World Health Organization

HEALTH HARARE

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Zimbabwe launches Mass Drug Administration against schistosomiasis and intestinal worms

The campaign banner

Wedza, 17 Sept. 2012 In line with the new global momentum towards the control, elimination and eradication of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), Zimbabwe launched a mass drug administration against schistosomiasis (bilharzia) and soil transmitted helminthes (intestinal worms) at a function held at Wedza High School. The mass drug administration is the final phase of a process which started with a national prevalence survey in 2010, and the development of the master plan that began in 2011 and completed in 2012

Dr S. Midzi presenting WHO remarks

The National Prevalence Survey of 2010 showed that Mashonaland East Province, under which Wedza district falls was one of the highly affected. The mass drug administration will therefore target people, mainly under the age of 15, and will be delivered through the country's network of schools and health facilities in the high burden districts. The mass drug administration was made possible by WHO which donated to the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare Praziquantel (PZQ) used in the treatment of bilharzia, and Albendazole (ALB) for intestinal worms. A total of 2 583 000 PZQ tablets (600mg), and 2 450 200 ALB tablets (400mg) were donated. These drugs are expected to cover 3 794 638 people mainly under the age of 15 in the high burden districts.

Dr Dokora, Dep. Minister of Education, Arts, Sports and Culture presenting his remarks

Speaking at the launch on behalf of the WHO Representative a.i. Dr Stanley Midzi said WHO has been working with member states in the African Region (AFRO) to carry out mapping exercises on the burden of NTDs, develop plans, and mobilize

resources and donate drugs for selected priority NTDs including schistosomiasis and intestinal worms. "In Zimbabwe, WHO has supported all these processes beginning with the national prevalence survey in 2010, followed by the development of the master plan and subsequently the donation of drugs against schistosomiasis and intestinal worms in 2012," said Dr Midzi. He also acknowledged that the school system is a critical vehicle for the implementation of a mass drug administration campaign such as this. The same sentiments were shared by the UNICEF representative who said school children are the most vulnerable to bilharzia and intestinal worms, and at the same time are effective educators of their families and communities on health issues. "School children are therefore pivotal in such a public health program," she said.

Ms Fissum Assefa from UNICEF making her remarks

The Deputy Minister of Education, Arts, Sports and Culture, Dr Dokora acknowledged the efforts of the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare in treating bilharzia and intestinal worms in school children. He said that health and education are intrinsically linked because without health, education will not take place, and without education, health will not be achieved. He also said the joint leadership of the mass drug administration campaign by the Ministries of health and education will be a critical success factor for the exercise in all high burden districts.

School children entertaining guests during the launch

Drug administration kicked off at the launch and some students from Gumbonzvanda primary school were the first ones to receive the drugs. Teams are on the ground from 17—21 Sept. moving around schools and health centers in the high burden districts administering drugs to all eligible children.

Dr Manangazira Director, EDC explaining the dosages

The first boy to receive the drugs being measured, given his tablets and taking them

Smiles from the first 3 to receive the drugs at the launch.

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