

Phone conversation between Deworm the World (Alissa Fishbane, Deputy Director) and GiveWell (Holden Karnofsky and Natalie Stone) on June 17, 2010

GiveWell: Could you take us through Deworm the World's history?

Deworm the World: We were launched in 2007 as an initiative of the Young Global Leaders of the World Economic Forum in response to the overwhelming rigorous evidence on the impact of school-based deworming. Currently over 400 million children are infected with parasitic worms, yet for less than \$0.50 a child per year, school-based deworming can improve their health and reduce absenteeism at school by 25%, making it one of the most cost-effective ways to increase school participation. Not only do these worm infections limit access to education more immediately, over the long-term children persistently infected with worms have been shown to have lower literacy and earnings.

Given the combination of high impact and low cost, from an investment point of view school-based deworming is a development best buy. However, despite this very strong evidence, only 15% of at-risk children are currently being reached. This is due to a variety of factors at the international or domestic level, including lack of awareness, policy frameworks, institutional capacity, technical assistance, funding or drugs.

Deworm the World works with governments and development partners to identify and overcome these barriers to launch, strengthen and support sustainable school-based deworming programs. We don't seek to implement programs ourselves because we don't think that's the most efficient nor sustainable way to do it; governments already have the existing infrastructure of schools, personnel and training systems in place and often just need specific support to develop and implement national programs. In 2009 we enabled programs targeting over 20 million children in 26 countries for just over \$700,000 in total operating expenses. Our investment supports governments to leverage existing resources to enable programs to be realized. Taking into account all of the resources invested in a school-based deworming program, over 200 children can be dewormed for \$100. This includes all aspects of the program, including training the teachers, purchasing and distributing the drugs, planning, monitoring and evaluation, etc.

To achieve these results, we focus on three main areas: coordination of strategic support, including drugs and technical support to specific aspects of a school-based deworming program; in-depth technical assistance to governments for all aspects of the program; and advocacy leading to policy change. In all of the countries where we work we coordinate strategic support, including drug donations and/or specific technical advice or assistance, such as using new mapping technologies to enable the development of strategically targeted, evidence-based programs or facilitating training activities for teachers and technicians. In some countries we also provide a tailored long-term, in-depth technical assistance package to launch, scale up and sustain school-based deworming programs. We guide and support governments in the development and execution of an evidence-based national implementation strategy, operational plans and budgets, training and materials, community sensitization campaigns and information and education materials, and monitoring and evaluation systems.

We are currently providing in-depth technical assistance to four programs: a national program in Kenya and three state programs in India. In Kenya, we've worked with the government to launch their first evidence-based national deworming program; the first phase was completed in 2009, covering 75% of the at-risk population. In preparation for the second phase, we finalized the surveying and mapping, and this year the program will expand to all at-risk areas. We also work with the government of Andhra Pradesh in India, which launched the first phase of its program last year and have now begun to extend the program across the state. We are also supporting the Indian state governments of Bihar and Delhi to launch large-scale, sustainable programs.

Finally, our advocacy work focuses on disseminating the strong evidence for school-based deworming and encouraging the development of policy frameworks at both country and international levels. For example, we have been working with the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI), who now advises Ministries of Education in EFA-FTI countries where worms are a problem to include school-based deworming programs in their national education plans for at-risk areas of their country. Under the EFA-FTI framework, these countries are now eligible to receive financial and technical support for school-based deworming programs. This is a significant step in overcoming barriers to the scale up this cost-effective, high impact program.

GiveWell: Do you provide drugs to the governments you advise?

Deworm the World: We don't donate drug ourselves, rather we facilitate the distribution of donations to effective programs in need. Through the Clinton Global Initiative mega-commitment on school feeding and deworming in 2008, Feed the Children is donating large quantities of drugs to country programs we recommend.

GiveWell: How do you decide which governments to work with? Do they approach you or do you approach them?

Deworm the World: We do both. In some countries like India we have helped to successfully advocate for and then launch needed programs. For the most part however, with the increasing awareness of the impact of school-based deworming on education in addition to health and nutrition, we are increasingly being approached directly by governments for assistance in taking programs forward. In these countries we first assess key criteria, specifically high-level political support and the presence of worms. From there we evaluate program needs and determine the level of strategic and technical support that is needed.

GiveWell: Do you have information on what programs were in place before Deworm the World began working in these countries and what the current status of their deworming programs are?

Deworm the World: Yes, we have this information and track current status to continually assess needs. In addition to ensuring that the programs are evidence-driven

and targeted, we also coordinate with other programs and civil society to ensure activities aren't duplicated. We have an alliance with the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative and Children Without Worms and work closely with the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, and Save the Children amongst other organizations.

GiveWell: How many staff members do you have and where are they located?

Deworm the World: A fundamental principle for our work with countries is to embed our staff within the Ministries, rather than investing in office space, to most effectively build capacity and support their teams. Additionally, our field staff is either from the area where they work or permanently live there. In Kenya, we have about 3.5 full time staff including our Regional Director for Africa. In India, we currently have 3 full time staff including our Regional Director for South Asia plus some interns. In the U.S., we have 3 staff members.

In each country we work with, we evaluate what the needs are and also work with other organizations to fill these needs. For example, often we'll work with regional technical institutes to do the disease mapping within a country, and through our work we've been able to support the capacity building of regional, sub-regional and national teams.

GiveWell: What are your plans for the next year? Are you going to work in additional countries?

Deworm the World: Our current plans include both continuing to work in the places where we already have a presence as well as expand to additional countries.

Where we already provide in-depth technical support, our goal is to build the capacity of the government to institutionalize school-based deworming. In our experience this happens over a period of years, we generally estimate 3-5 years, yet each country is different and we tailor our assistance accordingly. In some cases we enable this transition in less time.

In addition, we are currently identifying which countries we will work with next to provide in-depth technical assistance and which will require specific short-term teams on an as-needed basis. We recently started working with Nigeria and hope to soon identify funding to expand our technical assistance there. We also recently coordinated short-term assistance to The Gambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia and will continue to coordinate any additional specific support as needed in these or other countries. Our goal is to provide countries with the assistance they need, but not any more than that, to support the institutionalization of fully government-led and sustained programs.

GiveWell: What are the current programs in Nigeria and Ghana?

Deworm the World: These are two countries that have approached us for assistance. Both have high-level political support for a national school-based deworming program, and the evidence shows that worms are a problem for school-age children in specific

areas of each country. In Nigeria, which is similar to India in that many policies and programs are implemented on the state, rather than national, level, we are planning to work with specific states where worms are a problem. For example, school-based deworming will soon begin in Ogun state and we intend to support the program with a complete technical assistance package. In a few states, such as Osun, deworming is already occurring, and here we are offering our support with the monitoring and evaluation component of their program. We are currently trying raise funding to support these specific activities as well as to finish the mapping process in other states that have been identified as potentially high risk.

GiveWell: And the mapping allows you to see whether worms are a great enough problem for a deworming program to make sense?

Deworm the World: Exactly. We have two levels of mapping; the first is a predictive mapping process that uses a variety of geographic and climatic data to determine broad scale predictions on where worms are and are not likely to be found. This is then empirically validated using existing data and surveying to provide detailed prevalence maps from which treatment plans can be developed.

This mapping process is essential for a variety of reasons: it ensures that the program is optimally targeted only to areas where worms are a problem, it defines treatment regimens, and it allows for an assessment of program impact over time. It also provides a clear evidence-based tool to support the launch of programs where worms are a problem, and in some cases to stop them where they are not.

GiveWell: Do they not currently have school-based deworming programs in these areas?

Deworm the World: In many countries there is often ad hoc deworming yet what is needed is a systematic, evidence-based national plan for school-based deworming. In Nigeria, for example, some states have worms and others do not, so while the implementation will be state-level, the plan will be supported at the federal level through an overarching national policy strategy and plan. In Ghana the government previously had a national program that they are planning to re-launch this year.

GiveWell: Why do the countries go through you rather than directly to the organization that provides drug donations?

Deworm the World: We work to coordinate partner action to enable the most effective and appropriate assistance package for the countries and implementers on the ground. Drug donations are once piece of the puzzle, and we're working to address all of them. Under a Clinton Global Initiative mega-commitment, the World Food Program, Deworm the World, Feed the Children and American Institutes for Research, among other organizations, all work together and to our individual strengths to advance school-based deworming. In the case of drug donations, Feed the Children donates them while we have the expertise to recommend where they are most needed.

GiveWell: How do you judge whether you are succeeding or failing?

Deworm the World: Since we know that deworming is effective, our primary measure of success is our reach—the number of kids that are reached through our efforts. For 2009, our goal was to help deworm at least 10 million children (that otherwise would not have been), including establishing new programs to deworm 3 million children in Kenya and 1 million children in India, and we're thrilled that we surpassed this goal. Over the next couple years, our goal is to help deworm at least 30 million children, including at least 10 million where we have played a catalytic role in helping to establish new programs.

More broadly, we are doing a good job if we are moving toward putting ourselves out of business, and I mean this in two respects: first, that the governments are able to fully sustain the program, starting with the commitment to program funding and its inclusion in education sector plans and resulting in full ownership technically, financially and managerially. Second, that in the future most at-risk children will be reached through effective programs. Currently only about 15% are. We see Deworm the World as an organization that will exist for as long as it is needed, yet for no longer than that.

Building the rigorous research on the effectiveness of deworming, we focus on operationalizing and scaling up of country programs. It is important that these programs are implemented in a targeted, evidence-based and cost-effective manner. For example, all programs we work with cost less than 50 cents per child per year.

GiveWell: Are new programs being launched or run by governments due to the efforts of Deworm the World that they wouldn't otherwise have run?

Deworm the World: Yes, through our advocacy and technical assistance efforts to governments we have supported government efforts to launch a number of new programs (Kenya, Andhra Pradesh) and are currently working to scale up additional new programs (Bihar, Delhi, and Nigeria). In other countries we have coordinated technical assistance and training to strengthen and advance the programs and facilitated drug donations so that programs could continue to run that otherwise would not have been able to do so.

GiveWell: Do you audit government programs?

Deworm the World: For the countries where we provide drug donations, we are in close contact with the programs and partners on the ground to make sure that they are using the drugs as intended, and we track the size of target populations, number of children reached and quantity of drugs utilized annually. If a country is not effectively using their drugs we will cut them off from future donations. Where we have invested Deworm the World funds, for example to provide technical assistance, we do audit our support to these programs.

GiveWell: Do you produce reports on that that you would be able to share?

Deworm the World: Yes, absolutely. We are currently creating an annual report, and where we provide in-depth technical assistance we also create specific country reports, highlighting results including total number of children reached and program cost per child, at the end of every round of deworming. We also report back to donors on a regular basis as per their requests.

GiveWell: Just to be clear, we aren't looking for specific measures of success or failure. We are interested in how you measure your own progress.

Deworm the World: We define success by the sustainable coverage of the majority of the at-risk population in each program where we work, and we work toward sustainably covering a greater percentage of the global at-risk school age population. A recent example of this success is in Andhra Pradesh, where we have worked with the government to not only institutionalize deworming but also build it as the flagship component of a comprehensive school health program. Deworming is an entry point for comprehensive school health and we work with governments to build upon its foundation; for example, once a school-based deworming program is in place it is relatively simple to add on the distribution of micronutrients or other interventions.

We also view the increased awareness and demand for school-based deworming as a success to which we have helped contribute through our global advocacy efforts. School-based deworming is now seen as a significant contributor to Education For All, the Fast Track Initiative now supports the inclusion of school-based deworming in national education sector plans, and the World Food Program now has a policy to undertake deworming in all school feeding programs where children are at-risk. We've been involved in all of these changes, and as a result we've seen a great increase in demand for programs and assistance from countries.

For us, failure is where we see duplicative efforts in the field or where programs are targeting areas without a need for deworming, and we are working to continually identify and reduce these activities, which are a great failure in terms of resources. Where we do reduce them it is a success for us, and likewise as we defined success as sustainable coverage, any premature discontinuation of a program would be a great failure. We are constantly evaluating our work and communicating with countries and our partners on the ground to address these issues.

GiveWell: Do you worry about programs not being sustained over time?

Deworm the World: Sustainability is a key focus of ours and we are very driven to support governments in a manner that enables long-term, sustainable implementation. Where we provide technical assistance we also work to build capacity and transition the program a little each year, at a rate that we feel is appropriate for each country and always with long-term sustainability in mind, to enable the government to fully own all aspects of the program.

GiveWell: What would you do with more funds?

Deworm the World: We would be able to respond to the increasing demand from countries. We work with country specific programs with budgets for school-based deworming, and with additional funds we would be able to respond to more countries that request support and meet our criteria.

GiveWell: Is there anything that you guys would do differently now if you had more money?

Deworm the World: While we wouldn't do anything differently, in addition to being able to respond to the increased demand with additional funding, we would be able to overcome a common bottleneck, which is the mapping. We would very much like to identify additional funding to support this process, as it is essential to move forward with any targeted, evidence-based program.

GiveWell: Does Deworm the World conduct the mapping itself or does it pay other organizations to do it?

Deworm the World: We have technical experts on our team, and we work with cutting-edge scientists at the global level. While each country is a little different, fundamental to each mapping process is our coordination of the entire activity and capacity building of regional, sub-regional and national teams.

GiveWell: One way we could see an organization having impact is for it to essentially act as a triage organization, directing funding to wherever it is most needed. Would Deworm the World provide other types of assistance in cases where technical assistance wasn't the bottleneck to more deworming programs?

Deworm the World: We very much see ourselves as a triage organization. For each country program we assess what type of assistance is needed to launch and/or sustain an effective school-based deworming program, and we work with partners to develop and fulfill an appropriate support package based on these needs.

GiveWell: Would you buy the drugs if lack of funding for drugs that was what was needed?

Deworm the World: Yes. Right now we have a ready supply of donated drugs, but we are also working to identify additional sources of donated drugs (or funds to purchase them) as demand is not entirely met through the existing supply.

GiveWell: Could you share with us a breakdown of what Deworm the World has done in the past, what you're doing currently, and what you're planning in the future?

Deworm the World: Yes, we would be happy to share this breakdown. We can also be contacted directly at contact@dewormtheworld.org for any additional information on

our activities.