

# NTD News

NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES NEWSLETTER



## Kiribati has eliminated Lymphatic Filariasis as Public Health Problem

After over a decade of efforts, Kiribati has eliminated lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem. Dr Takeshi Kasai, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific, Dr Soumya Swaminathan, WHO Chief Scientist, and Dr Park Neunghoo, Minister of Health and Welfare of the Republic of Korea and Chair of the seventieth session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific, congratulated Mr Tauanei Marea, Minister of Health and Medical Services of Kiribati, for this historical achievement during the seventieth session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific 2019 in Manila, Philippines.

## 1 NEWS FROM MEMBER COUNTRIES

### Cambodia

The two-day national workshop to finalize the National Action Plan for Control and Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases in Cambodia (2019-2024) was organised by the National Helminth Control Program (Ministry of Health) on 30-31 January 2019. Multiple ministries, institutions and development partners from national and provincial levels such as the Ministry of Health (Department of Communicable Diseases, Department of Drugs and Food, Department of Preventive Medicine, Central Medical Store, and Provincial Health Department), the Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Health, Department of Rural Water Supply, and Provincial Department of Rural Development), the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (Department of School Health and the Provincial Department of Education, Youth and Sport) and the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (Department of Occupational Safety and Health) participated. They discussed priority actions in the coming five years to achieve control and elimination of NTDs in Cambodia.



National consultation workshop to finalize the national action plan for control and elimination of NTDs, Siem Reap, Cambodia, 30-31 January 2019

The National Helminth Control Program carried out a liver fluke prevalence survey (*Opisthorchis viverrini*) using the Kato-Katz technique, in six provinces in March 2019. It was conducted with the support of AMED (Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development) and in collaboration with the local health authorities (Provincial Health Department, Health Operational District, Health Centre and Village Health Volunteers). The six provinces were Takeo, Kampong Speu, Pursat, Koh Kong, Pailin and Siem Reap, and over 2,000 people were targeted in 30 villages across the provinces.

In May 2019, the National Helminth Control Program carried out monitoring and supervision visits of the CL-SWASH (community-led initiative to eliminate schistosomiasis integrated with water, sanitation and hygiene interventions) activities in 10 schistosomiasis-endemic villages (eight in Kratie and two in Stung Treng) where CL-SWASH has been implemented, in order to measure progress in the WASH situation, discuss the outcomes of CL-SWASH activities thus far, and provide technical support to cope with challenges.



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CL-SWASH monitoring and supervision visit in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces, May 2019

From May to June 2019, the National Helminth Control Program, working with local health authorities (Provincial Health Department, Health Operational District, Health Center and Village Health Volunteers), along with village chiefs, pagodas and schools, conducted mass drug administration (MDA) and schistosomiasis health education in all schistosomiasis-endemic villages in Kratie and Stung Treng.



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Mass drug administration and health education activities in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces, May-June 2019

In June 2019, the National Helminth Control Program conducted a training workshop on control of neglected tropical diseases in Cambodia. The workshop aimed at sharing updates on the disease burden and helminth control activities in Cambodia, bringing together the helminth control focal points from 25 provinces and operational districts in Cambodia.



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**Training workshop on control of neglected tropical diseases for provincial and district focal points, Kampong Cham, Cambodia, 11-12 June 2019.**

## China

The WHO HQ mission to Zhengzhou, Henan province took place in April 2019 with the aim of understanding and reviewing the leishmaniasis situation in China. At a workshop on leishmaniasis prevention and treatment held by the National Institute of Parasitic Diseases, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, on 2 April, the WHO team described the global burden and provided updates on diagnosis, treatment guidelines and vector control. Over 40 professionals from eight provinces/autonomous regions shared their experiences and discussed the technical plan for the control of leishmaniasis in China and remaining challenges.



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**The Workshop on Leishmaniasis Prevention and Treatment in Zhengzhou, China, 2 April 2019, during the visit of the WHO leishmaniasis team**

To strengthen international collaboration and help improve schistosomiasis diagnostic capacity in the near-elimination phase, a training course on schistosomiasis diagnosis was held in Shanghai on 10-21 June 2019. It was organised by the National Institute of Parasitic Diseases, in collaboration with WHO HQ. 16 trainees from eight countries, namely Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Myanmar and Lao PDR, participated in the training. It entailed three modules: theoretical training, field practice and laboratory operation, and offered a technical platform for professionals from different countries to exchange their expertise.



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**Training course on schistosomiasis diagnosis in the near-elimination phase in Shanghai, China, 10-21 June 2019**

## Fiji

The Northern division failed TAS 3 in 2018, and in January 2019 the national lymphatic filariasis (LF) taskforce meeting recommended MDA using triple drug therapy to accelerate LF elimination, integrated with scabies control. In practice, this meant that the LF dose of the triple drug regimen was given first, followed by an additional ivermectin dose for scabies for eligible populations one week later. Preparation for MDA continued for nearly a year in partnership with the Fiji Integrated Therapy (FIT) project led by the Murdoch Research Institute and the University of New South Wales. Training workshops for nurses or supervisors commenced in February 2019, while the ones for the drug distributors or community health workers were convened in April. MDA was to be implemented in July.

LF sentinel surveys were carried out in Taveuni, Malolo and Eastern divisions from 25 March to 19 April 2019. The antigenaemia prevalences were 7.8% (324 people tested), 15.8% (378 people tested) and 7.31% (1,451 people tested), respectively. It was decided to continue MDA, using triple drug therapy, in all the implementation units.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Service continued deworming of school-aged children from February, but the reported coverage remained low for most of the country. The current national coverage level is 9.7%. A notable exception



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The national LF taskforce meeting in Suva, Fiji, 28-30 January 2019

was Vatulele island, where the total population of 1 532 people above the age of one was targeted for deworming using a community-based approach. 87% coverage was achieved. Deworming is integrated into the Health Promoting School campaign and 194 primary schools, comprising 26% of the primary schools in Fiji, are currently covered under this programme.

The NTD programme in the Ministry of Health and Medical Service rolled out its WASH awareness activities through the Health Promoting School program in June 2019 to school and management representatives of 20 schools, 12 from the Northern division and eight from the Eastern division. The student-based assessment identified the need to improve primary and secondary school children's understanding of WASH and its importance. The key finding from the primary school assessment was a poor understanding of the link between the environment and disease transmission, and the importance of hygiene practices in combating disease transmission.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Service, with support from the Fred Hollows Foundation, finalized a plan for a nationwide survey to verify the current endemicity status of trachoma and determine the need for MDA. The survey will be conducted in the latter half of 2019 using a standard population-based study methodology and incorporating clinical and serological assessments.

The international workshop to mark the conclusion of the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust grant funding under the Pacific Trachoma Initiative (PTI) was held in Suva, Fiji, on 26 June 2019. Representatives from all trachoma-endemic countries in the Pacific, the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee



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The national LF taskforce meeting in Suva, Fiji, 28-30 January 2019

Trust, the Fred Hollows Foundation and other major partners including WHO attended the workshop. The participants discussed the achievements of PTI, lessons learnt and ways forward for national trachoma elimination programmes as the funding from the Trust comes to an end.

## Federated States of Micronesia

Chuuk State of Micronesia, which is currently the only remaining LF-endemic implementation unit in the country and which completed the recommended MDA rounds by 2018, prepared for the micro plan for sentinel and spot-check site surveys, with support of WHO. The training and field survey will be conducted in August 2019.

## Kiribati

LF TAS 3 was completed in three evaluation units during the latter half of 2018. No positives were found in any unit. Thus, Kiribati became eligible to submit a dossier to claim elimination of LF as a public health problem. With support of WHO, the Ministry of Health & Medical Services began work on developing the dossier.

The Ministry of Health & Medical Services continued with countrywide deworming of all three high-risk groups, namely school-aged children, preschool-aged children and women of child-bearing age. The first round of deworming was conducted in March 2019. The treatment data is awaited.

The Ministry of Health & Medical Services carried out leprosy awareness, screening and contact tracing in Abaiang Island on 15-17 February 2019 and in Beru island on 4-15 April. Kiribati is one of the three Pacific countries that has not yet reached the leprosy elimination target, defined by WHO as 1 out of 10,000 people.

## Lao People's Democratic Republic

The first round of semi-annual school deworming was conducted in April 2019. The central team from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Sports conducted supervisory visits to Vientiane and Xayabouly provinces to monitor field operations and provide technical support to schools and field teams.

The Centre for Malariology, Parasitology and Entomology (CMPE) under the Ministry of Health, together with malaria staff from provincial and district health departments, conducted a baseline survey with stool examination on taeniasis and opisthorchiasis in Champhone district of Savannakhet province in May 2019. Preserved stool samples were sent to the University of Melbourne, Australia, for laboratory confirmation of taenia species.

## Malaysia



Supervisory visit by the central school deworming team in Vientiane province, April 2019 (photo © Department of General Education, Ministry of Education and Youth)



Stool examination on taeniasis and opisthorchiasis in Champhone district, Savannakhet province, May 2019 (photo © Centre for Malariology, Parasitology and Entomology)

The Ministry of Health Malaysia, with WHO support, organised a training workshop on introduction of triple drug therapy to accelerate elimination of LF in Betong district, Sarawak State on 12 February 2019. The training workshop was attended by all health staff and nurses from the district and neighbouring districts, and epidemiologists and members of vector-borne disease units in Sarawak State Health Department who are involved in the upcoming MDA campaign, as well as the LF team from Sabah State, where the MDA campaign using triple drug therapy was to be implemented in hotspots.



Training workshop on introduction of the triple drug therapy in Sarawak and Sabah State for accelerating elimination of LF, Betong district, Sarawak, Malaysia, 12 February 2019

The first round of the LF MDA campaign using triple drug therapy was then implemented in Betong district in April, following its failure in TAS 2. Treatment coverage was 98.81%. MDA using triple drug therapy in 32 hotspot villages in Sabah, which were found to have persistent transmission of LF with over 2% antibody prevalence through ongoing surveillance activities, was also initiated in April. It was scheduled to cover a population of 11 800 by the end of 2019.

## Papua New Guinea

The National Department of Health (NDOH) Papua New Guinea convened a microplanning and stakeholders meeting, first at national level in Port Moresby on 27-28 May 2019, followed by the provincial event in Kokopo, East New Britain on 29-31 May.



Weight-based directly observed therapy (DOT) in front of health worker to ensure the person receives and takes all medication as prescribed and to monitor response to treatment during the MDA in Sarawak, April 2019



Crushing of tablets using mortar and mixing with melted chocolate for children during the MDA in Sarawak, April 2019 (photo © Ahmad Farid Nazmi Bin Abdul Halim)



Use of house card tagging of every house visited to ensure the actual number of population during the MDA in Sarawak, April 2019 (left photo); Testing of non-eligible individuals for MDA (pregnant mothers, the medically unfit and breastfeeding mothers) during the MDA in Sarawak, April 2019 (right photo)

Both meetings were joined by the representatives of the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research and Case Western University, which will collaborate with NDOH in the monitoring and evaluation study of the triple drug MDA. This latter was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, JICA and WHO, which support field implementation of MDA campaigns, and the Provincial Health Agency, Provincial LF Task Force and selected district health agencies of East New Britain Province.

## Philippines

On 19 to 22 February 2019, the National Department of Health held a workshop in Manila to enhance disease-free

evaluation for the national LF elimination programme. It was designed for regional coordinators and medical technologists. The workshop analysed the problems, gaps and challenges in LF elimination in the Philippines and identified strategies to intensify post-MDA surveillance.

The National Department of Health organised an integrated morbidity management and disability prevention training session across three programmes: LF, leprosy and persons with disability, on 26-28 March 2019 in Manila. The session aimed to train the programme coordinators of LF, Leprosy and Disability in screening and management of morbidity and disability due to LF and leprosy. It was facilitated by the National Department of Health and a leprosy expert from the Philippines Research Institute of Tropical Medicine.

The first consultation meeting on the development of a deworming package for the private schools in high risk areas was held on 23-25 April 2019 in Manila. The consultation was attended by the DOH national program manager, selected regional Integrated Helminth Control program coordinators and partners from selected LGUs as well as representatives of the Department of Education. The consultation drafted a guideline on the implementation of deworming in private schools and comprehensive intervention packages for soil-transmitted helminthiases in risk areas.



Integrated morbidity management and disability prevention training, Manila, Philippines, 26-28 March 2019

The National Department of Health convened an Infectious Disease Office Zonal Program Implementation Review for Luzon and the National Capital Region on 7-9 May 2019 in Manila and for Visayas and Mindanao on 21-23 May in Manila. The 11 infectious disease programs of the Disease Prevention and Control Bureau came together to conduct an integrated programme implementation review as part of efforts to streamline the response to common concerns affecting prevention and control of infectious diseases. The

key priority actions with participating stakeholders from the sectors involved in their elimination. The consultation included the representatives of selected LGUs and Regional Offices, a medical officer from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) and key partners such as WHO, RITM and San Lazaro Hospital. The participants reviewed the proposed amendment to administrative orders on (i) management of rabies exposures, (ii) animal bite treatment centre certification and (iii) declaration of rabies-free zones and the new LF sustainability plan 2022.

The workshop to update diagnostics, microscopy, laboratory services and quality assurance for LF, schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminthiasis, malaria, and dengue for regional and provincial medical technologists was conducted by the Disease Prevention and Control Bureau, Infectious Diseases for Elimination Division, on 25-27 June 2019 in Manila. Its purpose was to promote quality health services down to the grassroots level. The workshop participants also identified points of integration of diagnostics, microscopy, laboratory services and quality assurance across multiple diseases.

The Department of Health (DOH), with support of WHO, continue to scale up adoption and implementation of the Neglected Tropical Diseases Management Information System (NTDMIS). The NTDMIS is a combination of a web and mobile-based system for data collection, processing and reporting of MDA coverage, drug inventory and adverse event reports on soil-transmitted helminthiases, LF and schistosomiasis. Currently, the system is implemented in 15 provinces and three cities within six regions, with approximately 1.5 million children aged one to 18 years in the country.

## Solomon Islands

The Ministry of Health and Medical Service carried out provincial microplanning for population-based interventions for yaws elimination in three provinces (Western, Choiseul and Malaita) from February to April 2019. Further consultations with other provinces were to be conducted in the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2019.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Service, through the NTDs focal point and provincial health directors, held a meeting to prepare the next steps for trachoma elimination. It took place

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