

Over 4 Million Children De-wormed in 4 Days



▲ Child taking albendazole tablet for treatment of intestinal worms

In the span of less than a week, over 4.2 million children across Rwanda were treated for intestinal worms and more than 100,000 treated for schistosomiasis. This herculean effort was the second campaign led by the Ministry of Health in partnership with the Access Project and other partners. Taking place at 1,998 sites across the country, March 24-27 2009, the campaign was a component of the Rwandan Ministry of Health's Mother and Child Health Week.

"We have devoted an entire week to treat mothers and children for some of the most prevalent diseases so that they are healthy enough to have a better future," said Dr. Fidel Ngabo, Coordinator of Rwanda's Maternal and Child Health Task Force.

"De-worming children is beneficial to the country's development because Rwanda's future lies in their hands"
- Bosenibamwe Aimé,
Northern Province Governor

If left untreated, intestinal worms (also known as STH) and schistosomiasis can have devastating impacts. These include stunted physical and mental development, liver, intestinal and bladder damage, chronic fatigue, anemia, and even death. "Children are often absent from school because they don't feel well. Some have stunted growth – especially those under 10 years – and often appear weak. Sometimes, even when they are in school, they have difficulty concentrating and learning," said Consolata Nduwamariya, head teacher at Remera Primary School in Musanze District.

Nationwide surveys conducted by the Ministry of Health through TRAC Plus and the Access Project in 2007 and 2008 revealed that STH has an overall prevalence of 66% among children 10-16 years old. Surveys also showed schistosomiasis prevalence rates as high as 70% among children living in close proximity to lakes Burera, Ruhondo, and Muhazi.

STH and schistosomiasis are the most common parasitic infections worldwide, causing severe sickness in close to 1 billion people. Almost all cases occur in the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. They keep people – and entire countries – from reaching their full potential..to [page 3](#)

Construction of New Health Center in Gashora

It is June 2010 and the people of Gashora have a health center with enough space and equipment to provide critical preventive and curative services, uninterrupted electricity and running water, and clean, functional toilets. With over 20 full time staff and good management systems in place, a patient waits no longer than 20 minutes for a consultation. People who suspect they are infected with TB or other diseases get diagnosed and treated early.

This vision of the future is very different from the health center of today, but will be a reality in just a few months. With funding from Columbia University's Earth Institute and U.S.-based NGO Rwanda Works, and oversight from the Access Project, the people of Gashora will have a new health center by July..... to [page 2](#)

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Construction of New Health Center in Gashora

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“Having this new health center will change a lot in this community,” said Habimana Landuard, Senior Nurse at Gashora health center. Currently, Habimana and his colleagues work in a small building originally designed in 1987 to serve as a dispensary rather than a health center. The building has no running water and operates without power.

Patients wait up to six hours to receive care because there are too few nurses and too few consultation rooms to serve Gashora’s population of 20,000. “At times, three services are provided simultaneously in one room,” said Jean Marie Rukanikigitero, Access District Health Advisor for Bugesera. Gashora has neither the space nor the equipment to provide TB tests, ARV therapy, or other critically needed services. Community members must often walk eight hours to health centers with more modern facilities. Those who are unable to take time away from farming or fishing don’t visit a health center at all, allowing illnesses to progress and contagion to spread.

Access has worked in Gashora since 2006, providing support in areas such as financial management, human resources, and information technology. Although service delivery has been significantly improved – as evidenced by increased consultation rates and mutuelle (health insurance) enrollment – the lack of basic infrastructure prevents further improvement. “It is impossible to ask people to manage things which are not there! There is a minimum they should have,” said Dr. Rukanikigitero.

Gashora’s new health center will have consultation and hospitalization facilities equipped to provide ARV treatment, vaccinations, maternity care, family planning, and minor surgical interventions. Its lab will perform TB, malaria, and other tests.



Gashora’s new health center to be completed by the end of June, 2009

The health center will also have a meeting room large enough to accommodate training for health workers and other community members. “Once we have the new center, we will be able to reach the people more efficiently to teach and advise them on preventing diseases. I feel in two years we’ll be focusing more on preventive services,” said Habimana.

“I feel in two years we’ll be focusing more on preventive services” - Habimana Landuard, Gashora Senior Nurse

The locals of Gashora believe the new health center will not only bring quality health care, but also economic development. “We’re now included in the country’s vision and development plans,” said 50 year-old Beatrice Mukanyangizo, a lifetime Gashora resident. “I think it will be beautiful. I am really happy. Even if I don’t get to enjoy the benefits of having such developments, at least I know my children will.”

Gashora is the first of three new health centers Access is helping to build this year, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Rwanda Works.

For more information on the Gashora health center and other Access projects, visit www.theaccessproject.com. □

Solar Energy in Health Centers

The Access Project recently installed solar panels in four health centers. Each of these health centers had previously had inadequate energy or no energy at all. “Without power, we had to deliver babies and perform other procedures with candles, kerosene lamps, or in the dark. We never knew if the equipment was properly sterilized, we couldn’t see if a baby was in distress,” said Harelimana Assoumpta, Senior Nurse at Kamabuye Health Center.

Based on an assessment of cost and feasibility, Access decided to install photovoltaic (PV) systems in Kamabuye and three other health centers. “I no longer have to leave the room in search of a light source when kerosene runs out in the middle of delivering a baby,” Assoumpta said with a big smile. “The deliveries will be safer and the patients happier.” □



SUCCESS STORIES

Partnership Saves Newborns



▲ Incubators donated by GE to Nyamata Hospital

Also in the nursery, 49 year-old Mukandori Drocelle protectively looks at her grandson. Mukandori's daughter – the baby's mother – was brought to Nyamata two days ago. Both mother and baby were in distress, and unfortunately, reached the hospital too late for the mother to be saved. Her baby boy, however, is alive and becoming stronger every day. Mukandori attributes the baby's survival to the hospital's new incubator. "When the baby was born, he was cold and was not turning or crying. When they put him in the machine, he started moving and crying," said Mukandori.

"In Rwanda we see people, when given resources and opportunities, who do something with them"
- Robert L. Corcoran, GE Vice-President of Corporate Citizenship

In addition to the six incubators, GE donated baby cots, an oxygen machine, and other medical equipment. GE also provided training and installation, and will offer ongoing technical and managerial support. The donation is part of GE's Developing Health Globally™ (DHG) initiative, an effort to improve healthcare delivery in rural Africa. The initiative began in 2004 in Ghana and sought to expand to Rwanda in 2006. The Access Project, having worked to improve healthcare in Rwanda since 2003,

helped GE to identify local needs and develop processes to work with government and other partners. "Access was critical to the success of DHG execution in Rwanda," said Krista Bauer, GE's Director of Global Programs. Access will continue to partner with GE as it expands DHG activities to six additional hospitals in Rwanda this year.

"In Rwanda we see people, when given resources and opportunity, who do something with them," said Robert L. Corcoran, GE Vice President of Corporate Citizenship. These resources are needed now more than ever. Daria Mukasoni, Director of Nyamata Hospital, estimates that 10-15 babies are prematurely born there every month in need of incubators. This number is growing at Nyamata, as it is at other hospitals around the country.

Both Baby Mukarurangwa and Baby Mbanzedore are responding well to care and will soon be released from the hospital. Each will receive a name at a traditional village ceremony in the weeks to come. Thanks to the donated incubators, and the technical and management support required to use them effectively, grandmother Mukandori and mother Mbanzedore will be able to celebrate the introduction of these babies into their communities as they begin their lives. □

It is midday – the feeding time for babies at Nyamata District Hospital nursery – and a group of women are breastfeeding or giving formula to newborns. Mbanzedore Francoise watches her recently delivered baby boy through the glass of an incubator, in which he rests peacefully.

Mbanzedore gave birth at seven months. Fortunately, she reached the hospital early in her delivery, and that hospital had recently received a donation of six incubators from General Electric (GE.) Mbanzedore credits the incubator for saving her baby's life. "When babies are in that machine, it is as though they are in a womb," she says, pointing at the incubator. "They are warm and receive protection as though they were in the mother."

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"To have a better future and participate in the development of your country, you have to be in good health," said Tommy Thompson, former U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary and current Global Ambassador of the Global Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases.

Improvements in intellectual development and cognition following child de-worming programs have been shown to have a substantial

impact on productivity levels later in life. In Japan, de-worming programs in the 1950s are considered one reason for the country's subsequent economic boom.

"De-worming children is beneficial to the country's development because Rwanda's future lies in their hands," said Bosenibamwe Aimé, Northern Province Governor. With continued focus and attention on preventing and treating these infections, a generation of Rwandans can grow up smarter, stronger, and more productive. □

OTHER NEWS

Peace Corps Volunteers Join The Access Project

Rwanda's new Peace Corps volunteers, the first group to arrive since Peace Corps officially closed its offices here in 1994, were sworn into service in April. The volunteers will be in Rwanda for two years, working with community based organizations, non-governmental organizations, and local government institutions.

Of the 31 volunteers, four will be working with the Access Project. The volunteers come from diverse professional

backgrounds, including teaching and public health. Each volunteer will be based in one of six districts, working with Access District Health Advisors to improve health care management.

"Our volunteers are eager to get to their sites and work alongside their Rwandan colleagues to improve health of all Rwandans and promote better understanding between the people of the two countries," said John Reddy, Country Director of Peace Corps in Rwanda. □

Visit From Legatum



▲ Presentation on NTD Program by Dr Karibushi

A delegation from Legatum, a privately owned international investment group that supports the Access Project's efforts to

eliminate neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), visited the Access Project in late 2008.

The team from Legatum included its President, Mark Stoleson.

The Legatum Foundation is the granting arm of the Legatum group of companies, and promotes sustainable development throughout the world. The foundation is actively involved in efforts to eliminate NTDs in order to reduce global poverty. □

Upcoming:

Access Project to Attend 26th ICC



▲ Access Project conducting prevalence survey

The Access Project will present results of a nation-wide prevalence survey on soil-transmitted helminths and schistosomiasis at the 26th International Congress of Chemotherapy and Infection (ICC).

The survey was the most extensive and comprehensive study on neglected tropical diseases to date in Rwanda, and was conducted in partnership with the Rwandan Ministry of Health.

The ICC will be held in Toronto, Canada June 18-21. It is a premier international scientific and clinical congress about microbiology, epidemiology, diagnosis and therapy of infectious diseases, as well as antimicrobial chemotherapy. □

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