

Schistosomiasis (SCH) and STH program activity (non-GiveWell funded)

School Health Integrated Programming Project – 2016 and beyond

In 2016 Imperial College London's Partnership for Child Development (PCD) and Sightsavers teamed up to support four country governments in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Senegal to strengthen their national school health and nutrition programs. The initiative was funded by the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education.

Over one year, The School Health Integrated Programming (SHIP) project demonstrated how schools can be used as a platform to deliver health interventions using deworming and vision screening as exemplars. The approach used the two health interventions as entry points to raise awareness, capacity and engagement among governments towards comprehensive School Health and Nutrition (SHN).

Similar to worm infection, refractive error - the need for eyeglasses - also limits many children's opportunities in school, and the aim of SHIP was to create a foundation by which countries would have the awareness, capacity, and the operational and technical resources to include SHN into their Education Sector Plans.

A total of 476 teachers were trained in 158 schools, exceeding the target of 100 teachers per country. 52,425 children received deworming medication, 57,434 children received vision screening, and 1,017 were given glasses representing a refractive error prevalence of 1.7%. The numbers of children receiving vision screening and deworming exceeded the target of 40,000.

In most settings, two teachers per school were trained by an expert in the field to recognize common eye problems, such as conjunctivitis and basic vision assessment using a simplified screening kit. For deworming, teachers were trained to understand the rationale for treatment, how to give out the medicines to school-age children, monitoring for side-effects, and record keeping.

After the training, the teachers returned to their schools to conduct the screening. For vision screening, teachers screened all of the students in their schools, and optometrists travelled to the schools to further assess students in need, prescribing glasses or referring to the nearest eye unit as needed. Where possible, spectacles were provided on the spot at no cost to the student, using an innovative method by which the student could choose the frame of their choice, and the appropriate power of lens would be 'clipped' into frame. The 'ready to clip' spectacle system was provided through a private sector spectacle manufacturer, Essilor, at a price of \$2.00 per pair.

The deworming interventions were carried out in alignment with the government's national deworming programs in order to not duplicate efforts and/or create a vertical system.

Looking ahead, Sightsavers is hoping to continue to work alongside the Partnership for Child Development to deliver activities in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Senegal from September 2017 – March 2018. Sightsavers is also exploring opportunities to develop new school health integrated programming in partnership with NGOs.

"School health in general is important for the development of children and affects their ability to learn and succeed," says Claudia Costin, World Bank Senior Director for Education. "Improving the health and nutritional status of school-age children has a significant impact on the timing of their enrolment, the frequency of their attendance, and their performance in school."

UNITED project

The Sightsavers led-UNITED programme (2013 – 2017) in Northern Nigeria aims to control NTDs in five states, Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger, Kano and Katsina. Fully funded by the UK Government, the project is treating blinding trachoma, schistosomiasis, lymphatic filariasis (LF), onchocerciasis and soil transmitted helminths (hookworm, whipworm and roundworm). Sightsavers leads the program and partners include CBM, Helen Keller International and MITOSATH.

Cameroon integrated NTD programme 2016 and 2017

With funding by USAID ENVISION (through the NGO Helen Keller International), Sightsavers has supported school based mass drug administration as part of integrated NTD programs in three regions of Cameroon since 2011, South-West, North West and West. Sightsavers' integrated NTD program work is organized into four projects, South-West 1, South-West 2[1], North West and West. Our aim in Cameroon is assist the national program eliminate onchocerciasis and lymphatic filariasis as public health problems and control morbidity of schistosomiasis and STH in targeted health districts.

Sierra Leone

Sightsavers' programs operate under an integrated model where a number of diseases are supported simultaneously. In Sierra Leone, Sightsavers has worked closely with the Ministry of Health and other implementing partners to develop an integrated platform for conducting mass drug administration (MDA) for lymphatic filariasis (LF), onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis, and soil-transmitted helminthiasis. Sightsavers has contributed towards this integrated approach by supporting the training of Community Drug Distributors, developing educational materials, as well as covering some of the costs for monitoring and supervising MDA activities.

Since the national program has been able to rapidly scaled up treatments through the integrated approach, it can now consider transitioning certain diseases towards elimination goals which means MDA can be eventually stopped, while other diseases like SCH and STH will need to sustain a longer term-school based control program. Moving forward, to better serve the national program Sightsavers has shifted its funding focus in 2017 to help the national program achieve onchocerciasis elimination targets alone, while USAID funding will continue to help support other community and school-based platforms for LF, SCH, and STH.

Research

COUNTDOWN - Calling Time on NTDs – research project

COUNTDOWN is a consortium research project set in four African countries including Nigeria and Sightsavers is a collaborating partner in the Nigeria programme. The consortium is dedicated to investigating the cost-effective scale-up of sustainable solutions necessary to control and eliminate the seven most common neglected tropical diseases by 2020, including STH and schistosomiasis.

The COUNTDOWN team in Nigeria is led by the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) and includes social scientists, health economists, a research uptake officer (embedded in FMOH), and a research manager/officer. The collaboration includes Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine bringing technical guidance and Sightsavers bringing the perspective of large scale implementing partner. The project is funded by the UK Government.

The Nigeria programme launched in 2017, and is supporting implementation research, the outcome of which will provide the evidence needed for policy and programme change to enhance coordination and programme delivery. Two States of Nigeria – Kaduna and Ogun – have been purposively selected as the focus of COUNTDOWN Nigeria as they represent two very different NTD implementing environments. Both are endemic for STH and Schistosomiasis.

A situational analysis for both states was completed in April 2017 and the findings are being used to develop research questions with the FMOH to address the issues identified. Research questions are likely to focus on costing to achieve resource mobilisation and community engagement strategies. Research will begin in early 2018.