

Schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminth infections

The Fifty-fourth World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolutions EB5.R5, WHA3.26, EB55.R22, WHA28.53 and WHA29.58 on schistosomiasis;

Noting the report on the control of schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminth infections;

Recognizing that where control measures have been implemented in a sustainable way, as demonstrated in several countries, mortality, morbidity and transmission have decreased dramatically, leading to elimination in a number of countries;

Expressing concern that 2000 million people are infected by schistosomes and soil-transmitted helminths worldwide, of whom 300 million have associated severe morbidity, and that schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminth infections are invariably more prevalent in the poorest sections of the populations residing in the least-developed countries;

Further recognizing that sanitation and safe water are essential, and that repeated chemotherapy with safe, single-dose, affordable drugs at regular intervals ensures that levels of infection are kept below those associated with morbidity, and improves health and development, especially of children,

1. ENDORSES as the best means of reducing mortality and morbidity and improving health and development in infected communities, the regular treatment of high-risk groups, particularly school-age children, and ensured access to single-dose drugs against schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminth infections in primary health care services, complemented by the simultaneous implementation of plans for basic sanitation and adequate safe water supplies.

2. URGES Member States:

(1) to sustain successful control activities in low-transmission areas in order to eliminate schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminth infections as a public health problem, and to give high priority to implementing or intensifying control of schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminth infections in areas of high transmission while monitoring drug quality and efficacy;

(2) to ensure access to essential drugs against schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminth infections in all health services in endemic areas for the treatment of clinical cases and groups at high risk of morbidity such as women and children, with the goal of attaining a minimum target

of regular administration of chemotherapy to at least 75% and up to 100% of all school-age children at risk of morbidity by 2010;

(3) to promote access to safe water, sanitation and health education through intersectoral collaboration;

(4) to ensure that any development activity likely to favour the emergence or spread of parasitic diseases is accompanied by preventive measures to limit their impact;

(5) to mobilize resources in order to sustain activities for control of schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminth infections;

3. ENCOURAGES organizations of the United Nations system, bilateral agencies, and nongovernmental organizations:

(1) to intensify support for control of helminth infections, and to take advantage of the synergy that can be created with existing initiatives for the prevention, control and elimination of other communicable diseases;

(2) to intensify support to sanitation and safe water programmes as well as taking into account the health aspects of agricultural development programmes and programmes to develop water resources with respect to the possible re-emergence of diseases;

4. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to combat schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminth infections by advocating new partnerships with organizations of the United Nations system, bilateral agencies, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector, and by continuing to provide international direction and coordination;

(2) to continue to seek the resources required to support advocacy, coordination, programmes and research activities;

(3) to continue to promote the strengthening of health systems and services as an important component of successful disease control programmes;

(4) to keep the Executive Board and Health Assembly informed of the progress made in controlling or eliminating schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminth infections in high- and low-transmission countries, respectively.

Ninth plenary meeting, 22 May 2001
A54/VR/9

= = =