



SWAYAM KRISHI SANGAM

Estimates indicate that at least 400 million school-age children are infected by roundworm, whipworm, hookworm, schistosomiasis and other flukes and/or guinea worm, often with multiple species infections. These parasites consume nutrients from children they infect, and in doing so, they bring about or aggravate malnutrition and retard children's physical development. This can lead to stunting, anemia and children being underweight.

Poor health and malnutrition are important underlying factors for low school enrollment, absenteeism, poor classroom performance, and early school dropout. Programs to achieve good health, hygiene and nutrition are therefore essential to the promotion of basic education for all children. Providing low-cost de-worming medication to school-aged children is one such initiative, which in addition to being an important nutritional and health goal could actually prevent absenteeism and make children learn better in school.

De worm the World (DtW) was launched to improve access to education through supporting, coordinating, and advocating for school-based de-worming programs. The group works directly with governments and implementers to develop large scale, cost-effective de-worming strategies. DtW has secured 300 million pills to treat soil-transmitted helminths (by far the most prevalent of the intestinal worms) and has identified programs to treat 10 million children in 2009 which can be supported with these pills.

In India, DtW is partnering with SKS Microfinance to utilize its vast distribution channel to provide de-worming tablets to 1 million school-aged children in the communities SKS works in. Andhra Pradesh has been identified as the pilot state for the de-worming program due to the high prevalence of worms in the state (the World Health Organization estimates the prevalence rates in the state at 72.8% for roundworm, 68.4% for whipworm and 29.8% for hookworm). The SKS de-worming initiative is expected to start in June 2009 in the districts of Adilabad, Kurnool and Warangal. SKS field assistants in these districts will be trained to raise awareness about the harm caused by worms, necessary treatment, and ways to prevent re-infection. These field assistants will conduct village-wide sensitization campaigns - which will target both SKS members and non-members – before distributing Mebendazole tablets (500 mg) to children within the age group of 5-15 years.