

Health ministry set to hold world's largest 'Deworming Program' in India

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By : BioVoice News Desk - February 9, 2016



The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India has announced the pan-India rollout of National Deworming Day, a nation-wide, preschool (anganwadi) and school-based deworming effort that will be observed across India on February 10, 2016 to deworm all children at risk of worm infection.

Launched in 2015, National Deworming Day 2016 is the largest single-day, school-based deworming effort in the world.

Parasitic worms, or soil-transmitted helminths (STH), are among the most common infections worldwide. More than 1.5 billion people or 24% of the world's population suffer from worm infections

globally. Mass, school-based deworming is safe, cost-effective, and can rapidly be scaled to millions of children at one time. The Government of India's fixed one-day school-based program ensures that the maximum number of children are reached cost-effectively.

India has the highest burden of soil-transmitted helminths in the world, with 220 million children aged 1-14 at risk of worm infections. Worms interfere with nutrient uptake in children; can lead to anaemia, malnourishment and impaired mental and physical development. Rigorous research has shown that worms also pose a serious threat to children's education and productivity later in life. Deworming reduces the risk of worm infections in children.

National Deworming Day in 2015 reached more than 89.9 million children in 10 states and 1 union territory.

Community mobilisation and outreach efforts are also being undertaken and engage health workers, including ASHAs, to raise awareness about the harmful effects of worm infections, the benefits of deworming, and to encourage community participation in the program.

State specific Information: Telangana

In Telangana, On National Deworming Day, Albendazole 400 mg chewable tablet will be administered to children aged 1-19 at 30,000 government and government-aided schools, NCLP, Social and Tribal Welfare, Central Government schools, and madrasas. 13,000 private schools are also participating. Children aged 1-5 and out-of-school children will be dewormed at 35,000 *anganwadis*. The state of Telangana aims to deworm a total of 80,00,000 children between the ages of 1-19 on National Deworming Day.

Leading up to National Deworming Day, the state of Telangana trained over 43,000 teachers and 31,000 *anganwadi* workers. State and district-level stakeholder meetings were also conducted to ensure all program activities are in place before the deworming round.