

A conversation with Grace Hollister, February 24, 2015

Participants

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Note: These notes were compiled by GiveWell and give an overview of the major points made by Grace Hollister.

Summary

GiveWell spoke with Ms. Grace Hollister of the Deworm the World Initiative to get an update on its programs. Conversation topics included its budget and recent work in India, Ethiopia, Vietnam and Nepal.

Deworm the World's budget

Overall, Deworm the World's budget has not changed significantly since GiveWell's last update on the budget in late 2014.

India

Technical assistance to state governments

Deworm the World continues to provide comprehensive technical assistance to several states in India: Bihar, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh. It is winding down its support to Delhi. To date, Deworm the World has focused on comprehensive technical assistance and support for the National Deworming Day. Deworm the World is in discussion with the state governments of Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh to provide comprehensive technical assistance. Deworm the World has previously engaged in discussions with the Government of Jharkhand about providing technical support, however there was insufficient interest from the government for continuing the engagement, and as such Deworm the World refocused energies elsewhere. After this expansion, Deworm the World does not expect that there will be many additional states that will need a comprehensive level of support.

Going forward, Deworm the World plans to also provide “light-touch” technical assistance (LTA) in additional states, where assistance would be focused on a more limited set of deworming components, based on state needs. It has not yet approached any states with proposals for LTA. However increased demand for technical assistance from state governments is being driven by the launch of National Deworming Day, and this activity is planned for later in 2015.

National Deworming Day

India held its first National Deworming Day in February. Eleven states participated. Other states are expected to participate in a second round in August. Deworm the World is helping the national and state governments develop the program. For example, Deworm the World:

- hosted a training session for all state nodal officers on the program's operational guidelines,
- helped the national government develop operational guidelines, communications material including TV and radio spots, and monitoring and reporting formats and standards, and
- is supporting the national government in making improvements based on the first round of treatment.

In addition, the government in Chhattisgarh requested assistance with monitoring of their program. Deworm the World was able to provide some support, including setting up reminder SMS messages for teachers and principals and providing coverage validation for deworming day. This opportunity was probably very beneficial and required relatively few resources.

States which did not receive technical support from Deworm the World may not have had adequate time or support for planning the February deworming round. This may have resulted in lower coverage and weaker monitoring. Some states would likely appreciate assistance from Deworm the World or another similar organization. The national government has encouraged states that want technical assistance to work with Deworm the World.

Prioritization

Deworm the World prioritizes which states to undertake outreach for technical assistance based on:

1. need for deworming, assessed through a range of factors including sanitation, socioeconomic and nutrition indicators and, where available, data on the prevalence and intensity of infections,
2. an assessment of state health system capacity, to determine which states would likely benefit most from technical assistance, and
3. momentum and political will to implement a program.

These can be difficult to assess before beginning a program, but Deworm the World uses some basic indicators to estimate each criteria. For example, based on this framework it expects that the need is large in Uttar Pradesh and smaller in Punjab and Haryana. Also, the size of a state can have a significant impact on the prioritization, given that the population in need would be greater in a large state.

Monitoring and impact survey results

The government expects to have monitoring results from the National Deworming Day in May. State governments will share their results with the national

government. Deworm the World expects the states that it assists will be willing to share their results publicly, but it is less certain if other states' results will be shared promptly. Results from a follow up prevalence survey in Bihar are also expected in May.

Ethiopia

Deworm the World is providing technical assistance in partnership with the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (SCI) to the Federal Ministry of Health. The organizations are collaborating on the entire program rather than dividing work such that SCI supports the schistosomiasis program and Deworm the World supports the soil-transmitted helminth (STH) program. Each organization contributes different expertise to the partnership. For example, Deworm the World is guiding the plans for measurement and evaluation and for training.

Staff from Deworm the World's program in Kenya traveled to Ethiopia in January 2015 to present at a national training session for schistosomiasis and STH treatment. Officials from Ethiopia may travel to Kenya in the middle of this year to observe the deworming program.

Deworm the World and SCI's initial engagement with Ethiopia is due to conclude in June. The government and its partners expect to complete a five year plan and funding proposal by May. The proposal might include funding to extend Deworm the World's work in the country.

Vietnam

Deworm the World is working with the government and Thrive Networks (previously known as the East Meets West Foundation) on an integrated deworming, hygiene education and sanitation program in Vietnam. The program is currently operating in only a small portion of the country. The goal is to demonstrate that the program is cost-effective so that the government will scale up the program and add deworming to its list of key programs that receive consistent government funding.

Deworm the World's partnership with both the government and Thrive Networks is a new working model for Deworm the World; elsewhere, it has supported government implementation or run its program independently. Deworm the World has only one staff member in the country.

Dubai Cares provides most of the program funding. All funding goes to Thrive Networks, which provides money to the government for implementation expenses. The costs of training over the full three years of the program had been underestimated, so the program budget has been revised upwards. To cover this, Deworm the World has allocated an additional \$200,000 from its unrestricted funding.

Thrive Networks has also been working in Vietnam on sanitation hardware (for example, latrine installments). Deworm the World is not involved with this work

directly, but it is advising on the program's impact evaluation. This will include a randomized controlled trial on hygiene education in combination with deworming, which will look at the impact on reinfection rates.

Nepal

Deworm the World's Country Director for India, Priya Jha, recently met with officials in Nepal. The government is very interested in starting a deworming program, and Deworm the World plans to continue to pursue the opportunity to assist the government in this work.

The government would likely need external funding for the program, which Deworm the World could help to provide.

Existing mapping data suggest that prevalence may be over 50% in many regions, but more recent mapping data may need to be collected before starting a program. Due to the mountainous terrain, there could be significant variation in prevalence in different regions.

Other countries considering deworming programs

Deworm the World has been exploring the potential for additional programs in new geographies. It has worked with consultants to scope opportunities for impact in Nigeria and has fielded requests from governments in Namibia and South Africa about its technical assistance.

Deworm the World is discussing internally which of these countries it may want to explore further, and it will prioritize based on the level of effort required, the need for support, and the availability of funding.

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