

Haiti is one of only four countries in the Americas where lymphatic filariasis is still transmitted, but of these, Haiti bears the greatest burden. In 2000, the Ministry of Health and Population (MSPP), working with partners, started Mass Drug Administration (MDA) in the areas where the highest prevalence of LF had been identified by distributing an annual dose of Diethylcarbamazine Citrate (DEC) and Albendazole to the eligible population. Eventually, an integrated NTD control program combining the LF and STH programs was created and program partners, including IMA

World Health, the University of Notre Dame and the Centers for Diseases Control began a planned scale up to achieve national coverage for MDA, which will be realized by the end of 2011.

The program uses volunteers known as community leaders to educate, sensitize and mobilize the population for MDA. Educating the population teaches them that lymphedema and hydrocele are caused by LF and not supernatural causes as commonly thought.

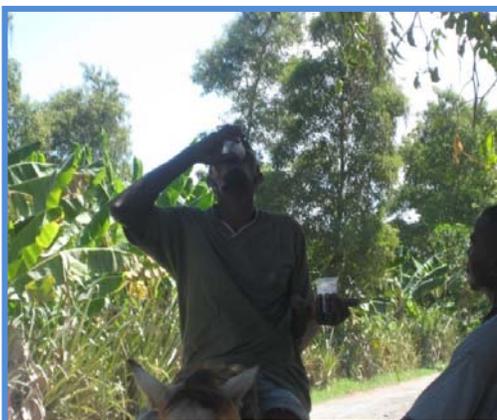


Of the 14 neglected tropical diseases identified by the World Health Organization, IMA World Health's current programs focus on the prevention, treatment, control and/or elimination of NTDs in Haiti, Tanzania, India, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. IMA has been involved with the LF elimination program in Haiti since 1998 in morbidity management of LF patients and then implementing MDA activities starting in 2002. Since 2007, IMA has led in the implementation and scale up of USAID/RTI supported MDA, targeting LF and STH through annual distribution of DEC and Albendazole. The program has continued to operate despite a number of challenges, including the devastating 2010 earthquake, political instability, and the ongoing cholera epidemic. With the assistance of over 18,000 community volunteers, this year IMA will treat more than 4.7 million Haitians as a result of partnerships with USAID, RTI, the Haitian Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education, and other partners.

The pictures depict an MDA that took place in a commune called Limonade, located in the North Department in Haiti. A 50 year old man, Pierre*, has stopped at a distribution post to participate in MDA. His mode of transportation is a horse, which should indicate the rural location of this post!



As program staff, we were curious to know why he had travelled out of his way to take the pills. He shared his reasons for coming to the post. His neighbor, Jean Marie, who was the same age, had been suffering from hydrocele for more than 20 years. Everyone in the community said it was caused by having sex with a married woman! Jean Marie was poor and had spent a lot of money visiting voodoo priests who claimed that they could cure the swelling. Nothing seemed to work and he was treated badly by his family and friends and ostracized by his neighbors as they thought the disease was contagious.



Recently community leader, Mildor Michelet, held a meeting in the community to tell the population about the upcoming MDA and he used posters to explain the disease, symptoms, treatment, and prevention.

Following the meeting, Pierre went to Jean Marie to explain to him what he had learned at the meeting and advised him to visit the health center about his case. About a month later, Jean Marie was able to have a surgery that helped him to once again have a normal life.

Mildor also told community members to take the pills offered at the distribution post in order to prevent cases of hydrocele and lymphedema. Pierre did not want to end up in a situation like Jean Marie so he travelled by horse to the post so he could take the pills.

These types of stories are not uncommon and are often heard at distribution posts when drug distributors ask people why they have come to take the pills. Through leadership from the Haitian government, funding support from donors like USAID, CDC, and Gates, implementing partners like IMA World Health and University of Notre Dame, generous drug donations from GSK, and most of all the

community volunteers, the program will have national coverage this year and treat all eligible people through the program leading to a healthier Haiti!

*Some names have been changed