

NTD News

NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES NEWSLETTER



An MDA campaign against schistosomiasis was conducted in the Khong and Moulapamok districts of Champasack province in November and December 2021. Efforts to provide essential health services were continued to ensure the performance of the comprehensive health system during the COVID-19 pandemic. Health centre staff strictly observed COVID-19 precautions for infection, transmission and hygiene in providing deworming medicine during household visits, a different approach from last year's mass gathering deworming campaign.

1 NEWS FROM MEMBER COUNTRIES

Cambodia

Provinces endemic for schistosomiasis are Kratie and Stung Treng along the Mekong River. Around 100 000 people live in these endemic provinces and are at risk of infection. Regular mass preventive chemotherapy is the cornerstone of schistosomiasis control in Cambodia. With the implementation of mass drug administration (MDA) since 1995, the prevalence of schistosomiasis in four sentinel site villages has dropped dramatically from 80% in 1995 to less than 1% by 2020.

In October 2021, teams visited 18 sentinel and spot-check villages in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces to assess infection status and conduct MDA for *Schistosoma mekongi* and soil-transmitted helminthiasis. The prevalence of schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminthiasis in these selected villages was very low, with one case from the four sentinel site villages in Kratie infected with *S. mekongi*. However, there were 11 new sentinel villages in Kratie province where *S. mekongi* was found.



Infection status assessments and mass drug administration for *Schistosoma mekongi* and soil-transmitted helminthiasis were conducted in 18 sentinel and spot-check villages in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces in October 2021. (Credit: Cambodia Ministry of Health)

Fiji

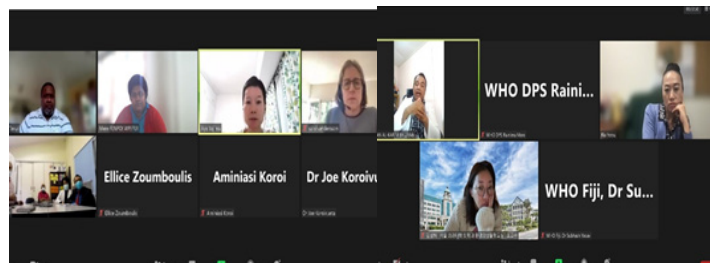
Fiji continues its efforts against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). Nationwide activities for trachoma, lymphatic filariasis (LF) and scabies were conducted in 2021.



MDA and health education in schistosomiasis. Community screening for trachoma in partnership with Project HEAVEN (Credit: Fiji Ministry of Health)

Lymphatic filariasis morbidity equipment is ready to be shipped to Kiribati in partnership collaboration with WHO, Japan International Cooperation Agency (Junko Otaki of JICA Fiji office) and the Ministry of Health.

(Credit: Fiji Ministry of Health)



Online skin consultation with stakeholders of the World Scabies Program, WHO, Fiji Ministry of Health and dermatology experts in October 2021

(Credit: Fiji Ministry of Health)



Storage container sent to Fiji from WHO to address MDA storage and shipping needs (Credit: Fiji Ministry of Health)

French Polynesia

In February 2021, the French Polynesia Ministry of Health conducted the Transmission Assessment Survey (TAS) 3 among children aged 6 and 7 years in urban areas of Tahiti. Of the 1188 children who participated in the survey, only two tested positive with the Filariasis Test Strip. Windward urban Tahiti passed TAS 3 in March 2021.



TAS 2 in a Windward urban area (Tahiti Nui), French Polynesia, March 2021 (Credit: French Polynesia Ministry of Health)

The French Polynesia Ministry of Health implemented an MDA campaign against LF using a combination of diethylcarbamazine and albendazole in October and November 2021. The campaign was conducted in two units (the island of Huahine and three islands of the Southern Marquesas: Hiva Oa, Fatu Hiva and Tahuata). The Ministry of Health is pleased to announce the MDA campaign's success with a coverage of 92% for the population of Huahine and 70% for Southern Marquesians.



Lymphatic filariasis MDA campaign ambassadors in Huahine, October - November 2021 (Credit: French Polynesia Ministry of Health)

From November 2021 to February 2022, the Ministry of Health conducted TAS 3 in rural zones of Tahiti Nui and Tahiti Iti, and in the rest of French Polynesia (Moorea, Northern Marquesas archipelago, Australs, Tuamotu-Gambier). Data analysis is ongoing, and results will be shared once finalized.



TAS 3 in Ua Pou, Northern Marquesas, November 2021 (Credit: French Polynesia Ministry of Health)

Lao People's Democratic Republic

The Ministry of Health integrated the newly finalized health education package on rabies prevention and control into the teaching curriculum in Xayabouly province. In March 2021, a team from the ministries of health, education and sport, and agriculture conducted a monitoring visit to assess the pilot integration of rabies lessons into the teaching curriculum in primary and secondary schools. The assessment team tested 313 students on their knowledge and understanding of rabies prevention. It noted a positive result; 92.0% of students had knowledge of rabies prevention compared to 58.7% before integrating the health education package on rabies prevention and control.



Monitoring visit in Xayabouly province, Lao People's Democratic Republic, March 2021

(Credit: Lao People's Democratic Republic Ministry of Health)

In April 2021, the Ministry of Health and the Food and Drug Department conducted a meeting in Vangvieng, Vientiane province to revise the school deworming implementation programme guidelines. After careful planning and a review of the guidelines, they agreed the Food and Drug Department would take responsibility for packing and delivering medicine from the provincial to the district level, facilitating the efficient distribution of deworming drugs to different schools.



Monitoring visit in Xayabouly province, Lao People's Democratic Republic, March 2021

(Credit: Lao People's Democratic Republic Ministry of Health)

Quarterly NTD meetings were held in March and June 2021. The meetings were chaired by the director of the Department of Communicable Disease Control and attended by the NTD task force. The meetings aimed to identify priority activities that could be undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as: (1) training of school health task force from all provinces before restarting school deworming activity in October 2021; (2) conducting the final transmission assessment survey in Attapeu province; and (3) conducting an MDA campaign against schistosomiasis.

In August 2021, the Department of Communicable Disease Control organized a meeting in Thalath, Vientiane province to develop the rabies vaccine guidelines. Participants included representatives of the National Immunization Programme, selected district hospitals and central hospitals. The meeting was chaired by the deputy director of the Department of Communicable Disease Control. The next step will be to design the cover and get approval from the director of the Department of Communicable Disease Control/Department of Hygiene and Health Promotion.



Development of guidelines on using the rabies vaccine in humans, August 2021
(Credit: Lao People's Democratic Republic Ministry of Health)

The Ministry of Health conducted TAS 3 for LF in November 2021. A total of 1532 samples were collected from students in grades 1 and 2. No positive Filariasis Test Strip results were identified during the survey in Attapeu province.



TAS 3, November 2021
(Credit: Lao People's Democratic Republic Ministry of Health)

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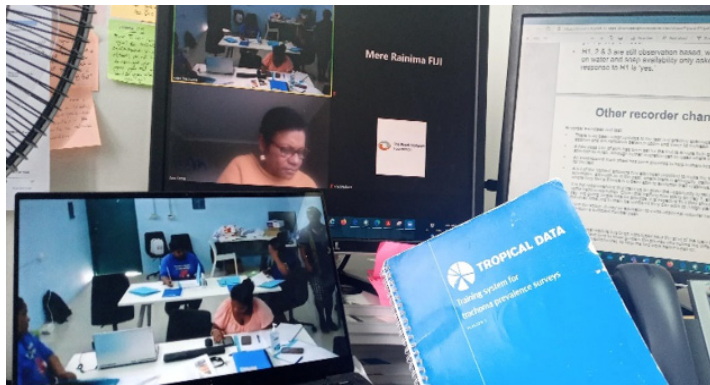
Schistosomiasis deworming in Khong and Moulapamok districts of Champasack province, November and December 2021
(Credit: Lao People's Democratic Republic Ministry of Health)

Malaysia

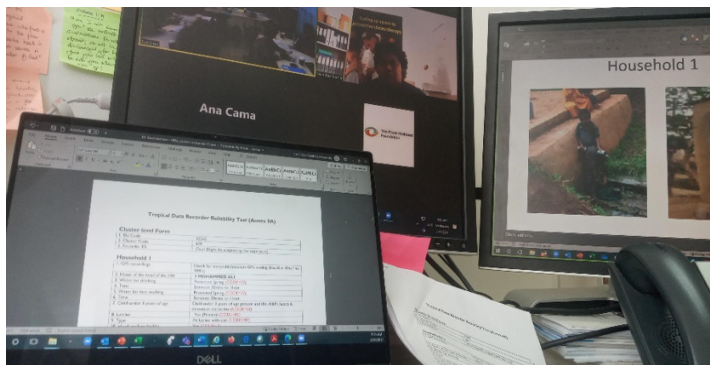
The Ministry of Health conducted Pre-Transmission Assessment Survey (Pre-TAS) and TAS 1 activities in the Debak subdistrict in April and July 2021, respectively. Both surveys, with 1009 slides and 311 samples, had no positive results.

Nauru

In July 2019, the Ministry of Health's national trachoma prevalence survey confirmed the endemicity of trachoma in the country. The survey prompted a series of activities for trachoma elimination, such as the Trachoma Survey Refresher Training on 29–31 March, facilitated by The Fred Hollows Foundation Australia and WHO, followed by a nationwide MDA campaign in August 2021.



Trachoma Survey Refresher Training, March 2021
(Credit: Nauru Ministry of Health)



Recorders test during the virtual training for trachoma, 31 March 2021
(Credit: Nauru Ministry of Health)



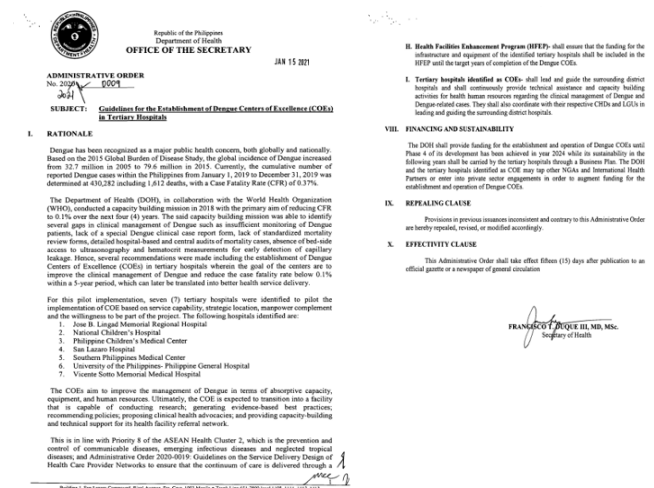
Trachoma MDA campaign, August 2021
(Credit: Nauru Ministry of Health)

Philippines

Despite the ongoing COVID-19 response activities within the Philippines, the country remains steadfast in addressing NTDs. As to not waste the initial efforts and the continuing release of issuances, such as the establishment of the Dengue Centers of Excellence, the conduct of dengue mortality review training, monitoring and evaluation tool, and the lead country for the conduct of the 2021 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Dengue Day Forum and LF elimination activities.

In 2018, the Department of Health, in collaboration with WHO, conducted a capacity-building mission with the primary aim of reducing the dengue case fatality rate. One of the recommendations was to establish Dengue Centers of Excellence (COEs) in tertiary hospitals. Within five years, the COEs aim to improve dengue clinical management and reduce the dengue case fatality rate below 0.1%, which will turn into better health service delivery.

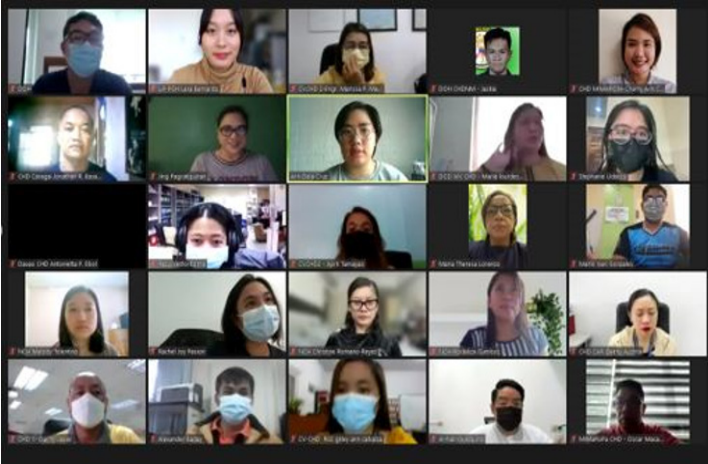
The COEs aim to improve the management of dengue in terms of absorptive capacity, equipment and human resources. Ultimately, each COE is expected to transition into a facility capable of conducting research, generating evidence-based best practices, recommending policies, proposing clinical health advocacies, and providing capacity-building and technical support for its health facility referral network.



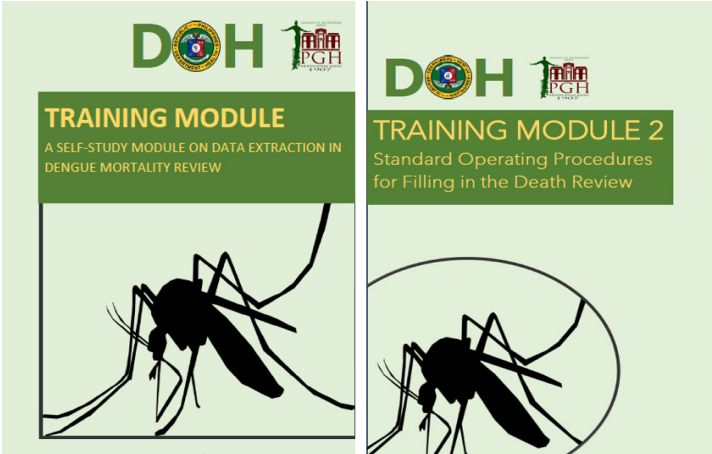
Administrative Order No. 2021-0009 - Guidelines for the Establishment of Dengue Centers of Excellence (COEs) in Tertiary Hospitals

On 22 and 29 April 2021 and 21-22 July 2021, the National Aedes-borne Viral Diseases Prevention and Control Program (NAVDPCCP), in collaboration with the University of the Philippines – Philippine General Hospital, conducted the Virtual Training on the Conduct of Dengue Death Review among Hospitals in the Philippines-Health System Operation. The training emphasizes the implementation of early case detection and referral systems for patients, managing severe cases with appropriate treatment, reorienting health services to cope with dengue outbreaks, and training health personnel at all health system levels. Mortality from dengue is highly preventable by implementing timely and appropriate clinical management, which involves early clinical and laboratory diagnosis, intravenous rehydration, staff training, and hospital reorganization.

In addition, to achieve expertise in the clinical management capacity of dengue nationwide, the continuation of the training mentioned above is necessary. The training components consist of a Self-Study Module on Data Extraction in Dengue Mortality Review and the Standard Operating Procedures for Analysis of the Dengue Mortality Review. Participants ranged from Infectious Disease Cluster heads, NAVDPCCP coordinators, Regional Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit coordinators, medical officers, medical technologists, nurses, dengue point persons, and infectious disease officers.



Virtual training for dengue mortality review, 29 April 2021;8:00-5:00, via Zoom (Credit: Philippines Department of Health)



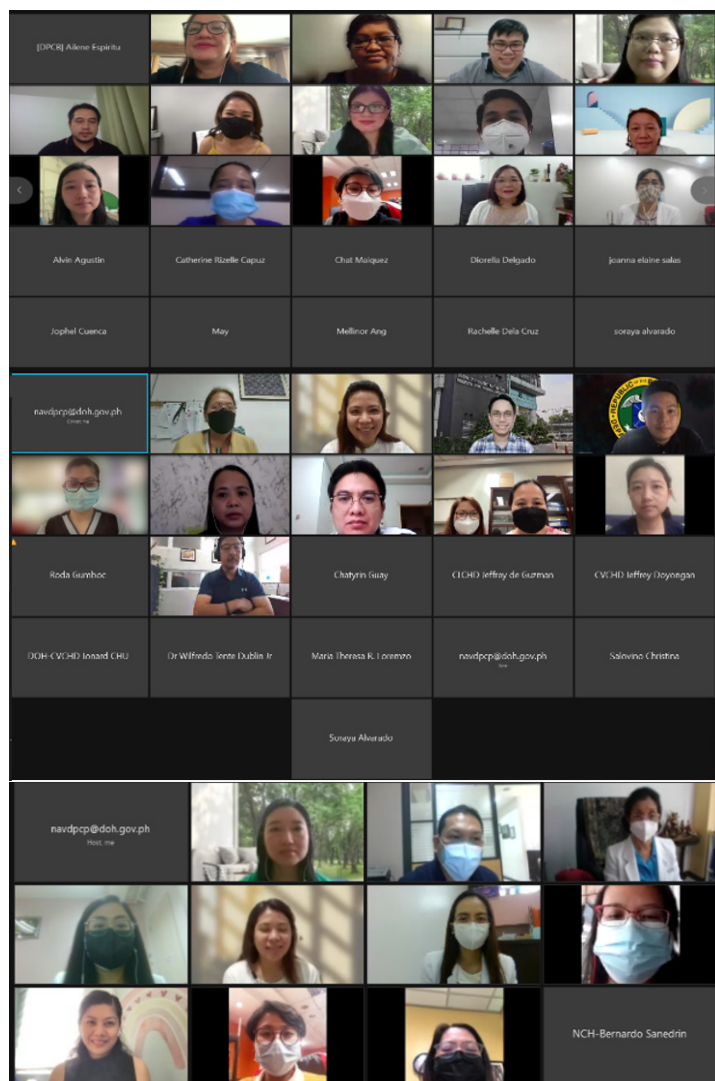
Draft training modules for dengue mortality reviews done in collaboration with the University of the Philippines – Philippine General Hospital

Relative to Administrative Order No. 2021-0009, the NAVDPCCP developed a corresponding assessment tool to monitor and evaluate the status of the implementation of the guidelines. The timeline for monitoring and evaluating based on the phase of development is as follows:

Phases	Details	Timeline
I	Enhancement of service delivery component	2020-2021
	Development as a training centre	
II	Conduct of research & technology transfer	2021-2022
III	Act as an information centre	2022-2023
IV	Health policy advocacy	2023-2024

The guide will determine any gaps and challenges encountered during its five-year implementation to identify the appropriate ways forward.

The Disease Prevention and Control Bureau, through the Infectious Disease Division, conducted a series of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities with the selected level III hospitals (Phase I). Phase I includes the enhancement of service delivery components and the development of a training centre to assess the current status of the implementation of the Administrative Order. These activities provide an avenue for identifying technical and financial support needed for the phased developments and discussing the ways forward for the identified gaps and challenges. In several level III hospitals – San Lazaro Hospital, Philippine Children’s Medical Center, National Children’s Hospital, Southern Philippines Medical Center, Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center, Jose B. Lingad Memorial Regional Hospital, and the University of the Philippines – Philippine General Hospital – the M&E activities were conducted from August to December 2021.



Virtual conduct of Phase I monitoring and evaluation of selected level III hospitals, via Zoom (Credit: Philippines Department of Health)

Annually, the Philippines hosts the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) Dengue Day Forum on 15 June. The theme for this year's ASEAN Dengue Day Forum was "ASEAN Unite Against Dengue Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic". The theme coincided with the ASEAN Member States' desire to maintain the minimum public health standards and avoid increased transmission of dengue during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Conduct of the ASEAN Dengue Day Forum, 15 June 2021; 8:00-12:00, via Zoom (Credit: Philippines Department of Health)

In early January 2021, Zamboanga del Norte conducted a routine province-wide deworming activity. The Department Memorandum Interim Guidelines on the Delivery of Routine Lymphatic Filariasis Mass Drug Administration under the National Filariasis Elimination Program (NFEP) ensured the safe and effective delivery of routine services during the pandemic. Zamboanga del Norte was able to deworm 777 770 individuals from the 789 906 targets with a coverage of 98.46%.

On 7 April 2021, a virtual Pre-TAS and TAS 1 orientation was held for the eight municipalities and one city of Sultan Kudarat. The orientation informed participants of the importance of Pre-TAS and TAS 1 in attaining and sustaining a filariasis-free area. The orientation also

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