

**INTERNATIONAL
MEDICAL
OUTREACH**

Rapid Appraisal on
Soil-transmitted helminthiasis (Intestinal parasites) in

**Bertrand-des-Platons,
Haiti**

August 2015

Preface

An International Medical Outreach (IMO) team collected the data used in this report and reached the conclusions presented under the direction of Dr. Todd M. Price, IMO Director. The team measured the height and weight of the children tested and collected the stool samples and blood samples used in the study. They also conducted the stool analysis and blood analysis on site in Bertrand des Platons, Haiti.

Questions or comments on the study can be directed to info@imoutreach.com.



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Introduction

Soil-transmitted helminthiasis (STH) refers to a set of parasitic diseases caused by a group of intestinal worms collectively called soil-transmitted helminths (STHs) that are transmitted primarily through contaminated soil. Approximately two billion people worldwide are infected with STHs and an additional four billion are at risk. Of these, children are most susceptible to infection due to their frequent exposure to a contaminated environment through playing, eating raw vegetables and fruits, and direct contact with soil and water. Heavy infections of STHs decrease nutritional status, affect school performance, and lower resistance to other infectious diseases while chronic infections lead to malnutrition, stunted growth, and diminished intellectual capacity.

Explanation of Rapid Appraisal

In August 2015, an International Medical Outreach team conducted our own independent testing for STH in Bertrand-des-Platons, Haiti. This independent testing, or Rapid Appraisal, measured a sample group of children throughout the area on six parameters: stool analysis, height, weight, and blood analysis that includes testing for the incidence of anemia, malaria, and HIV. These parameters are described below.

Stool Analysis

Microscopic examination of a simple stool smear is sufficient in diagnosing STH because of the enormous daily output of eggs by gravid female worms. The procedure is simple: collect a fresh (same day) stool sample, prepare slide, examine sample under a microscope, and record findings. This process of observing and identifying eggs in the feces under a microscope is enough to determine the presence of ascariasis, enterobiasis, hookworm infection, and strongyloidiasis and can be performed on site, given that there is a power source for the microscope.

Height and Weight

Children are highly susceptible to dietary deficiencies that lead to malnutrition. Chronic malnutrition can cause a higher susceptibility to disease, a significant drop in IQ, and stunted physical growth. Interpretation of measurements of height and weight for children in relation to a standard growth chart is essential to confirm a child's healthy growth and development. An International Growth Chart released by the World Health Organization depicts the growth of children from birth to 5 years who had been raised in six different countries (Brazil, Ghana, India, Norway, Oman, and USA) according to recommended nutritional and health practices. After the age of five, the WHO recommends the use of the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) charts. The optimal growth displayed in these growth charts represents the prescribed gold standard for children's growth or the way all healthy children should grow.

The internationally recommended way to assess malnutrition at population level is to take body or anthropometric measurements (weight and height) and consider these in relation to each other. Weight alone has little meaning unless it is related to a child's age or height. The WHO recommends using this data to monitor trends.

The measurements collected for each child are used to determine percentiles of height-for-age, weight-for-age, and body mass index. For example, when a child's weight-for-age is plotted at the 95th percentile line, it means that 5 out of 100 children (5%) of the same age and sex have a higher weight. These percentiles reveal the balance among those falling in the top-tenth and bottom-tenth of the tested population. They also reveal the prevalence of stunting (defined as children with height-for-age below the 5TH percentile), underweight (defined as children with weight-for-age below the 5TH percentile), and wasting (defined as children with body mass index below the 5TH percentile).

Blood Analysis

Anemia

Anemia occurs when there are an insufficient number of red blood cells necessary to carry nutrients and oxygen to the tissues of the body. It is identified by a decrease in the number of red blood cells, hemoglobin and hematocrit and can cause symptoms such as lightheadedness, fatigue, and weakness.

All intestinal parasites can contribute to the incidence of anemia. Hookworms, for example, feed on red blood cells by attaching to mucosal tissues. The loss of blood is exacerbated by an anticoagulant released by the parasite that remains active even after the worm has migrated to another site along the intestinal wall. Anemia is an issue especially in countries where the dietary intake of iron is already marginal and where malaria, another cause of anemia, is widespread.

For this Rapid Appraisal, an instant hemoglobin analyzer (Hemocue) is used to measure hemoglobin. Hemoglobin is a protein molecule within the red blood cell that carries oxygen from the lungs to the body's tissues and returns carbon dioxide from the tissues back to the lungs. A lower than normal hemoglobin level reflects a lower than normal number of red blood cells.

Malaria

Malaria infects RBCs and causes them to break up, which results in anemia. Malaria is a treatable disease that can be assessed easily by a blood smear examined under a microscope or rapid blood testing via a finger stick.

Performing the malaria smear serves two purposes: (1) a negative result rules out malaria as a cause of anemia, and (2) a positive result exposes the disease and the need for treatment.

HIV

One out of five people with HIV do not know that they are infected. Most of the signs and symptoms of HIV do not show up until the disease has far progressed to AIDS. By that point, the condition is more complicated and the disease can be more difficult to treat.

Most children living with HIV become infected through mother-to-child transmission. Children born to mothers living with HIV or children living in circumstances of high risk need to be tested as soon as possible after birth to find out if they are infected with the virus, and if necessary, start antiretroviral treatment. Unfortunately, only 35 percent of children in this situation are tested.

Children older than 18 months should be tested using rapid diagnostic testing, which detects HIV antibodies in the blood. This is appropriate for children older than 18 months as they have developed their own antibodies to HIV, and no longer carry their mother's.

HIV infection and malnutrition often affect the same populations, particularly in resource-limited settings.

Results of Rapid Appraisal

Stool Analysis

Soil-transmitted helminthiasis

	NUMBER TESTED	NUMBER POSITIVE	PREVALENCE
Total	187	130	69.5%
Girls	95	62	65.3%
Below 12 years old	72	46	63.9%
12 years and older	23	16	69.6%
Boys	91	67	73.6%
Below 12 years old	67	51	76.1%
12 years and older	24	16	66.7%

- 69.5% represents an extremely high overall prevalence.
- Only one slide per stool sample was examined. Thus, the prevalence of STH infections observed in this study might have been underestimated.
- WHO recommends mass treatment twice per year.

Five types of helminths were found: Hookworm, Pinworm, Roundworm, Tapeworm, and Whipworm. These types are described in detail starting on page 13. The distribution of each helminth among those testing positive is represented below.

TYPE OF HELMINTH	NUMBER POSITIVE	PREVALENCE
Hookworm	60	46.2%
Pinworm	21	16.2%
Roundworm	38	29.2%
Tapeworm	15	11.5%
Beef Tapeworm	12	9.2%
Fish Tapeworm	3	2.3%
Whipworm	1	0.8%
More than one species	5	3.6%

- Five types of helminths are identified, with 3.6% of the tested population having more than one type.
- Hookworm is the most common (46.2%) helminth found within this community.
 - Open defecation and poor sanitary conditions are the main causes of high prevalence.
 - The larvae enter the body by penetrating the skin usually through the bottom of the feet.
 - Major manifestation of hookworm infection is anemia.
- Roundworm is the second most common (29.2%) helminth.
 - Associated with poor personal hygiene and hand washing practices.
 - Transmitted by the ingestion of eggs from contaminated soil, water, and raw fruits and vegetables.
 - The most important consequence of ascariasis is the impact on physical and intellectual development.
- Pinworm is third most common (16.2%)
 - There may be no symptoms other than itching in the anal and rectal area
 - Pinworm infections are spread from person to person. Children scratch the rectal area, get eggs on their fingers or under their fingernails, and transport the eggs to bedding, clothing, and other items and other people.
 - Good hand washing practices, especially under the fingernails, will reduce the spread.
- Tapeworm is the fourth most common (11.5%)
 - Both beef tapeworm (9.2%) and fish tapeworm (2.3%) were found.
 - The main cause of tapeworm infection in people is eating undercooked meat from infected animals.

- Tapeworm eggs are also passed in bowel movements. A person who does not wash their hands after using the toilet and then prepares food can contaminate the food.
- Whipworm is the least prevalent type of helminth found (0.8%) in this community.
 - Infection occurs through ingestion of eggs.
 - Eggs are deposited into the soil through open defecation.
 - Fingers are contaminated from contact with the soil or contact with fruits and vegetables not properly washed or cooked.
 - Risk factors for whipworm are a hot, humid climate and poor sanitation and hygiene practices.

Height and Weight

Height-for-age

	NUMBER TESTED	BOTTOM 10 TH PERCENTILE		TOP 10 TH PERCENTILE	
		NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Total	187	71	38.0%	7	3.7%
Girls	95	36	37.9%	3	3.2%
Below 12 years old	71	25	35.2%	3	4.2%
12 years and older	24	11	45.8%	0	0.0%
Boys	92	35	38.0%	4	4.3%
Below 12 years old	68	26	38.2%	3	4.4%
12 years and older	24	9	37.5%	1	4.2%

Weight-for-age

	NUMBER TESTED	BOTTOM 10 TH PERCENTILE		TOP 10 TH PERCENTILE	
		NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Total	187	78	41.7%	3	1.6%
Girls	96	44	45.8%	1	1.0%
Below 12 years old	72	34	47.2%	1	1.4%
12 years and older	24	10	41.7%	0	0.0%
Boys	91	34	37.4%	2	2.2%
Below 12 years old	67	26	38.8%	1	1.5%
12 years and older	24	8	33.3%	1	4.2%

- About 40% of all children tested fall in the bottom 10th percentile in height-for-age and weight-for-age, indicating abnormal growth.
- Nearly half (45.8%) of the older girls are small in stature, meaning that they fall in the bottom 10th percentile for height-for-age. This may have serious repercussions when they become of childbearing age.

Stunted, Underweight, Wasting

	STUNTED	UNDERWEIGHT	WASTING
Total	22.5%	30.5%	22.6%
Girls	24.2%	35.4%	24.2%
Below 12 years old	22.5%	34.7%	25.4%
12 years and older	29.2%	37.5%	20.8%
Boys	20.7%	25.3%	20.9%
Below 12 years old	22.1%	26.9%	17.9%
12 years and older	16.7%	20.8%	29.2%

Blood Analysis

Hemoglobin values are related to a person's age and gender. Normal values vary; however, the ranges are very close (varying by about 0.5 g/dl) for almost every group. An example of normal ranges that is widely accepted by physicians is as follows:

Age 2 – 6 years	11.5 – 13.5 g/dl
Age 7 – 12 years	11.5 – 15.5 g/dl
Female	
Age 12 – 18 years	12.0 – 16.0 g/dl
Age greater than 18 years	12.1 – 15.1 g/dl
Male	
Age 12 – 18 years	12.0 – 18.0 g/dl
Age greater than 18 years	13.6 – 17.7 g/dl

Anemia

	NUMBER TESTED	NUMBER ANEMIC	INCIDENCE
Total	183	134	73.2%
Girls	94	70	74.5%
Below 12 years old	70	52	74.3%
12 years and older	24	18	75.0%
Boys	89	64	71.9%
Below 12 years old	65	46	70.8%
12 years and older	24	18	75.0%

- 73.2% incidence overall is very high.
 - The high incidence is consistent across both genders and both age groups.
 - This correlates directly to the high incidence of STH across both genders and both age groups.
- STH, particularly hookworm, is a risk factor for anemia.
- The proven effects of STH infection on iron status, vitamin A status, anemia, and growth occur through various mechanisms, including the following:
 - Reduced food intake due to decreased appetite
 - Decreased nutrient intake
 - Impaired absorption
 - Nutrient loss
 - Inflammation of the intestines

Malaria

	NUMBER TESTED	NUMBER POSITIVE	PREVALENCE
Total	183	0	0.0%
Girls	94	0	0.0%
Below 12 years old	70	0	0.0%
12 years and older	24	0	0.0%
Boys	89	0	0.0%
Below 12 years old	65	0	0.0%
12 years and older	24	0	0.0%

- No malaria detected.
- Testing was performed during the dry season when a lower prevalence of malaria would be expected.

HIV

	NUMBER TESTED	NUMBER POSITIVE	PREVALENCE
Total	183	0	0.0%
Girls	94	0	0.0%
Below 12 years old	70	0	0.0%
12 years and older	24	0	0.0%
Boys	89	0	0.0%
Below 12 years old	65	0	0.0%
12 years and older	24	0	0.0%

- No HIV detected.

Soil-transmitted Helminthiasis (STH) Explained

1.1 Causative Agents

Hookworm (*Necator americanus* and *Ancylostoma duodenale*):

Hookworms affect approximately 576 million people globally and is the leading cause of maternal and child morbidity in developing countries of the tropics and subtropics. Infective hookworm larvae penetrate human skin through hair follicles and small fissures within minutes of contact with contaminated soil. The larvae are carried by circulation to the lungs, penetrate the alveolar walls, and make their way up the trachea to be swallowed and carried to their final habitat in the small intestine.

Migration of larvae through the lungs may provoke the inflammation of lung tissue. Once in the intestine, hookworms may cause chronic abdominal pain and persistent eosinophilia. The major manifestations of hookworm infection, however, are iron-deficiency anemia and protein energy malnutrition resulting from blood loss. Features of hookworm-induced anemia include smaller than normal red blood cells that are poorly filled with hemoglobin, skin paleness, weakness, physical or mental weariness, lack of energy, difficulty or uncomfortable breathing, and swelling of the organs due to an abnormally low level of protein in the blood, especially in malnourished children. Moderate infections and anemia can impair physical, cognitive, and intellectual growth in children, diminish productivity of workers, and threaten the outcome of pregnancy for both mother and child. The development of anemia depends on the intensity and duration of the infection, yet in the most severe cases, anemia caused by hookworms can lead to congestive heart failure.

Pinworm (*Enterobius vermicularis*):

Pinworm, called *Enterobius vermicularis*, is highly prevalent throughout the world and is particularly common among children. Pinworms are small, thin, white roundworms that reside in the large intestine, appendix, and adjacent gut. Female worms, containing an average of 10,000 ova at a time, migrate to the perianal and pelvic regions where they deposit their eggs and die. The eggs become infective within six hours and are transferred to clothes, bedding, dust, and air. The most common mode of transmission, however, is via the hands of the host, particularly underneath the fingernails, through scratching or handling clothes and bed linen. On ingestion, the embryos hatch in the duodenum, molt twice, and develop within five or six weeks into adult worms that live for about a month.

Enterobiasis, or pinworm infection, is not associated with any particular social class, gender, race, or culture. The prevalence of enterobiasis is lowest in infants and reaches its maximum in schoolchildren from five to fourteen years old. Pinworm eggs are infective within six hours of the time that they are laid and may remain so for up to twenty days. Pinworm is primarily a familial or institutional infection associated with crowding. Because of the relatively brief life span of the worms, long-standing infections are due to continuous reinfection.

Most pinworm infections are asymptomatic; however, symptoms that do appear are largely related to perianal and pelvic itching and scratching. Painful urination, inability to control urine, vaginal infection, and vaginal discharge can also occur due to pinworm. The migration of the parasite may also lead to pelvic, cervical, vulvar, and kidney inflammation. Large numbers of larval pinworms have caused inflammation of the digestive tract in both adults and children.

Roundworm (*Ascaris lumbricoides*):



Ascaris egg identified during the stool analysis of IMO's Rapid Appraisal in El Paraiso.

Ascaris is the most common form of STH, affecting about 800 million to 1.2 billion people globally. Ascariasis is transmitted by the ingestion of infective eggs from soil, water, or vegetables that have been contaminated with the feces of already infected persons. Once ingested, the eggs hatch in the intestines, burrow through the gut wall, and migrate via venous blood through the liver and heart to the lungs. There they break into the alveoli. Once mature, they pass up to the trachea where they are coughed up and swallowed. The larvae then pass through the stomach for a second time into the intestine where they become adult worms. A single worm has a life span of one to two years and may produce two hundred thousand eggs a day. The high prevalence of ascariasis worldwide is a consequence of the tremendous egg

output from female worms and the remarkable ability of ova to resist unfavorable external environments.

As *Ascaris* travel through the body, they can cause visceral damage, peritonitis and inflammation, enlargement of the liver or spleen, and an inflammation of the lungs. They may also cause coughing or gagging, vomiting, wheezing, or shortness of breath. Once the worms make it to the intestine, they steal nutrients from the partially digested host food and cause malabsorption, contributing to malnutrition. They may also cause gastrointestinal discomfort, nausea, irregular stools, stomach or abdominal pain, weight loss, fatigue, and fever. Ascariasis has been shown to depress appetite and food intake by children and can interfere with absorption of proteins, fats, lactose, vitamin A, and iodine. The impact on nutrition, intellectual development, cognitive performance, and growth is likely the most important health related consequence of ascariasis worldwide. Treatment of heavily infected children with anthelmintics has been shown to improve nutritional status, but provision of micronutrients, protein, and energy is necessary for underweight or stunted children to achieve catch-up growth.

Ascariasis is associated with poor personal hygiene and poor sanitation, including places where there are no latrines or other sanitation infrastructure. Preventative measures taken against ascariasis include avoiding the ingestion of soil that may be contaminated with human feces; washing hands with soap and warm water before handling food; teaching children the importance of washing hands to prevent infection; and washing, peeling, or cooking all raw vegetables and fruits before eating, particularly those that have been grown in soil that has been fertilized with manure. Not defecating outdoors and establishing effective sewage disposal systems can also prevent the transmission of ascariasis.

Tapeworm (*Taenia saginata* and *Taenia solium*):

It is thought that tapeworms first infected humans up to two million years ago, making taeniasis among the oldest recognized of all human infections. There are at least six types of tapeworm known to infect people, identified by the animal from which they come. Today, between 40 and 60 million people are infected with tapeworm.

Eating undercooked meat of animals infected with these flat, segmented parasites is the primary route of taeniasis' transmission. The ingested worm attaches to the upper jejunum causing an inflammatory reaction in the intestines. The adult tapeworms head, called a scolex, attaches to the small intestinal mucosa. Segments of the tapeworm, called proglottids, develop from the neck of the scolex, mature, and become filled with thousands of eggs that are passed into the environment with feces. These eggs are then ingested by animals through contaminated soil or water, hatch in their intestines, attach to intestinal cells, enter circulation, and are transported throughout the animal's body where the cycle can start again.

Taeniasis in humans can persist for many years and often do not cause symptoms. But taeniasis may also be associated with persistent, minor symptoms including nausea, weakness, diarrhea, abdominal pain, hunger or loss of appetite, fatigue, weight loss and vitamin and mineral deficiencies. The most frequent complaint in *T. saginata* (beef tapeworm) is the uncomfortable sensation of the proglottids spontaneously forcing their way out of the rectum.

In rare cases, tapeworms can lead to serious complications, including blocking the intestine. If pork tapeworm eggs are accidentally swallowed, they can migrate to other parts of the body and cause damage to the liver, eyes, heart, and brain. These infections can be life threatening.

The definitive diagnosis of tapeworm infections typically is by identification of eggs or proglottids filled with eggs in the stool. However, proglottids often emerge spontaneously from the anus and deposit eggs on the perianal and perineal region; thus, anal swabs such as the "scotch tape" method may also be diagnostic.

Treating tapeworm larvae infection is more complicated than treating an adult tapeworm infection. While the adult tapeworm stays in the gut, the larvae may settle in other parts of the body. The medication prescribed depends on the species of tapeworm involved and the site of the infection. These drugs target the adult tapeworm, not the eggs, so avoiding reinfection is highly important.

The most common treatment for tapeworm infection involves the oral medications Praziquantel, Albendazole, and Nitazoxanide that are toxic to the adult tapeworm. These medications destroy the scolex of the tapeworm, as failure to do so will result in regrowth of the entire tapeworm.

Post-treatment follow-up stool examination should be performed approximately one to three months after the course of medication. These medications, if procedures are followed properly, are 95% effective.

Whipworm (*Trichuris trichiura*):

An estimated 800 million worldwide are infected with the whipworm *Trichuris trichiura*, (primarily children living in poverty in the tropics and subtropics).

Adult worms measure approximately 4 cm in length and typically reside in the cecum and ascending colon. In heavy infections the lower colon and rectum may be involved. The thin whip-like anterior part of the parasite, or its head, is embedded in the epithelium of the colon. Each day the female worm produces 7000 to 20,000 barrel-shaped eggs measuring $50 \times 20 \mu\text{m}$, with a thick shell and a clear plug at each end. Eggs shed in the feces onto soil embryonate and become infective under optimal conditions of moisture and shade within 2 to 4 weeks. After the egg has been ingested, the larva emerges from the shell and penetrates the mucosa of the cecum. Adult worms begin to produce eggs within approximately 3 months; they live 1 to 3 years or longer.

Trichuriasis is found in humid tropical environments and in temperate zones during warm and humid months. It is most common in poor rural communities and areas in which sanitary facilities are lacking. Most infected people harbor fewer than 20 worms, but a small proportion, usually children in the 5- to 15-year-old age group, harbor more than 200 worms.

The period from ingestion of eggs to the appearance of eggs in the stool is 60–90 days.

Most people have no symptoms. Children with chronic *Trichuris* colitis have chronic abdominal pain, diarrhea, iron deficiency anemia, growth retardation, and clubbing of the fingers. Tenesmus and frequent passage of stools containing large amounts of mucus and often blood can occur. Recurrent rectal prolapse is common (adult worms can be seen in the prolapsed mucosa). In moderate or heavy infections, growth retardation and impaired cognitive function can be seen.

Diagnosis is made by identifying the adult worms on the mucosa of the prolapsed rectum or at colonoscopy or by finding the lemon-shaped eggs in the stool. The level of egg output is high (approximately 200 eggs/g of feces per worm pair).

Single doses of Albendazole, Mebendazole, and Pyrantel pamoate cure less than 50% of people with whipworm infection, and the reduction in worm burden may be less than 60%. Three days of Albendazole (400 mg orally daily) or Mebendazole (100 mg twice daily) are more effective in light and moderate infections, but for heavy infections, courses of 5 to 7 days of Albendazole are indicated. The combination of Albendazole and Ivermectin taken once yields the highest rate of cure and a greater reduction in the intensity of the infection.

1.2 Symptoms of Infection and Impact on Health

The symptoms of STH are nonspecific and only become evident when the infection is particularly severe. The nonspecific symptoms include nausea, fatigue, weakness, abdominal pain, and loss of appetite. STH causes morbidity through various different mechanisms. Three of particular significance are listed below.

- **Anemia.** All human cells depend on oxygen for survival; therefore, a decrease in the number of red blood cells can result in feelings of weakness, fatigue, malaise, and poor concentration. In severe cases of anemia, the body increases cardiac output in an attempt to compensate for the lack of oxygen. This may lead to palpitations, angina, and even heart failure.
- **Intestinal Obstruction.** In cases of massive infection, a bolus of parasites can cause intestinal obstruction. Obstruction is usually partial but overtime, it can become complete. Additionally, obstruction can occur where parasites excrete neurotoxins that cause contractions of the small bowel. A lingering obstruction gets complicated with the probability of intussusception, volvulus, necrotic bowel, or perforation, all of which are life threatening.
- **Malnutrition.** Malnutrition becomes life threatening in association with STH as STHs feed on host tissues, including blood, leading to a loss of iron and protein. Additionally, STH impairs the body's ability to absorb or assimilate food, decreasing the absorption of essential nutrients. In particular, STHs compete for already low levels of vitamin A in the intestine of the host. Because vitamin A maintains the integrity of the epithelium in the respiratory and gastrointestinal tracts, its deficiency increases the risk of developing respiratory disease and chronic diarrhea. Malnutrition weakens every part of the immune system, which increases the risk of infection and infectious disease. Infectious diseases like malaria, measles, persistent diarrhea, and pneumonia can also keep the body from absorbing adequate food.

The impact of STH on an infected person's life can be significant. Some examples include:

- **Stunting.** Chronic malnutrition occurring over time interferes with a child's ability to develop and grow. Malnutrition and recurrent infections in combination with STH are major contributors to growth stunting. A stunted child may appear normal, but is significantly smaller and shorter than children who are adequately nourished. Their immune system is weaker, leaving them more vulnerable to disease and they are five times more likely to die from diarrhea. Once established, stunting and its effects typically become permanent. Stunted children may never regain the height lost as a result of stunting, and most children will never gain the corresponding body weight. It also leads to premature death later in life because vital organs never fully develop during childhood. Height-for-age, weight-for-age, and weight-for-height are frequently used indicators of nutritional status of children. Because these represent the long-term effects of malnutrition and are not sensitive to recent, short-term changes in dietary intake, height and weight are measured as part of the Rapid Appraisal.
- **Need for surgery.** When their numbers in the body become extremely high, STHs build up in the child's intestines causing obstruction, hindering normal function, and eventually blocking the intestine entirely. The only solution in this situation is an emergent surgical intervention that in most cases is not possible in remote areas, causing the child's premature death.
- **Reduced ability to learn.** In an already malnourished child, STHs further rob the body of the nutrients required for physical and mental development. In the formative years of a child's growth, this chronic malnutrition results in a significant and irreversible drop in IQ. Children with STH are therefore less able to concentrate or process information, compromising their formal education that is, in most cases, already limited.

1.3 Who is most at risk?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), children are at risk as soon as they stop breastfeeding and start crawling on the ground, frequently putting their hands in their mouths. Without treatment and prevention, children are infected and repeatedly re-infected, causing the number of STHs they harbor to steadily increase. By the time they reach school, they can be harboring hundreds of STHs or more.

Preschool and primary school-age children should be targeted for treatment and prevention of STH for the following reasons:

- They typically have the highest burden of STH.
- They are more susceptible to other infections.
- They are at a critical time of their physical and mental development.
- Primary school is foundational for secondary and higher levels of learning.
- Decreased STH prevalence among this group reduces the level of contaminate in the environment.

1.4 Treatment

IMO's preferred anthelmintic is Albendazole. Not only is Albendazole effective, it is also:

- Safe for young children and pregnant women
- Easy to administer due to its standard dose regardless of weight
- Chewable
- Relatively inexpensive.

The recommended dose is Albendazole 400mg, once, every six months.

1.5 Prevention

WHO advocates administering anthelmintic medication at regular intervals to populations at risk. This approach may lower the prevalence and intensity of STH but is unlikely to eliminate transmission in the absence of sanitation, clean water supplies, and overall economic development. The improvement of infrastructure, sanitation standards such as properly washing and cooking food and hand washing, and environmental factors such as housing conditions and access to clean water are broad steps toward prevention of STH.

Regular mass treatment is a commonly accepted remedy of STH because of the ease with which controlled doses of safe, effective, and relatively inexpensive anthelmintic medication can be administered. However, a disturbing aspect of this widespread practice of annual or semi-annual deworming of children and other groups is the concern about resistance developing to Albendazole and other anthelmintics. Prevention is, therefore, paramount.

General Recommendations for STH Prevention

Regular treatment will only result in a short-term reduction of infection. Re-infection is inevitable within a short period of time unless key preventive interventions are undertaken. The interventions outlined below are the basic requirements necessary to break the cycle of transmission and thus eliminate STH as a public health problem.

Use Safe Water

- Establish and utilize a safe water system.
 - Protected natural spring
 - Engineered method
 - Borehole
 - Dug well
 - Public standpipe
 - Filtration
 - Ceramic
 - Slow sand
 - Rainwater collection
 - Solar Disinfection
 - Boiled water
 - Chlorination
- Safe Water Storage
 - Container must only be used to transport/store clean water
 - Container must be kept closed with a properly fitted lid
 - Containers should have a small opening or a tap for access to water
 - Do not insert hands or objects into the container
- Use safe water for all activities of life
 - Drinking
 - Cooking
 - Hand-washing
 - Bathing/personal hygiene
- Hydrate the body adequately to receive full health benefits
 - Drink only safe water
 - Drink water everyday
 - Recommended daily amount of water is as follows:
 - 5-8 years old— 1 liter
 - 9-12 years old— 1.5 liter
 - 13+ years old— 2 liters
 - Women— 2 liters
 - Men— 3 liters
- Practice proper food preparation
 - Clean food preparation areas and allow to dry thoroughly
 - Wash vegetables and fruits thoroughly, especially when eating them raw
 - Cook food and vegetables properly

Practice Proper Hygiene

- Wash hands
 - When the hands are dirty
 - After using the toilet
 - Before meals/snacks
 - Before taking medication
 - Before and after feeding and caring for children
- Bathe and take care of the body
- Always use soap—it causes sticky particles to loosen from the skin
- Exercise oral hygiene
- Wear shoes when outside the home
 - Protective shoes when walking distances
 - Slipper-type shoe around the homestead

Manage Human Waste

- Discourage open defecation
- Properly dispose of human waste, especially children's stools
- Use toilets or latrines—one of the most effective measures to break the cycle of transmission
 - Train and encourage all family members to use toilets
 - Proper construction must include barrier between user and excreta
 - Keep toilets clean and well maintained
- Composting toilet
 - Safe and sanitary management of human feces
 - Decomposes the germs and recycles the nutrients from human waste
 - Does not require power or water
- Pit latrine
 - Creates breeding ground for flies
 - Can be dangerous if not properly constructed, maintained or protected
 - Difficult to clean
- Designate a special field for defecation away from homesteads, water source, and food storage
- Only when absolutely necessary:
 - Dig a hole in the ground for defecation
 - Cover the hole with soil afterward to avoid exposed excreta

Abide by a Treatment Schedule

- Take medication at regular intervals
- Go to health services to provide treatment of symptomatic illness

Distribute Health Education

- Anatomy and physiology
 - Teach general information about the body
 - Teach proper care and disease prevention
- Biology of the body — teach how the body functions in general
- Helminthiasis and its physiology within the body
 - How helminths enter the body
 - How helminths migrate throughout the body and eventually reside in the intestines
 - The effect of helminthiasis on the body
- Nutrition
 - Define and discuss a balanced, nutritional diet
 - Incorporate a nutritional diet within the cultural context
 - Identify available foods
 - Explore options to meet nutritional requirements

Adopt Healthful Habits

- Education and practice are the most important activities to motivate children to change their behavior.
- Children can be effective agents to convince parents, family members, and community members to change their behaviors.
- Schools are important in the training process
 - Lead by example—administrators and teachers should wash their hands at the appropriate times
 - Be consistent
 - Enforce healthy behavior all the time
 - Consistency causes habits to form
 - Habits become a way of life
 - Make it easy and practical for the children and teachers to wash
 - Set up a hand-washing area at the school
 - Have clean water and soap always available at the station
- Present teaching in a positive rather than a negative context.
 - “Clean hands feel good” instead of saying “Dirty hands cause disease”
 - Encourage the children to try new ways of doing things
 - Rewards good habits
- Encourage self-respect—mind, body, and spirit. Self-respect is evidenced by the following:
 - Proper care of your body
 - Maintain privacy
 - Practice modesty