



# PRESS RELEASE

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## Campaign against Neglected Tropical Diseases

Kigali, Rwanda — The Ministry of Health, in partnership with Columbia University's Access Project, will conduct a Mass Drug Administration (MDA) Campaign against worms and schistosomiasis - two of Rwanda's most prevalent Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) - through the Integrated Measles Campaign in all 30 districts of Rwanda from 6 to 9 October 2009.

The Access Project conducted a national prevalence survey on schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminths (STH, commonly known as intestinal worms) in 2008, which showed that on average, 65.8% of school age children were infected with one or more STH. The STH prevalence rate reached 100% in some areas. The overall prevalence of schistosomiasis, also known as bilharzia or "snail fever", was 2.7%, with the highest prevalence rate reaching 69.5% in some areas. One of the strategies to reduce the morbidity and mortality resulting from these NTDs is large-scale drug distribution in schools (for enrolled children) and in the communities (for non-enrolled children).

The campaign is expected to deworm about four million children, providing mebendazole tablets to children aged 12 to 59 months and albendazole, for children aged 5 to 16 years. Children from 5 to 16 years will also receive praziquantel tablets against schistosomiasis, but only in endemic areas (Rutsiro, Nyamasheke, Gakenke, Gicumbi, Nyagatare and Ngoma districts). The drugs will be administered by health center staff, community health workers, and teachers in all 30 districts of the country.

This is the third such effort to control NTDs. During the most recent effort in March 2009, part of the Ministry of Health's Mother and Child Health Week, more than 4.2 million children across Rwanda were treated for intestinal worms. Soil-transmitted intestinal worms 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 communities.

This campaign's interventions will also include immunization against polio and measles for children under 5 years old and Vitamin A and iron supplements for children of all ages, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers; about 4 million children from birth to 16 years, 300,000 pregnant women and 50,000 breastfeeding mothers are expected to be covered during the Integrated Measles Campaign.

The Ministry of Health has organized the campaign in partnership with WHO, UNICEF, the Access Project, USAID, the Global Fund, the World Food Program, and the Red Cross.

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### About the Access Project

The Access Project improves the health of poor communities by applying a business management approach to public health systems, to improve health infrastructure and increase access to life-saving drugs and quality care.

The Access Project and other partners are partnering with the Ministry of Health to build the processes and capacity within Rwanda's health system to dramatically reduce the burden of NTDs, including soil transmitted helminthiasis, schistosomiasis and trachoma."

For more information please visit [www.theaccessproject.com](http://www.theaccessproject.com) or contact us directly  
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