

NTD News

NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES NEWSLETTER



American Samoa, Samoa, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea implemented mass drug administration for elimination of lymphatic filariasis with the newly WHO-recommended triple drug therapy

The newly WHO recommended triple drug therapy regimen was successfully adopted for the first time globally in the nation-wide mass drug administration campaign for elimination of lymphatic filariasis in American Samoa, Samoa and Fiji and the provincial-wide one in Papua New Guinea in August-December 2018.

1 NEWS FROM MEMBER COUNTRIES

American Samoa

The Department of Health American Samoa organized a nationwide mass drug administration (MDA) campaign to accelerate elimination of lymphatic filariasis (LF) in September–October 2018, using the triple drug therapy strategy recently recommended by WHO. Support was provided by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (USCDC), the Pacific Island Health Officers Association (PIHOA) and WHO. Prior to the MDA campaign, there were intensive media campaigns, social mobilization and training of health staff, all aimed at achieving high treatment coverage. Approximately 30 314 people were treated, and the reported drug coverage, using 2010 census data, was 55%. A coverage survey conducted in February 2019 in 30 clusters across 24 of the 74 villages indicated overall 88.7% coverage, ranging from 48.6% to 100%, depending on the village.

Cambodia

In July and November 2018, the National Helminth Control Programme continued to implement CL-SWASH (Community-Led initiatives to eliminate Schistosomiasis by combining deworming with WASH interventions) in 10 schistosomiasis-endemic villages (eight in Kratie and two in Stung Treng) with WHO support. There were monitoring and supervision visits by the CL-SWASH teams, composed of national and local interdisciplinary staff, to review the outcomes in these 10 villages and assess progress in sanitation coverage.



Monitoring and supervision visit for CL-SWASH activities in Kratie and Stung Treng Provinces, Cambodia, 2018

In each province, there was a one-day CL-SWASH provincial meeting after the monitoring and supervision visit to the CL-SWASH villages. The aim of these meetings was to share the latest information about outcomes and lessons learnt in the implementation of CL-SWASH activities, and discuss plans to expand them to other villages.



Meetings of the CL-SWASH team members in Stung Treng and Kratie Province, Cambodia, 2018

In November 2018, the National Helminth Control Programme, supported by WHO, assessed the status of soil-transmitted helminth (STH) infections among 651 school-aged children in 12 primary schools in six provinces. These were Oddar Meanchey, Svay Rieng, Kep, Kampong Chhnang, Mondulkiri and Pailin. Overall prevalence of infection was found to be 19.3%.



Soil-transmitted helminth survey among schoolchildren, Cambodia, November 2018

The National Helminth Control Program was launched in November 2018 through Population Service International in Cambodia. STH survey was made among pre-school and school-aged children and women of childbearing age living in plantations in five north-eastern provinces of Cambodia, namely Kratie, Kampong Thom, Stung Treng, Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri. The results are awaited.



Soil-transmitted helminth survey of workers in plantations, Cambodia, November 2018

China

The 7th International Forum for Sustainable Vector Management (IFSVM 2018) was held jointly by the China Preventive Medicine Association (CPMA) and Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) on 22-24 October 2018 in Ningbo, China. More than 450 participants from 13 countries attended the conference. The forum aimed to provide a high-level exchange platform for experts and professionals from various countries to discuss sustainable vector management for the protection of human health and well-being.



The 7th International Forum for Sustainable Vector Management (IFSVM), Ningbo, China, 22-24 October 2018

The disease burden of rabies is high in China, with 516 human rabies cases reported in 2017. In order to reduce the burden in China and achieve the global rabies elimination goal of “Zero by 2030”, China CDC held a workshop on rabies elimination on September 28, 2018 in Beijing. A total of 35 participants representing various stakeholders attended the workshop and discussed strategies and action priorities for the elimination of the disease in China. Better dog management and wider dog vaccination were decided to be the core strategy.



The workshop on rabies elimination held in Beijing, China, 28 September 2018

The National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China published its Report on the National Survey of Important Human Parasitic Disease in China (2015) on 14 December 2018. The Director of the National Institute of Parasitic Diseases under China CDC presented the report at a press conference in Yujiang district of Jiangxi province. The national survey covered 31 provinces (autonomous regions/municipalities) of China.



The press conference on the Report on the National Survey of Important Human Parasitic Disease in China (2015) held by the National Health Commission, China, December 2018

Fiji

The national lymphatic filariasis elimination programme conducted the 14th MDA round in the Eastern division and Taveuni subdivision, and also completed its 4th targeted round on Malolo Island after a high number of positive cases had been found in the transmission assessment survey (TAS) of 2015. The national programme also did a coverage survey using the WHO Coverage Supervision Tool (CST), which confirmed more than 85% access to the treatment through the Direct Observed Treatment strategy. The CST survey also singled out the use of mass media and health staff awareness campaigns prior to the MDA as effective ways to get MDA information out to the general public.

Preparations for the upcoming integrated MDA to tackle scabies, LF and STH, scheduled for July 2019, are making good progress in the Western division. Zone nurses, health centre team leaders, sub-divisional nursing managers, peer educators and health inspectors attended sessions on microplanning of MDA campaigns in each of the four subdivisions of the Northern Division in November 2018. Microplanning promoted better understanding among the Northern Division's MDA implementation team, while providing an opportunity to talk about potential operational challenges and the resources needed to optimise coverage.

Community deworming for control of STH on Vatulele Island continued with 100% coverage among all eligible populations. Through strong community participation and inter-governmental collaboration, the prevalence of infection has declined over the years from 88.3% to 66.0%. WASH activities such as installing water filters and tanks to improve access to safe and clean drinking water were also included.

The Northern Division conducted the third LF TAS in October 2018, covering 80 randomly selected schools in Bua, Cakaudrove and Macuata subdivisions. 2 780 students were tested using Filarialysis Test Strips, of whom 30 were found antigen-positive, compared to the critical cut-off threshold of 16. The NTD Taskforce will hold its review and planning meeting in January 2019 to discuss the next steps to accelerate LF elimination in the Northern division.

Awareness programmes were conducted in 18 health-promoting schools and their communities. There was health education on the prevention of STH and importance of improving water sanitation and hygiene in schools and households. Water purification tablets were also distributed to schools and households.



© WHO LF transmission assessment survey in Northern Province, Fiji, October 2018

French Polynesia

The Ministry of Health of French Polynesia conducted LF TAS 2 in Tahiti rural area, namely Tahiti Iti Moorea, Tuamotu, Australes and north Marquesas islands, using the Filarialysis Test Strips. The total of 2 343 children aged 6-7 years were tested from October to the end of December 2018 and no one was found positive.

Kiribati

Implementation of LF TAS 3 continued in the Gilbert Islands; Abaing Island in July 2018 and Banaba Island and Kuria Islands in September 2018. A total of 498 children were tested using Filariasis Test Strips and all were found negative. A follow-up survey and contact tracing of two lymphoedema (leg) patients in Kiritimati Island, who were identified during TAS, was also conducted from 8 to 18 October 2018. The patients and their families were tested with Filariasis Test Strips and all were found negative. Kiribati will start development of a dossier for validation of elimination of LF as a public health problem.

Nationwide MDA for elimination of trachoma was conducted in July 2018, achieving 85% national coverage. Impact survey to determine whether MDA can be stopped is planned in June 2019.

The second round of biannual deworming was conducted in September 2018, targeting at preschool-aged children, school-aged children and women of child-bearing age. The national coverage achieved was 51% for preschool-aged children, 56% for school-aged children and 23% for women of child-bearing age.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic

In July 2018, malaria and environmental health staff from the central, provincial and district levels, together with the district vice-governor, made a monitoring visit to six villages where CL-SWASH is only being implemented with some difficulties. Their purpose was to encourage and assist households still without latrines to build them.



Monitoring visit of the CL-SWASH villages with the malaria and environmental staff to encourage building latrines in-house in six villages experiencing difficulties, Lao PDR, 2018

On 29 September 2018, the Department of Livestock and Fishery in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Department of Communicable Diseases Control in the Ministry of Health organized a celebration of World Rabies Day. The purpose was to spread awareness of rabies and encourage people to have their domestic dogs vaccinated against rabies.



Dog vaccination against rabies on World Rabies Day, Lao PDR, 29 September 2018

Stool examination among school-aged children was conducted in eight sentinel sites from September to October 2018 to monitor the prevalence and intensity of STH. It was found to range between 3% and 93%. The prevalence of hookworm infection was the highest. The intensity of infection was found both in heavy and moderate levels.



Stool examination for soil-transmitted helminthiasis at school in sentinel site, Lao PDR, September-October 2018

From September to October 2018, stools from school aged children were examined in seven sentinel sites and eight spot check sites in order to monitor the prevalence and intensity of schistosomiasis. The prevalence of schistosomiasis ranged from 2% to 7.3% at sentinel sites, and 1% to 3.7% at spot check sites. The intensity on infection was found both in heavy and moderate levels at sentinel sites whereas at spot check sites only at moderate and light levels.



Schistosomiasis monitoring survey, Champasak province, Lao PDR, September-October 2018

New materials were developed to train outreach teams to perform MDA against STH and schistosomiasis, targeting school-aged children. All health staff involved in MDA were given training in October 2018, before carrying out MDA in December 2018. The training module focused on severity of diseases, transmission, prevention, benefits of taking medicines, possible side effects of medicines and prevention and management of adverse events.



Training for school-based integrated MDA against schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminthiasis, Champasak province, Lao PDR, October 2018



A NTD annual meeting was held on 21 - 22 November 2018, with the Vice Minister of Health as the chair. Participants came from diverse sectors, including those responsible for animal health, human health and education. They were from all provinces across the country as well as the central level. They discussed progress and lessons learnt from implementation of various NTD control activities in 2017, 2018.



Annual NTD annual meeting in Lao PDR, 21-22 November 2018

A delegation of Rotary International 2650, based in Japan's Kansai Region, visited schistosomiasis-endemic communities in Champasak province to participate in and support MDA campaign work and CL-SWASH monitoring activities. The field mission took place on 14 December 2018. 23 members from three sub-clubs of Rotary International 2650 took part. Rotary International 2650 began supporting national efforts to eliminate schistosomiasis in Lao PDR in 2017, in consultation with the WHO Country Office, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education and Sports.

Malaysia

LF TAS namely conducted from September to November 2018 in 69 implementation units (IU) throughout Malaysia. Three IUs that conducted TAS 1 after two additional cycles of enhanced MDA, Lawas, Sundar and Bangkalalak, passed TAS 1 and began post-MDA surveillance. Among 16 IUs that conducted TAS 2, Debak in Sarawak State failed with five antibody positives using PanLF against the critical cut-off of three, while the remaining 15 IUs passed TAS 3. In summary, of 127 endemic IUs in Malaysia, a total of 87 (68.5%) across Malaysia have passed TAS 3 so far. Ongoing surveillance using the test and treat approach in areas that have already passed TAS 3 and in those between TAS surveys continued, using the Brugia Rapid test to maintain low prevalence.



LF transmission assessment survey in schools, Malaysia, 2018



Test and treat activity using Brugia Rapid test in the community, Malaysia, 2018



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Integrated school-based MDA against schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminthiasis, Champasak province, Lao PDR, 29 October 2018

Mongolia

The National Center of Zoonotic Diseases in the Ministry of Health held a multidisciplinary stakeholders meeting to develop the national action plan for control of echinococcosis in Mongolia. It took place on 29-30 October 2018, in Ulaanbaatar, with WHO support. The meeting was attended by public health, veterinary and clinical sectors relevant to echinococcosis control and treatment, at all levels, along with echinococcosis control experts from Australia, China and Switzerland. The participants discussed the priority action points to be included in the multisectoral action plan, with a focus on initiating veterinary interventions and on strengthening human and animal surveillance and case management within the health system.



Group photo of the multidisciplinary stakeholders meeting to develop the national action plan for control of echinococcosis in Ulaanbaata, Mongolia, 29-30 October 2018

On 31 October 2018, the National Center of Zoonotic Diseases held an informal meeting with the support of WHO, to examine the status of rabies control in Mongolia and agree on priority actions towards the elimination of dog-mediated human rabies in Mongolia.

New Caledonia

With the support of WHO, the Directorate of Health and Social Affairs of New Caledonia carried out two surveys to assess current transmission levels and prevalence of LF infection in the country: the transmission assessment survey in Loyalty Islands, and the cross-sectional survey among adults across the Northern province, formerly the highly endemic areas. The surveys were completed in December 2018. The results, and the next steps for LF elimination in New Caledonia, are under discussion.

Palau

On 11 and 12 July 2018, the Bureau of Public Health in the Ministry of Health Palau held a two-day workshop to discuss the post-validation surveillance of LF and develop policy for LF elimination among migrant workers from LF-endemic countries. The workshop was attended by representatives of bodies responsible for communicable disease control, environmental health and community health centres, along with the Bureau of Nursing, the Bureau of Clinical Service, and the Belau National Hospital under the Ministry of Health, the Bureau of Immigration and the Bureau of Labour under the Ministry of Justice, and private clinics. Based on the outcomes of the workshop, the dossier to claim elimination of LF as a public health problem was finalized for official submission to WHO.

Palau received official WHO acknowledgement for having achieved elimination of LF as a public health problem at the sixty-ninth session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific held from 8 - 12 October 2018 in Manila, Philippines. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General and Dr Shin Young-soo, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific Region, congratulated the Minister of Health for this historical achievement at the opening ceremony.



Group photo of the two-day consultation on LF elimination, Palau, 11-12 July 2018

Papua New Guinea

On 11 September 2018, The National Department of Health of Papua New Guinea organized a stakeholders meeting in Port Moresby to finalize micro-planning of the LF MDA campaign using the triple drug therapy in New Ireland Province. The meeting discussed the impacts and safety of the new WHO recommendation on triple drug therapy and the rationale and benefits of combining LF MDA with azithromycin treatment for elimination of yaws. This was done in the context of operational research to demonstrate the safety and feasibility of programmatic integration of LF and yaws MDA.

The National Department of Health implemented the province-wide LF MDA campaign, using the triple drug therapy for the first time, in New Ireland Province in December 2018. The MDA campaign was preceded by training for community health workers and a social mobilization campaign. The campaign was originally planned to start in October 2018. However, due to a polio outbreak in the country and a nationwide polio mass vaccination campaign beginning on 1 October 2018, the MDA campaign was rescheduled between repeated rounds of mass vaccination campaigns in the province. Despite numerous difficulties, treatment coverage reached 62.4%. A mop-up campaign in low-coverage areas is being planned for April-May 2019. New Ireland Province completed three rounds of MDA between 2014 and 2018 with over 75% reported coverage.



Training of health workers (above) and LF MDA campaign (right) in New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea, December 2018



Philippines

The Department of Health (DOH) through the Integrated Helminth Control Program (IHCP) developed its Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. The plan is anchored to the overall goals of the 2016-2022 Philippine Health Agenda: better health outcome, zero catastrophic cost and more responsive health service delivery network. It ultimately aims to have a zero STH prevalence to be able to achieve an STH-free Philippines.

As an initial step towards expansion of deworming services among the vulnerable groups, the IHCP, with support of WHO, has begun developing guidelines specific for women of childbearing age (WCBA), pregnant women, military and para-military groups and indigenous communities. The draft guideline is expected to be submitted and reviewed by March 2019.

The Schistosomiasis Control and Elimination Program developed its seven-year national strategic plan towards transmission interruption of schistosomiasis in the Philippines (2019-2025). Its highlight is the stratification of endemic areas based on the prevalence at village level, and different packages of interventions on the human, animal and snail aspects designed for each group of endemic villages in three classes of schistosomiasis prevalence (low, moderate, high).

Wider introduction of the NTD Management Information System (MIS) moved ahead, as developed in 2016 with technical support of WHO and financial support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, already piloted in Region 7 and National Capital Region in 2017. In 2018 it was fine-tuned and expanded in Regions 2, 5, 10 and 13. The refined version is being disseminated to end-users via SMS messages, e-mails and video tutorials posted in the log-in page. Additionally, DOH is continuously coordinating with the Department of Education for official adoption of NTD-MIS in schools.



The NTD management information system project progress review meeting, Manila, Philippines, 7 December 2018
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Rabies continues to be a public health problem in the Philippines. The Department of Health held the 2018 National Rabies Summit on September 27, 2018 in Manila on the occasion of World Rabies Day. The theme was "Rabies can be prevented. Be a responsible Pet Owner. Share the Message. Save a life". Over 400 representatives from the Department of Health, Department of Agriculture regional offices, the Department of Education, non-government organizations, the private sector and Local Government Unit officials attended the day. The summit highlighted the good practices of the local government units and gave awards for various achievements, such as 18 provinces maintaining zero human rabies cases for the past 5 years or more, one additional province achieved zero human rabies cases in 2018 for the first time.



Awarding ceremony for recognition of rabies free provinces in the 2018 National Rabies Summit in Manila, Philippine, 27 September 2018

Samoa

After completing the second of two additional rounds of MDA in May 2017, the Samoa Ministry of Health implemented TAS 1 in North-West Upolu, along with TAS 2 in the two other EUs between July and October 2017. TAS failed in all three EUs, demonstrating the need to restart MDA nationwide. The Ministry of Health of Samoa, with support from WHO, the Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Task Force for Global Health, carried out the nationwide LF MDA campaign in August 2018, using the triple drug therapy strategy newly recommended by WHO. Prior to the MDA campaign, there were intensive media campaigns, social mobilization and training of health staff to achieve high treatment coverage. The nationwide treatment coverage rate reached 81.1%.



Training of health workers in July 2018 (above left) and LF MDA campaign in August 2018 (bottom left and above right), Samoa
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Solomon Islands

As a prelude to expanding the STH deworming program to other provinces apart from Honiara and Guadalcanal, the STH consultation and planning meetings were held in Makira, Choiseul, Temotu and Central Islands Province in October 2018. The consultation meetings were attended by the provincial health director, nursing director, chief education officer, nutrition officer, environmental health officer, EPI officer, health promotion officer and zone supervisors at provincial and zone level, along with the national team including the NTD coordinator, health promoting schools coordinator and WHO representatives.



STH deworming consultation meeting in Temotu Province, Solomon Islands, 9-11 October 2018

Guadalcanal Province held a successful training session for teachers for Zone 6 on 17 October 2018. It was facilitated by the national NTD coordinator and the health promoting schools coordinator and held prior to the deworming operation. Subsequently school deworming was carried out in the province. The treatment report is awaited.



Training of Teachers in Guadalcanal Province, Solomon Islands, 17 October 2018

Vanuatu

Yaws case investigation and focal treatment continued routinely throughout 2018. The proportion of confirmed yaws cases to total reported cases has declined from 13.7% in 2017 to 11.6% in 2018. Most cases are from three provinces, Tafea, Shefa, and Malampa. A similar pattern was observed in the number of suspected yaws cases (clinically diagnosed) reported from the health information system (HIS). 686 people were treated with azithromycin during the focal treatment in 2018.

The number of reported scabies cases in 2018 had dropped by 25% by November 2018, from 3 138 in 2017 to 2 328 in 2018. Scabies screening was usually done jointly with yaws screening, either in schools or communities.

The national coverage of the second round of STH deworming, which continued till November 2018, was 40%. The target population group for deworming was expanded in 2018 to preschool-aged children above one year of age and school-aged children. Deworming activities have been implemented in conjunction with other public health activities such as NTD screening at community and school levels, malaria net distributions, and MCH outreach.

The three-month health education activities were completed in November 2018 in the 12 selected villages. They received lively support and participation from health workers, village chiefs, health committees and communities. The majority of these villages have successfully improved their environment by fencing off domestic animals, holding routine clean-up activities, building and using tippy taps for hand washing with soaps, and building ventilated improved pit latrines. They requested that the work be maintained in their villages to ensure sustained behaviour changes and the ensuing benefits regarding disease transmission.



Community health education training in Malekula, Vanuatu, September 2018



Global hand washing day at Mamau school, Vanuatu, 15 October 2018



Tippy Tap made of local bamboo used in communities, Vanuatu, November 2018

Viet Nam

Viet Nam received official WHO acknowledgement for having achieved elimination of LF as a public health problem at the sixty-ninth session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific held from 8 to 12 October 2018 in Manila, Philippines. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General and Dr Shin Young-soo, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific Region, congratulated the Minister of Health for this historical achievement at the opening ceremony.

On World Rabies Day, the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), WHO and other One Health partners called for everyone's support with the message, 'Rabies: Spread the Message, Save a Life'. The event took place in Lao Cai on 4 October, 2018. MOH and MARD advocated jointly for rabies prevention, control and elimination before over 1 000 participants made up of policy makers, animal and public health professionals, dog owners, and the general public.

Wallis and Futuna

Wallis and Futuna received official WHO acknowledgement for having achieved elimination of LF as a public health problem at the sixty-ninth session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific held from 8 to 12 October 2018 in Manila, Philippines. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General and Dr Shin Young-soo, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific Region, congratulated the Minister of Health for this historical achievement at the opening ceremony.

2 REGIONAL NEWS

The Meeting to Accelerate Prevention and Control of Foodborne Parasitic Zoonoses in Selected Asian countries was organized jointly by WPRO, SEARO, FAO and OIE on 16-18 October 2018 in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. National representatives responsible for NTD, animal health, food safety and WASH from 14 high-burden countries in the Western Pacific and Southeast Asian Region joined the meeting to discuss joint actions for the control of foodborne parasitic zoonoses in their respective countries, and identify major challenges and support needs from the Tripartite organizations to step up control.



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Group photo of the Meeting to Accelerate Prevention and Control of Foodborne Parasitic Zoonoses in Selected Asian countries in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, 16-18 October 2018

The ASEAN-Tripartite Rabies Meeting was jointly organized by the ASEAN Secretariat, FAO, OIE, SEARO and WPRO on 4-6 December 2018 in Hanoi, Viet Nam. The meeting hosted rabies focal points from human health and animal health sectors in all ASEAN Member States along with donors and partners supporting rabies elimination efforts in the ASEAN region. Participants reviewed the progress of rabies control since the launch of the ASEAN Rabies Elimination Strategy in 2016 with its target to control and eliminate rabies in ASEAN Member States by 2020, and discussed action priorities to further enhance collaborative efforts between human and animal health sectors to achieve the global target 'Zero by 30'.



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Group photo of the ASEAN Tripartite Rabies Meeting in Hanoi, Viet Nam, 4-6 December 2018