and resulting momentum from the national government, support for the rollout of the national program has taken priority.

Other recent Deworm the World activity

- **Updates to "cost per child" estimates:** Deworm the World has recently worked on refining the framework for estimating program costs, and updating estimates for cost per child served, using data from the states of Rajasthan, Bihar, and Delhi. Deworm the World is willing to share its updated estimates with GiveWell when they are complete.
- **Bihar:** Deworm the World completed the third round of deworming in Bihar in early 2014. The fourth round of deworming in Bihar will ideally take place in the

next three to four months, most likely in line with National Deworming Day. Deworm the World is advocating with the government to expand the program to include preschool-age children.

- **Jharkhand:** As agreed with USAID, the anticipated funder for this state, Deworm the World is no longer attempting to move forward with deworming in the state of Jharkhand. This decision was taken due to the difficulties encountered in generating sufficient political will for the program.
- **Rajasthan prevalence survey:** Deworm the World has completed a second prevalence survey in Rajasthan, intending to allay some of the Rajasthan's governments concerns about and improving on some of the weaknesses of the first survey.

Planned activities

Next year, Deworm the World hopes to work in Odisha and Uttar Pradesh in a similar capacity to how it has worked in other Indian states. Deworm the World has already visited both states, and it is possible that work in Odisha will begin in the next few months. Deworm the World will soon submit a technical assistance proposal to the government of Odisha. Deworm the World has not yet developed a proposal for Uttar Pradesh.

Going forward, Deworm the World plans to start working in at least two new states in India each year, using a "lighter touch" approach. This approach is intended to respond to the needs of states that have higher capacity for program implementation and will not require as intensive a level of support. Instead of setting up offices in each state and going through a comprehensive five-year program, Deworm the World plans to assess each state's needs and lend targeted technical assistance for around two years.

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