

NTD News

NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES NEWSLETTER



Vanuatu integrated NTD interventions with COVID-19 community awareness campaigns and Tropical Cyclone and other disaster responses

In March 2020, the Ministry of Health in Vanuatu mobilized all the public health programmes to focus on COVID-19 community awareness activities. The national NTD programme joined the campaigns by integrating NTD activities such as yaws treatment, deworming and hand hygiene and face washing demonstration in NTD endemic communities in Port Vila municipality. Integration of NTD activities continues with the Tropical Cyclone Response in April-May 2020 and the Volcano Ash Fall Response in May 2020.

1 NEWS FROM MEMBER COUNTRIES

Cambodia

The National Helminth Control Programme performed monitoring and evaluation surveys to assess the infection rate of schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminthiasis in 30 sentinel and spot-check villages in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces from May to June 2020. This was done in collaboration with the Provincial Health Department, Health Operational Districts, health centres, village health volunteers and village chiefs in the endemic provinces.



Stool examination in schistosomiasis-endemic villages in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces, Cambodia, May-June 2020

They also conducted mass drug administration (MDA) and health education on schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminthiasis in all schistosomiasis-endemic villages in the two provinces over the same period.



MDA and health education in schistosomiasis-endemic villages in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces, Cambodia, May-June 2020

China

Surveillance and public health control activities against schistosomiasis were held in the flooded provinces from June to August 2020. Anti-cercaria cream and leaflets on self-protection against schistosomiasis were distributed to the at-risk population. Warning signs were displayed in the areas of the water body where the risk of exposure to *Schistosoma* parasites was deemed to be high.



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Schistosomiasis surveillance and control activities in the flooded provinces of China, June-August 2020

In June-August 2020, the National Institute of Parasitic Diseases (NIPD) in China Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) joined with the Shanxi Provincial CDC in conducting visceral leishmaniasis vector (sandfly) surveillance in an endemic focus in Wuxiang county, Shanxi province. 5000 *Phlebotomus chinensis* sandflies, the major vector of visceral leishmaniasis in China, were collected. The surviving flies will be used in insectaria for further insecticide susceptibility testing.



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Collection of sandflies by light traps in the caves of Wuxiang county, Shanxi province (left) and gathering engorged *Phlebotomus chinensis* for colonies (right)

On 29 June 2020, the National Meeting on Vector Surveillance and Control was held virtually. Over 4000 participants from the National Health Commission, China CDC, and provincial, city and county CDCs attended. The meeting summarized the national progress of vector control in 2019, briefed on vector surveillance and control efforts in 2020, analysed the epidemic trends of vector-borne diseases and shared vector surveillance experience among institutions within China.



@National Institute for Communicable Disease Control and Prevention
The National Meeting on Vector Surveillance and Control held virtually,
29 June 2020

To celebrate the milestone of 20 years of work by the Regional Network for Asian Schistosomiasis and other Helminthic Zoonoses (RNAS+), a special issue of the *Advances in Parasitology* was published. RNAS+ was established in 1998 in Wuxi City, China, and now has a membership of 12 Asian countries. The special issue reviewed the journey from the very beginning of the network to its recent development, with a focus on its translational research, capacity building activities, multi-disciplinary collaboration, and the impact in research and control programmes. It also proposed a research agenda to fill the current gaps and to address challenges.



@National Institute for Communicable Disease Control and Prevention
A special issue for the 20th anniversary of RNAS+ published in 2020

Fiji

The Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services implemented its LF MDA campaign using the triple drug therapy in Serua island in Central Division on 13 February 2020. Testing and treating in the adjacent Talenaua villages on the mainland took place on 14 February 2020. Treatment coverages were 96% and 90% respectively. An MDA campaign in Malolo island in Western Division was also implemented in July and August 2020, for which treatment coverage data is awaited.



Lymphatic filariasis mass drug administration campaign in Malolo Islands, Western Division, Fiji, July-August 2020



Outreach test and treat activities for lymphatic filariasis elimination in the coastal Talenaua village facing Serua Island in the Central Division, Fiji, 14 February 2020

@MOHMS, Fiji

@MOHMS, Fiji

The trachoma baseline survey recommenced in February 2020 after being interrupted by the measles outbreak, but it was brought to a halt once again by the COVID-19 pandemic after the completion of the survey in Eastern Division. The survey in other Divisions will start in October 2020.

Kiribati

The Kiribati Ministry of Health developed a national trachoma action plan in February 2020 and started the third round of the nationwide MDA campaign against trachoma in May 2020, with support from the Fred Hollows Foundation Australia and WHO. The MDA campaign covering all the outer islands should be completed in October 2020.

Lao People's Democratic Republic

On 5 May 2020, the Centre for Malariology, Parasitology and Entomology (CMPE) organized a meeting to finalize the dengue vector surveillance and control guideline for central, provincial, district and village levels. The guideline was approved by the Director of CMPE and disseminated across the country.



The national meeting to finalize the national strategic plan for rabies prevention and control 2020-2024, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 27-29 May 2020

A refresher training course on school deworming for health and education staff at the provincial and district levels was conducted from 8 to 10 June 2020, followed by a course for school principals from 15 to 19 June 2020 in Vientiane. Both sessions were facilitated by the central team from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Sport.



National Competition for Parasitic Disease Control and Prevention Techniques, Jilin, China, 21-22 August 2019



A refresher course on school deworming for health and education staff at the provincial and district levels, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 8 to 10 June 2020,

The Ministry of Health held a national meeting in Vientiane from 27 to 29 May 2020 to finalize the national strategic plan for rabies prevention and control 2020-2024, and to establish the national Rabies Committee and Taskforce. The meeting was attended by the key stakeholders from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Education and Sport and the Ministry of Defence.

The school deworming campaign was carried out across the country from 15 to 26 June 2020. Adverse events occurred in two provinces where 129 out of 7376 school-age children dewormed (1.7%) were admitted to hospital. Most of the children with adverse events were aged between 11 and 15 (lower secondary school) and nearly 90% of them were female. There was one severe case which is still being treated in hospital. In response to this, the Ministry of Health (i) conducted a press conference to explain the situation to the public immediately; (ii) temporarily interrupted the nationwide deworming campaign; (iii) investigated all cases admitted to hospitals; (iv) collected medicines from all levels of the supply chain in the country for quality testing using the WHO protocol; and (v) submitted the samples of medicines for drug

quality testing at a WHO-accredited laboratory in Australia. The results are awaited.



The press conference on adverse events associated with the nationwide deworming campaign, Vientiane, Lao PDR, on 25 June 2020

Mongolia

Every year around 7000 people receive the post-exposure rabies vaccine after a bite or scratch by a suspected rabid animal. In January-June 2020, 3719 people had received post-exposure rabies vaccine. According to the report of the National Center for Zoonotic Diseases (NCZD) under the Ministry of Health Mongolia, 75 suspected animal rabies cases have been identified from 42 soums within Arkhangai, Bayan-Ulgii, Bayankhongor, Dornogovi, Dundgovi, Govi-Altai, Khentii, Khovd, Umnugovi, Sukhbaatar and Uvs provinces. This represents a drop of 29.9% from the previous year's levels. Pre-exposure and post-exposure vaccination activities are improving. No human rabies cases have been reported since 2013.

Cystic echinococcosis (CE) is most common in poor pastoral communities, being highly endemic in most areas of Mongolia where it is a major health burden, especially to the nomadic communities. In the last few years greater efforts have been made to control echinococcosis in Mongolia. In October 2018, the NCZD, with the support of WHO, organized a multi-sectoral workshop to develop the National Action Plan for Control of Echinococcosis in Mongolia. Following the workshop, in 2019, a cross-sectoral Action Plan for the control of CE in Mongolia was elaborated. Responding to the Action Plan, quarterly deworming of dogs with praziquantel was approved by the Director General of the Veterinary Services in 2020, and so far, 344 300 pet dogs have been treated. Prior to this, a total of 1977 children aged 6-18 were examined by ultrasound in the three soums of Bayankhongor province, and doctors and veterinarians from that province were trained in the prevention and diagnosis of communicable diseases in October 2019. The screening identified eight cases of hydatid echinococcosis. In the same month, a

field survey was carried out in three selected soums of Bayankhongor province to determine the infection rate in dogs: 345 samples of dog faeces were collected, and 276 dog owner questionnaires were completed. Currently, the project team is preparing training for parasitologists of each of the 21 provinces' veterinary departments and centres for zoonotic disease, to create a nationwide surveillance network and identify the definitive host of *Echinococcus* spp. Creating a surveillance network and training skilled workers for detection is considered vital for the implementation of the Action Plan.

Nauru

Following the results of a national trachoma prevalence survey carried out in July 2019, which confirmed the endemicity of trachoma in the country and determined the need for at least one round of MDA for trachoma elimination, the Ministry of Health in Nauru conducted microplanning for a trachoma MDA campaign in January 2020, and carried out a training workshop virtually in May 2020, facilitated by the Fred Hollows Foundation Australia and WHO. This was immediately followed by implementation of a nationwide MDA campaign in May-July 2020. Treatment coverage of 81% was achieved. Impact assessment is planned in January-March 2021.



@MOH Nauru
trachoma MDA campaign
reaching work places, Nauru,
May-July 2020

Philippines

The Integrated Helminth Control Program (IHCP) of the Department of Health (DOH) made a series of monitoring visits to selected schools in Central Luzon and National Capital Region during the school deworming campaign in January 2020. This was primarily done to assess the implementation of MDA in schools, identify best practices, issues and challenges, and provide support and action to address them. One of the recommendations to emerge from the three-week visit concerned the need for health promotion and education to correct misconceptions and provide information to parents and children, which will eventually help to widen the MDA coverage.



@Paola Alpaj

Teaching schoolchildren about deworming, Caloocan High School, Caloocan City, Philippines, 5 February 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic affected most programme activities. Nonetheless, in Department Circular 2020-0167: Continuous Provision of Health Services during the COVID-19 Epidemic the DOH firmly stated the importance of maintaining essential health services during the crisis. In response, the DOH, through the IHCP and Schistosomiasis Control and Elimination Program (SCEP), issued guidance on the implementation of routine deworming services during the COVID-19 pandemic in accordance with the minimum public health standards. It emphasized that despite postponement of mass gatherings, delivery of routine deworming services would continue through the fixed post (facility-based) or house-to-house approaches, following appropriate Infection Prevention Control (IPC) measures. In addition, critical interventions, such as (a) prompt diagnosis, treatment and care of patients with

NTDs presenting at healthcare facilities, and (b) essential vector control measures should continue wherever possible.

Vanuatu

On 23 January 2020, the Ministry of Health Vanuatu celebrated the first ever Global NTD Day in selected communities in Efate island, Shefa province. The events included hygiene awareness by a livestock officer, demonstration of handwashing and distribution of soap for communities.



@Fasihah Taleo

The Global NTD Day celebration in Efate island, Shefa province, Vanuatu, 23 January 2020

The Ministry of Health organized the three-day national NTD training workshop from 18 to 20 February 2020. Over 60 participants from provincial health departments, local NGOs and UNICEF participated and learnt about detection, treatment and response to NTDs in Vanuatu. This was followed by a three-day health zone workshop in Shefa province, Zone 1, in 5-6 March 2020.



The three-day national NTD training workshop in Port Vila, Vanuatu 18-20 February 2020

@Fasihah Taleo

In March 2020, the Ministry of Health mobilized all the public health programmes to focus on COVID-19 community awareness activities. The national NTD programme joined the public health team and integrated NTD activities into the COVID-19 awareness campaign in Port Vila municipality by supplying over 4000 posters on face and hand washing along with hand washing demonstration tools, and carrying out deworming and yaws treatment within selected NTD-endemic communities.



COVID-19 community awareness activities integrated with NTD community outreach activities in Port Vila, Vanuatu, March 2020

@Fasihah Taleo



The three-day health zone workshop in Zone 1 of Shefa province, Vanuatu, 5-6 March 2020

@Fasihah Taleo

On 3 April 2020, tropical cyclone Harold hit Vanuatu. In April and May 2020, the national NTD programme integrated deworming, NTD screening (for yaws and scabies), and bednet distribution in the Tropical Cyclone Harold Response in the hardest hit provinces, namely Malampa, Sanma and Penama.



Tropical Cyclone Harold Response integrating NTD activities in Senma Province, Vanuatu, April-May 2020

@Fasihah Taleo

In May 2020, a volcano ash fall brought disaster to Tanna island, Tafea Province. The national NTD programme integrated deworming, NTD screening (for yaws and scabies) and a measles vaccination campaign into the disaster response activities. In all, 12 mobile teams were mobilized throughout Tanna island for the integrated campaign. Between February and April 2020, Tanna reported more than 400 suspected scabies cases through the national health information system.



@Fasihah Taleo

Deworming and yaws and scabies screening integrated with measles vaccination and disaster response activities against volcano ash fall in Tanna Island, Tafea Province, Vanuatu, May 2020

In June 2020, three mobile teams were mobilized to carry out deworming against soil-transmitted helminthiases, and yaws and scabies screening at communities and schools in Efate island, Shefa province.



@Fasihah Taleo

Deworming against soil-transmitted helminthiases and yaws and scabies screening in schools in Efate island, Shefa province, June 2020

On 17 June 2020, a training course to launch the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) was conducted in Norsup in Malekula island, Malampa province. 21 schools were selected to pilot the HPS in Malampa. From 20 to 23 July 2020, practical sessions were conducted within the selected four schools and implementation of deworming by school teachers was integrated in the HPS pilot.

