



6 June 2016 – The first national deworming campaign for soil-transmitted helminthiasis in Egypt has reached an estimated 2 million school-age children.

The campaign, led by the Endemic Diseases Department at the Ministry of Health and Population, in collaboration with the WHO Country Office in Egypt, mostly targeted children of around 6 years of age in the first grade of primary school.

"School-age children typically have the highest intensity of worm infection of any age group", said Dr Ayat Haggag, Undersecretary for Endemic Diseases at the Ministry of Health and Population. "Schools offer an ideal platform to deliver cost-effective treatment as they have an available infrastructure and teachers who can support health care workers."

During the 3-week campaign, covering 1 980 708 school children in 271 districts through 27 governorates, children were asked to take 2 doses – 2 weeks apart – of chewable tablets of the anthelmintic medicine, albendazole.

"Albendazole is safe, and is the most commonly used medicine to treat intestinal worms in children", said Dr John Jabbour, WHO Representative in Egypt. "In communities where infection is common, all children should be offered treatment."

The aim is to decrease the prevalence of intestinal parasites and prevent associated complications (diarrhoea, anaemia, and malnutrition) that will ultimately affect growth rate and concentration among school-aged children.

Deworming tablets such as albendazole (and also mebendazole) are heat-stable and require no cold chain for delivery. For this first national campaign, WHO provided the Endemic Diseases Department with 4 million chewable tablets of albendazole. Furthermore, WHO supported operational costs as well as social mobilization and communication for the campaign.

The campaign was conducted in phases during the second semester of this scholastic year, starting on 13 March 2016 and ending on 7 April 2016. The Endemic Diseases Department collaborated with the Ministry of Education and nongovernmental organizations to facilitate implementation of the campaign.

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