



Introduction

Controlling neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) is an important part of nutrition. Diseases such as schistosomiasis and intestinal worms, including hookworm and ascariasis, are underlying causes of stunting, wasting and micronutrient deficiencies. At the same time, poor nutrition increases susceptibility to NTD infection - perpetuating a cycle of disease, malnutrition and poverty.

NTDs are a group of bacterial and parasitic diseases that infect one in six people worldwide and undermine the effects of good nutrition.

How NTDs Impact Nutrition

Controlling NTDs is an important part of improving nutrition, as they often exacerbate the effects of malnourishment. Schistosomiasis, also known as snail fever, and intestinal worm infections lead to anemia, malnutrition or both. Even when children and adults have enough food to eat, these diseases can rob their bodies of the nutrients they need. Together, schistosomiasis and intestinal worms infect more than one billion people worldwide.



Intestinal worm infections and schistosomiasis exacerbate malnutrition and contribute to the loss of iron and Vitamin A - two nutrients critical for good health and proper growth and development.

The combination of NTDs and malnutrition leads to poor physical growth and hinders cognitive development.

The consequences of NTDs are particularly detrimental for expectant mothers, who need iron and key nutrients during pregnancy to ensure that their babies are healthy from the start of life.

Combining Efforts



Several studies have shown that combining deworming with other nutritional interventions – such as Vitamin A and iron supplementation – can lead to better outcomes than providing supplements alone.

Leading economists for the 2012 Copenhagen Consensus – a project intended to set priorities for improvements in global welfare – ranked deworming as one of the most cost-effective health interventions, especially when bundled with micronutrient supplementation.

In response, a number of multilateral organizations, governments, NGOs and endemic countries are implementing programs that deliver deworming for intestinal worms and schistosomiasis alongside other nutrition and health interventions:

Vaccination Week in the Americas (VWA), a platform that delivers critical interventions such as deworming, Vitamin A supplementation and health education has been institutionalized by many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Guatemala's national NTD plan, for example, is directly linked to the country's Zero Hunger Plan, which strengthens policies and expands the benefits of these programs to more children in need.

India has adopted a comprehensive approach to its National Iron+ Initiative, which delivers deworming alongside iron supplementation as part of its broader efforts to address anemia.

To advance its commitment to maternal and child health, the Canadian government has carried out expanded health and nutrition programs that incorporate micronutrient supplementation, deworming and screening for acute malnutrition.

Ethiopia has seen success in distributing multiple interventions as once including Vitamin A and deworming treatments during Community Health Days.

Call to Action

To have a truly sustainable impact, international policymakers, advocates and program implementers must recognize the role of NTDs in causing malnutrition and support integrated approaches to addressing nutrition and NTDs. Capitalizing on the combined resources of the NTD and malnutrition communities and integrating approaches with other sectors will accelerate and sustain progress toward improving health and reducing poverty and inequality.

For more information, please visit www.globalnetwork.org/hunger-and-nutrition