

INFORMATION SHEET

Guinea Worm Eradication

UNICEF Nigeria, 2007

Guinea worm Disease

Guinea Worm disease otherwise known as Dracunculiasis is a water-borne disease which affects human beings. It has an incubation period of about 12 months and manifests through the formation of blisters on any part of the body, inflicting pain on its victims who are in most cases, immobilized during the peak period of attack.

Infection occurs when a person drinks water contaminated with water flea or Cyclops which contains the worm larvae. The water flea is digested while the Guinea Worm larvae is set free; it penetrates the digestive tract and moves through the body during 9-12 months until it emerges from any part of the body. All age groups are susceptible to Guinea Worm infection. There is no treatment for Guinea worm disease, the only prevention is to avoid contaminated water.

Major causes

The disease is common in communities with low level of hygiene practice. It is mostly found in very poor communities, hard to access, uninformed and neglected areas with no safe sources of drinking water.

Most endemic Communities lack access to quality health education, social and educational facilities among others.

Socio-economic impact of the disease

The period when the worm normally emerges on the skin of people tends to coincide with the peak farming season, hence Guinea Worm infection not only renders the victim immobile, it causes poverty and hunger. For this practical reason, it is often referred to as 'masiyaci' in Hausa, meaning

'the troublesome one' and 'sobia' in Yoruba meaning 'poverty'.

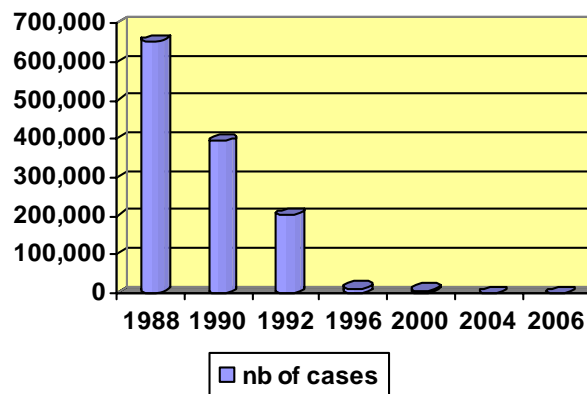
As most Guinea Worm endemic Communities lack health clinics, infected school children cannot attend classes, either temporarily or sometimes permanently.

Infected individuals are unable to attend to their means of livelihoods and to fend for their families. Infected mothers are unable to provide adequate care especially to infants resulting in conditions such as diarrhea, malnutrition, skin infections. They are unable to walk any great distance to immunise their babies against childhood killer diseases.

Towards Eradication

Guinea Worm disease is very promising for eradication because of its mode of transmission, barriers for prevention and its seasonal transmission. Impressive results have been reached in Nigeria.

Evolution of the Guinea worm disease cases



In 1988, the first national case search recorded 653,620 cases in almost all states throughout Nigeria. In 2005, only 120 cases were reported in 6 states. This shows a reduction of 99,9 % in 16 years. There has been further reduction in 2006. As at end of 2006, 16 guinea worm cases have been recorded in 5 States and 6 LGAs. The States are Ebonyi, Enugu, Cross River,

Ogun, Zamfara. In 2007, unfortunately an upsurge was reported in Enugu and Cross River States with a total of 42 cases as at end of August 2007.

In preparation for certification of Nigeria as guinea worm free, the President inaugurated a National Committee on Certification for Guinea worm Disease Eradication in 2005 with membership drawn from the academia, UNICEF, WHO, and The Carter Centre. This Certification Committee is functional and meets quarterly.

Despite the results achieved in Nigeria, the certification of Nigeria as Guinea worm free country will only be given if Nigeria has not recorded a single Guinea Worm case during three years. Therefore the Guinea Worm Eradication Programme needs to be sustained in the coming years.

Guinea Worm Eradication Programme

The progress made are the result of concerted efforts of the Federal Ministry of Health through the Nigerian Guinea Worm Eradication Programme (NIGEP) and its partners: Global 2000, the Yakubu Gowon Center, the Carter Center, WHO, UNICEF, DFID and the Government of Japan.

The main interventions are :

- Case surveillance and detection
- Social Mobilization and Advocacy
- Filtration of unsafe water for domestic purposes
- Chemical treatment of water source
- Health Education and Sanitation development
- Case containment and management
- Provision of safe water through boreholes

The commitment of General Yakubu Gowon, former head of State of Nigeria, and its tremendous advocacy work at all level has been a great asset in the fight against the Guinea Worm Disease.

UNICEF Contribution

Between 2002 and 2004, UNICEF has spent about US \$ 3,8 Million (500 Million Naira) for Guinea Worm eradication.

This money has been invested in the following activities:

- Provision / rehabilitation of safe water sources, particularly hand pump boreholes, development of springs and dug wells in endemic Communities.
- Support advocacy and community mobilization activities as well as supervision, surveillance, monitoring, programme review meetings and documentation.
- Capacity building / training at all levels of programme implementation.
- Hygiene education and promotion programmes at community level.
- Provision of provision of vehicles, motorcycles and bicycles to partners at National, State, LGA and Community levels for programme supervision and monitoring
- Distribution of filter and production of straw filter production
- Case containment and management
- Provision of equipment and materials to community based workers.

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