

A conversation with Grace Hollister on June 24th, 2014

Participants

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Note: This set of notes was compiled by GiveWell and gives an overview of the major points made by Ms. Hollister.

Summary

GiveWell spoke with Ms. Hollister about Deworm the World Initiative's budget and updates on its recent programs.

India

25% of the global parasitic worm burden is in India, so deworming programs in India could have a large effect on the total worm burden.

National deworming proposal

The Indian national government has recently demonstrated an increased interest in deworming programs. The Child Health Division of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) has been particularly interested in deworming. Deworm the World Initiative (DtWI)'s program in India is working with Ajay Khera, the leader of the Child Health Division, and other staff members in the division to encourage the division to continue promoting deworming. DtWI has also been meeting with the Joint Secretary of MoHFW and requesting appointments with the Minister of Health & Family Welfare.

Deworming has been proposed to be included in the 100 Day Agenda of the new administration in India. DtWI is a stakeholder supporting this effort. DtWI has proposed to assist with several aspects of the program including planning, guideline development and other technical issues. The lead partners will be state governments, with some support from the national ministries.

Rajasthan prevalence survey

The most recent prevalence survey in Rajasthan used a different sample of children from the original survey. Prior to the survey, DtWI recommended treating for worms in all of Rajasthan on the basis of high prevalence of *Ascaris* in the west and an expectation of Hookworm in the east, but this second prevalence survey demonstrated that there was virtually no incidence of hookworm in Rajasthan. However, the survey showed that there continued to be about 20% incidence of *Ascaris* infection in Rajasthan as a whole (still concentrated in the West). DtWI continues to recommend annual deworming for worms in Rajasthan on the basis of the *Ascaris* prevalence.

Bihar deworming program

The third round of the deworming program in Bihar is currently in progress. DtWI has data from this program, but it has not published a full report yet. The full report is expected to be published in early July.

Agreements with state governments

Madhya Pradesh (MP)

According to the MP government, there is currently a program providing deworming and vitamin A supplements to all preschool-age children in the state. If high coverage is achieved, this is an impressive program, as reaching pre-school aged children is a challenge.

In early June, DtWI signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with MP's Public Health & Family Welfare Department to create a deworming program for the state's school age children. DtWI is working with the staff members of the department to implement the program.

Jharkhand

DtWI continues to explore supporting statewide programming in Jharkhand, with the support of USAID.

Other states

Due to the recent national elections, there have been significant personnel changes in many state governments. This means that, in addition to maintaining relationships with existing staff members, DtWI needs to initiate relationships with new staff.

Plans for expansion of deworming programs in India

DtWI is planning to expand its staff in India. The Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) is interested in supporting DtWI's national-level activities in India and expansion into new states.

Demand for technical assistance may rise because the WIFS program mandates deworming but does not provide guidance on how to accomplish this.

According to a recent analysis, the states that were previously believed to require greater assistance continue to be high priority. However, as DtWI continues to collect more data and reanalyze, its priorities could change.

As part of DtWI's proposal to CIFF, DtWI proposed supporting a few states with comprehensive assistance and supporting a greater number of states with brief, targeted assistance. DtWI continues to balance meeting existing obligations, obligations that come with anticipated support, and generating new business. Thus, both capacity and funding are constraints to growth.

Kenya

DtWI's original deworming program in Kenya, which began in 2009, was implemented by partners in the education sector.

The deworming program in Kenya is now in its third year and is preparing for its next deworming campaign. DtWI runs campaigns twice per year in Kenya: one in September-October and one in February-March.

Collaborations among deworming organizations

Assisting other organizations in influencing governments

DtWI collaborates with similar organizations to build capacity to assist governments in scaling up deworming programs in countries where DtWI isn't working. This allows DtWI to play a catalytic role in the sector. Collaborating with other organizations also allows DtWI to meet demand for deworming in a shorter amount of time.

DtWI is in the early stages of testing this strategy. It plans to work with an organization that has expertise in water and sanitation to help the organization support deworming in Vietnam. The grant for this project has not been finalized, so the project has not begun yet.

Uniting to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases conference

The world is still far from achieving the World Health Organization (WHO)'s goals for reducing the burden of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) including parasitic worms. More structured collaboration is needed, and there are indications that this is beginning to develop.

Uniting to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases (UCNTD) organized a conference in April 2014. The first day of the conference, which received extensive news coverage, had a panel discussion of past achievements in combating NTDs and future plans for NTD control. The World Bank, Bill Gates, the World Health Organization (WHO), and Jamie Cooper-Hohn (the chair of CIFF) participated in the discussion.

The second day of the conference focused on deworming. DtWI's deworming program in Kenya was featured, and the Kenyan health minister gave the keynote address. There was significant positive dialogue and momentum related to deworming at the conference.

Several donors announced large financial commitments summing to \$120 million for deworming, including \$50 million each from CIFF and the Gates Foundation, to be provided over the course of 5 years. Most of CIFF's funding is for technical assistance and implementation. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's commitment will go toward research, such as operational research and the development of diagnostic tools.

Budget and financials

DtWI's funding is less limited than it has been previously, and it expects to receive enough funding to meet the needs of its planned budget for 2014. DtWI has received some grants and is having discussions with other donors who may provide grants for 2015. It has more funding than it expected because of CIFF's interest in funding programs in India beginning in Q4 of 2014.

Evidence Action typically sends financial reports to its donors every financial quarter, but it did not write a report in Q1 of 2014. Currently, Evidence Action is in the midst of changing accounting systems and a full financial report is forthcoming.

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